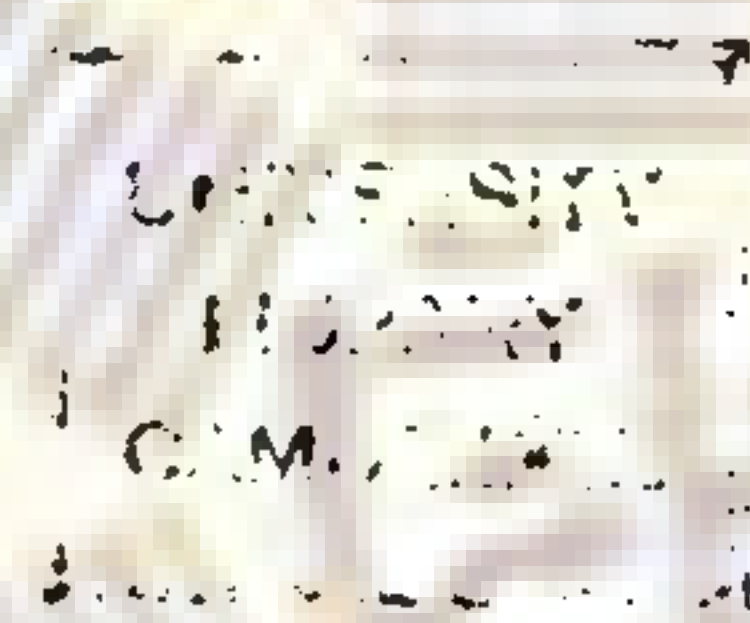


**The British administration of Hinduism
in North India, 1780-1900**

by

Katherine Prior



A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of a PhD degree
at Cambridge University

Gul Hayat Institute

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(Summary)

The thesis is divided into three main sections, each dealing with a different aspect of the religious administration of the British in India. No one section covers the entire period of 1780 to 1900, but they are assembled to give a chronological whole, with some overlapping between them.

The first section traces the changes in Hindu traditions of pilgrimage in north India, c.1780-1840. Most of the information revolves around three main sites - Allahabad, Benares and Gaya - partly as a result of source bias: the British had control of these sites from a relatively early date and much eighteenth-century information about the pilgrim industries there has been preserved. This section focuses on the religious behaviour of the Marathas: their patronage of the northern sites and the British interaction with Maratha royals and other elite pilgrims. It looks at the way in which elite pilgrims smoothed the way for non-elite pilgrims to make long and hazardous journeys to the north, setting up traditions of relations with sites and priests that enabled non-elite pilgrimage to continue long after royal patronage declined in the nineteenth century.

This section also considers the changing attitudes of the British to Hindu pilgrimage. Eighteenth-century officers welcomed the advantages inherent in the control of famous pilgrimage sites: the chance to advertise British rule to visitors from non-Company territories, the numerous occasions for pleasing political allies, the receipt of wealth from all over India. Territorial expansion at the turn of the century undid many of these advantages and, with the rise of evangelicalism and the acrimonious debate about the right of a Christian government to profit from idolatry, in the nineteenth century the control of pilgrimage sites began to be seen as a liability.

The second section concentrates on the British regulation of religious disputes. Most of the evidence deals with Hindu-Muslim conflict over religious festivals and cow-slaughter in the cities of the North-Western Provinces. Although most of the incidents examined are from the core of the nineteenth century, c.1820-1880, earlier incidents are studied in an attempt to understand pre-British practices. Some material from the very end of the century is also examined.

Innovative and influential aspects of British policy are shown to be the judiciary's emphasis on precedent and the consequent creation of intercommunal rights in religious display and of a documented history of local disputes. Pre-British religious disputation is shown to function in an entirely contemporary environment, with communities and individuals' rights of display reflecting only their current position within the locality. An important part of the argument is the extent to which Indians adopted the British methods but, exploiting officers' ignorance of a locality's history, manipulated them to their own ends.

A post-1857 development in British policy, the attempt to build-up "natural leaders" within localities and to get them to control the people's religious behaviour, is important because it highlights the British antipathy to traditional religious leaders. The failure of these "natural leaders" - largely gentlemen of inherited wealth and property and in receipt of British honours and titles - to stop their co-religionists from fighting over the rights of religious display underlines the very big gap between colonial intentions and achievements.

The third section is a discussion of the impact of "objective" scientific and sanitation principles on the celebration of grand Hindu fairs in the last half of the nineteenth century. Particular emphasis is placed on the government's efforts to prevent outbreaks of cholera and plague at the big gatherings. Where once the colonial government had shied away from close relations with Hinduism, warned off by the pious wrath of the evangelicals, now it pursued a radically interventionist course in public Hindu worship, justifying interference with pilgrims and pilgrimage sites in terms of public health. It is clear that this section draws upon the material presented in the first section, but the second is also not without relevance. The British antipathy to religious professionals is shown to be very strong in their late-nineteenth-century administration of pilgrimage sites. These men were consistently alienated from the government and they forfeited few opportunities to declare their hostility to state officials and the Indians who supported them. The fact that priests and pilgrims repeatedly joined forces in opposition to state "improvements" at holy sites, suggests that the independence of activity that was shown in the second section to have characterized religious behaviour in the home locality was strong enough to be transported throughout the Hindi-speaking region.

The conclusion draws together the disparate evidence of the three sections to argue that, over the nineteenth century, the component of religion in community and individual identity was magnified

until it became large enough to stand alone as an indicator of identity. It also argues that, particularly for non-elites, participation in religious display and any consequent disputes was an indicator of one's independence, not from members of another religious grouping, but from the economic elite of one's own co-religionists.



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Preface

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

As always with a project of this kind, despite the essentially solitary nature of the work there are lots of people without whose help and friendship my time in Cambridge would have been less productive and certainly less enjoyable. First of all, I must thank Chris Bayly, who has been a delightful supervisor, at all times gentle in his criticism and generous with his ideas and time. Also in Cambridge, I have thoroughly enjoyed the companionship and the wit of my friends Seema Alavi and Radhika Singha. In India, thanks are due to Professor Gyan Pandey and Dr Muzaffar Alam for their courteous assistance and encouragement.

This research was made possible by a scholarship from the Association of Commonwealth Universities (UK), for which I am extremely grateful. Staff at the British Council were invariably helpful, but in particular I must mention Alison Edwards for her good-humoured management of my file over the last two or three years. Additional assistance has been forthcoming from the Master and Fellows of St Catharine's College, the Managers of the Smuts Memorial Fund and the Managers of the Prince Consort and Thirlwall Fund, to all of whom I extend my thanks.

My parents, Mel and Joy, have long encouraged me in my somewhat idiosyncratic pursuits and they alone can be aware of how much I owe to their support and affection. To Anthony I offer my thanks for his friendship and his faith in my abilities, not to mention his generous approach to my chronic indigence. But my longest standing debt, in terms of friendship, encouragement and inspiration, is to Lance Brennan. And, although I fear that this thesis will not have done justice to his high expectations, it is nevertheless dedicated to him.

Katherine Prior

Cambridge, 1990

List of Abbreviations used in the text and footnotes

Collr	Collector
Comr	Commissioner
IOR	India Office Library and Records, London
Magte	Magistrate
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi
NWP	North-Western Provinces
NWP&O	North-Western Provinces and Oudh
PRC	Poona Residency Correspondence
Sany	Sanitary
SVN	Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers
UPRAA	Uttar Pradesh Regional Archives, Allahabad
UPSA	Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow
WP	Western Provinces

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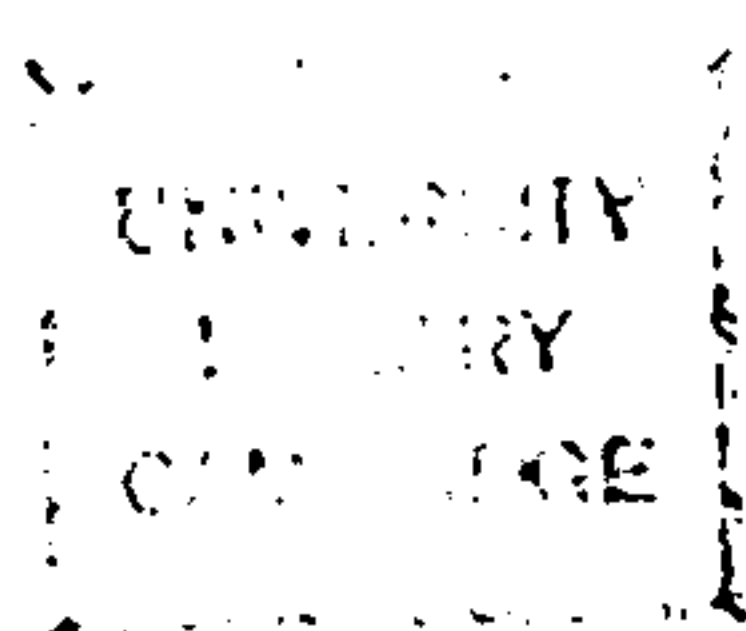
INTRODUCTION

This work is concerned with the relations between the British government and Hindus in north India from about 1780 until 1900. It does not pretend to be all-inclusive but it is wide-ranging, focussing on three points of frequent contact between the colonial administration and Hindus in a public setting: 1) pan-Hindu pilgrimage, 2) communal disputes between urban Hindus and Muslims and, 3) big religious fairs, or *melas*. No one of the three sections covers the entire period of 1780 to 1900, but they are assembled to give a chronological whole, with some overlapping between them. The emphasis on Hinduism in a public setting - at holy sites and fair grounds and in the bazaars of large towns and cities - is a necessary one if we are to be able to make any conclusions about changes in Hindu practice across a wide-section of the northern Hindu population. Similarly the generous time scale helps us to distinguish between long-term changes and mere hiccoughs in Hindu practice.

The first section traces the changes in Hindu pilgrimage in north India, c. 1730-1840. It focuses on elite Maratha pilgrimage to three pan-Hindu sites - Allahabad, Benares and Gaya - and looks at the way in which elite pilgrims smoothed the way for other pilgrims to make long and hazardous journeys to the north, setting up relationships with the sites and the priests that enabled non-elite pilgrimage to continue long after royal patronage of the holy sites had declined in the nineteenth century.

The second section concentrates on the British regulation of religious disputes in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, particularly disputes between Hindus and Muslims over clashing festivals and cow-killing. Innovative and influential aspects of British policy are shown to be the judiciary's emphasis on precedent and the consequent creation of intercommunal rights in religious display and of a documented history of local disputes.

The third section is a discussion of the impact of 'objective' scientific and sanitation principles on the celebration of grand Hindu fairs in the last half of the nineteenth century, showing how, in the pursuit of 'public health', the colonial government could justify exercising a new degree of control over pilgrims, pilgrimage sites and priests. The British antipathy to men of religion, particularly priests at pilgrimage sites, was very strong in the closing years of the century, especially when they discovered that priests and pilgrims would readily combine to oppose state 'improvements' at their holy sites.



In general, the aims of this study are broad; it is an attempt to give some context to the social and political changes that were taking place amongst Hindus in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. In the last twenty years many scholars have turned their attention to these changes and aspects of social reform, cow-protectionism, the Devanagri/Hindi agitation, and the rise of such organizations as the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharm Sabhas have been carefully delineated.¹ At the level of institutional politics there have been analyses of the links between the Indian National Congress and Hindus and between Hindus and Muslims as political spokesmen for their respective communities.² Given the apparent novelty of a lot of this organization and activity, it is understandable that these studies should have concentrated on the post-1857 innovations of colonial rule in India, particularly on the creation of new arenas of public activity, such as municipal committees and legislative councils, and on the extension of the elective principle to representatives of the social and commercial elite. Considerable attention has also been paid to the impact of other inputs of colonial rule, although here too the emphasis has necessarily been on the post-Rebellion era: the printing press, the telegraph, the railways, Western education, Christian missionary propaganda, etc. While all of these things must have been very influential there are dangers in according them too much weight, not the least of which is the creation of a reactive framework in which Indians are shown only responding to the changes introduced by the colonial state and not substantially shaping the nature of those changes.

A more serious limitation however is that of the heavy emphasis placed on the ability of 'natural leaders' to mobilize large numbers of people to their chosen cause. Only by presupposing the existence of almost god-like leaders can a relationship be established between the impact of the changes introduced by the West on a few elites and the accepted degree of ferment amongst the Hindu population as a whole in the latter years of the nineteenth century. To explain the cow-protection agitation of the 1880s and 90s in terms of the disappointment of Western-educated, urban elites at their narrow opportunities for career and political advancement is a flattering but improbable tribute to their powers

¹ See, for example, Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-religious reform movements in British India* (Cambridge, 1989) and *Arya Dharm: Hindu consciousness in 19th-century Punjab* (Berkeley, 1976); Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective action and community: public arenas and the emergence of communalism in north India* (Berkeley, 1989).

² Amongst others: D.A. Washbrook, *The emergence of provincial politics: the Madras Presidency 1870-1920* (Cambridge, 1976); Francis Robinson, *Separatism amongst Indian Muslims: the politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923* (Cambridge, 1974); P.R. Brass, *Language, religion and politics in north India* (Cambridge, 1974) and C.A. Bayly, *The local roots of Indian politics: Allahabad, 1880-1920* (Oxford, 1975).

of community leadership.³ Even in his more sophisticated guise as a factional power-broker, exercising control at all layers of society through a network of local elites, the natural leader is presumed to have extraordinary powers of social control.⁴

Whilst the work of the Subalternists has won back for lower-class Hindus, and Indians generally, a lot of the initiative and independence of action denied them by earlier historians, it has not brought us much closer to understanding what linked the diverse components of the activism of the late-nineteenth century together. If anything, to make their point that the mass of the population was not so readily manipulated by power-brokers, the Subalternists have emphasized the local, independent character of the politics that lay beneath apparently general ideologies, thus playing down the regional or provincial nature of such agitation or mobilization.⁵

Hence, instead of concentrating again on the landmarks of late-nineteenth-century Hindu history, I have tried to go back a bit further and at one remove from the arena of organized politics to see if there are any clues to what was happening to Hindu practice in the long term. I have a suspicion that studies that begin after 1857, or even later, are not going to be able to explain, as opposed to describe, many of the profound changes taking place in north Indian society thirty to forty years later. I have not focussed solely on the behaviour of elites, although theirs is certainly the most accessible, but I have stressed the importance of elite religious behaviour in setting models for emulation by lower-class and lower-caste Hindus. Nor have I done away with the impact of the colonial state, but I have tried to show that some of its most important innovations are to be found not in the conscious definition of political institutions and constituencies after the Rebellion, but in earlier, haphazard experiments with notions of customary behaviour, local history and inherited religious rights. Central

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³ See, in particular, J.R. McLane, *Indian nationalism and the early Congress* (Princeton, 1977), pp.271-331, for a very bold linking of the mass agitation of the cow-protection movement with the NWP's institutional politics.

⁴ The classic statement of the faction in modern Indian history is Washbrook's *Emergence of provincial politics*. For David Hardiman's critique of Washbrook and others see 'The Indian "Faction": a political theory examined' in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I* (Delhi, 1982), pp. 198-231.

⁵ Shahid Amin's study of the different, often violent, interpretations of Gandhi's message existing in Gorakhpur in the early 1920s is a skilled example of this approach in the field of nationalist, as opposed to colonialist, historiography: 'Gandhi, the person, was in this particular locality for less than a day, but the "Mahatma" as an "idea" was thought out and reworked in popular imagination in subsequent months' until it acquired an autonomous existence and worried even the local Congressmen. 'Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-22' in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York, 1988), pp. 288-348.

to an evaluation of the impact of the British is an appreciation of how much administrative activity was moulded by the indigenous setting and by Indians' manipulation of colonial intentions.

But one of the most crucial impacts of the colonial state and certainly one that, as of yet, has received insufficient attention, is the failure of the British to act as religious patrons as other rulers had before them and their relentless drive to separate religion from state, so empowering indigenous religion to function independently of the alien government. Far from collapsing when it lost its traditional aristocratic support, Hinduism flourished in the nineteenth century, drawing on new sources of patronage and organization. It is one of the main arguments of this study that during the nineteenth century public Hinduism became much more like a religion in the modern Western sense, severed from many of its traditional ties with secular authority. At the local and district level, this new-found autonomy meant that many more people, and not just the traditional power-brokers, clamoured for the role of religious patron, spokesman, or defender of the religion. Often they were people of low social status who eagerly seized the chance to promote personally or collectively this aspect of their identity. The realm of public religious display promised to be a place where one could be king for a day, independently of the alternative power of one's landlord, employer and creditors. By the end of the nineteenth century it was well established that, no matter what their economic dependence on certain secular leaders in their community, many ordinary people would look to other men or to each other for guidance in matters of religion. Particularly for people of low social status, participation in religious display was an indicator of one's independence, not from members of another religious community, but from the economic elite of one's own co-religionists.

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CHAPTER 1

NORTH INDIAN HINDU PILGRIMAGE, c. 1730-1840

**Hindu state religious patronage at Benares, Gaya and Allahabad
and the British administration of pilgrimage sites
in the early-nineteenth century**



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INTRODUCTION

Pilgrimage in society

With few exceptions pilgrimage in Hinduism is a voluntary activity.¹ Even if most Hindus expect that they will undertake at least one major pilgrimage in their lifetime it is still up to them to nominate their destination and a reason for going there. Personal motivation (or that motivation which is expressed in terms of personal choice) plays a constructive role that we would not expect it to perform in Islamic pilgrimage.² But the role of personal motivation has been seen as of such significance by researchers in the Hindu field that few have ventured into an era in which choice cannot be encapsulated in an interview schedule. Historical analyses of Hindu pilgrimage are rare in comparison with contemporary geographical and anthropological research, perhaps because of the difficulties of assessing the different motives of pilgrims unable to record their own preferences.³ But the emphasis on contemporary pilgrims is often underpinned by an assumption that the goals and achievements of pilgrimage are unchanging and there are dangers in extrapolating from the perception of the individual pilgrim to pilgrimage as an institution.

S.M. Bhardwaj's study of pilgrims at shrines in Himachal Pradesh highlights the pitfalls of an over-emphasis on individual pilgrims' motives. In ranking pilgrims according to their explicit rationale and their caste he underestimates the social pressures that may subtly influence their choices and produces a formulaic relationship between caste, motive and holy site.⁴ The fact that members of

¹ The expiation of enormous crimes such as cow-killing and brahmicide requires lengthy and arduous pilgrimage. In 1811 the Rao Raja of Alwar had to journey to Ramghat for purificatory bathing in the Ganga, having accidentally killed a cow while hunting. C.T. Metcalfe, Resident Delhi, to Mr Secretary Edmonstone, 25 Oct. 1811, J.N. Sarkar (ed.), *Daulat Rao Sindhia and North Indian Affairs (1810-1818)*, Poona Residency Correspondence, 14 (Bombay, 1951), p. 94. Hereafter PRC 14. Agehananda Bharati writes of a stage in Hinduism, around the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when some teachers might have considered pilgrimage a compulsory observance. 'Pilgrimage in the Indian tradition', *History of Religions*, 3 (1963), p. 145.

² In Islam every adult male is required to perform a pilgrimage to Mecca if he has sufficient funds for the journey and for the maintenance of his family during his absence. The question of why a Muslim is going on the Haj never arises.

³ Binod Agrawal, S.M. Bhardwaj, E.A. Morinis and David Sopher have conducted studies on diverse aspects of contemporary pilgrimage and fairs in Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Gujarat respectively. For all of them interview schedules served as a prime source of data: Agrawal, *Cultural contours of religion and economics in Hindu universe* (New Delhi, 1980); Bhardwaj, *Hindu places of pilgrimage in India: a study in cultural geography* (Berkeley, 1973); Morinis, *Pilgrimage in the Hindu tradition: a case study of West Bengal* (Delhi, 1984), and Sopher, 'Pilgrim circulation in Gujarat', *Geographical Review*, 58 (1968), pp. 392-425. Even the work of the Heidelberg researchers on Jagannath in Orissa, despite its strong historical framework, has very little to say about the pilgrims *per se* in that setting. See A. Eschmann, H. Kulke and Gaya Charan Tripathi (eds), *The cult of Jagannath and the regional tradition of Orissa* (New Delhi, 1978).

⁴ Bhardwaj identifies five categories of 'purpose' or motivation: Desire for Identification with the Sacred Order; The Accumulation of Merit and the Removal of Sin; Life-Cycle Purposes; Problem-Generated (or Tension-Generated) Purposes; and Purposes Related to Social Motives and Desires. Bhardwaj, *Hindu places of*

the scheduled castes only rarely travel to the pan-Hindu site of Badrinath, one of Bhardwaj's observations, cannot be explained simply by the explicit motives of the pilgrims.⁵

If, however, the ready availability of information about pilgrim choice seems to have diverted Bhardwaj's attention from those aspects of pilgrim behaviour that are not explicitly self-directed, there is also a danger in swinging too far in the other direction to an entirely functionalist analysis of pilgrimage which swallows the inspiration of the individual in the emphasis of the institution. Victor Turner's work on 'communitas', the shared experience of pilgrims at a holy site, stresses the importance of pilgrimage as a prop to the structure of mundane life. Worshippers from different regions and all levels of society are seen to be united in one emotional, humbling gathering, which acts as a safety-valve and thus enables the inequalities of ordinary existence to continue.⁶

pilgrimage in India, pp. 148-53. Underlying this typology of motives is Bhardwaj's suspicion that people who nominate non-specific 'religious' purposes as their reason for going on a pilgrimage are 'better' pilgrims than people who nominate specific 'social' purposes. But this reflects Bhardwaj's prejudices, not Hinduism's: any pilgrim, provided he observes the necessary internal and external discipline, can earn a reward (*phala*) from the deity at his chosen destination. It is up to the pilgrim to choose whether he uses that merit now in the mundane life, perhaps to gain a son, to pass an examination, or to recover from an illness, or whether he saves it for his future spiritual enhancement. The power of the deity to confer merit is unchanged regardless of the nature of the pilgrim's motive.

On this point Morinis writes: 'All pilgrimage is merit-producing; only different pilgrims choose to direct that merit to different ends. There are no significant ritual distinctions between pilgrimage intended to increase the store of spiritual merit and pilgrimage for material change in West Bengal. The underlying structure of pilgrim behaviour is to approach the deity in accord with the formulae of worship for that deity, regardless of whether the merit accumulated by correct performances is to be applied immediately or stored.' Morinis, *Pilgrimage in the Hindu tradition*, p. 270.

⁵ Briefly, Bhardwaj concludes that pan-Hindu shrines are resorted to for non-specific 'religious' purposes, especially by the higher castes, and local shrines are resorted to for mundane problem-solving. Pilgrims from scheduled castes were observed to travel 'shorter than average distances', inviting the conclusion that they are more interested in material gains than spiritual ones. Bhardwaj, *Hindu places of pilgrimage in India*, pp. 162, 188-92.

As a specific criticism of Bhardwaj's analysis Morinis has argued that as his one pan-Hindu site, Badrinath, is a Vaishnavite stronghold, one would expect non-material devotionism to prevail there; such is not necessarily a reflection of its pan-Hinduness or high-caste associations. Morinis, *Pilgrimage in the Hindu tradition*, pp. 235-7.

⁶ Turner's argument grew from his research on Christian pilgrimage in Mexico, and was subsequently bolstered by selected observations from scholars working in other pilgrimage traditions. Many researchers have since been unable to agree with his conclusions. His determination to construct a rationale for all pilgrimage led him to minimize differences between religions and cultures, a process inevitably encouraging a blurring rather than a sharpening of his fundamental definition of pilgrimage. Morinis has pointed out that the emphasis on 'communitas' enables Turner to define as acts of pilgrimage revivalist meetings and visits to national monuments and beaches. 'To ignore the differentiating motives of the participants to this extent [complains Morinis] is to suggest that, sunbaths or salvation, it makes no difference.' Morinis, *Pilgrimage in the Hindu tradition*, p. 261. For Turner's work see 'Pilgrimages as social processes' in *Drama, fields, and metaphors* (Ithaca, 1974), pp. 166-230, and 'Pilgrimage and communitas', *Studia Missionalia*, 23 (1974), pp. 305-27.

One of the biggest problems with Turner's argument is the degree to which it has to be modified to accommodate Hindu pilgrimage. Caste differences, he admits, are not subsumed at most shrines; rather they are 'softened' in an environment which is not characterized by aggression. 'Pilgrimages as social processes', pp. 170-1. Even this ought to be qualified when we recall the battles fought at Hardwar in the eighteenth century between different groups of ascetics, amongst whom the consciousness of hierarchy was extreme. Turner argues from his Mexican experience that the best sites for achieving communitas are the isolated, peripheral ones, divorced from the regular structures of everyday existence. Central, established pilgrim centres may be permeated by a degree of ordinary social structure that militates against communitas.

Neither a functionalist approach nor one centring on the individual tells us very much about the role of the pilgrim in society over time, or, in other words, the ways in which the institution of pilgrimage might change with society. Both approaches assume a stasis in the institution of pilgrimage as though it were outside the ordinary experience of life. Spiritual retreat may be an ideal of pilgrimage but it is rarely the sum total of the pilgrim's experiences. Few pilgrims travel without spending money, without registering new sights, and without speaking to strangers. The pilgrimage of my study is very much a part of society, radically influenced by and influencing the economy and the political and social networks of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century north India. By combining rather than opposing the separate emphases on the individual and the society we can see how each works upon the other, thus producing an institution that is anything but static. In this sense my intentions are close to those of Peter van der Veer, whose recent work on the development of the pilgrimage 'industry' at Ajudhia has a strong historical bias to it, particularly in its assessment of the impact of the colonial state and independent India upon the relations between the pilgrims and their priests.⁷

This study is in part an attempt to assess when and how the pan-Hindu ideals of pilgrimage, as expressed in numerous Hindu texts since the *Mahabharata*, came within reach of considerable numbers of Hindus. By definition, therefore, my interest is with long-distance pilgrimage and pan-Hindu sites. The bewildering multiplicity of holy sites in Hinduism has provoked some brave attempts to rank them into more manageable categories, but there are problems in constructing a hierarchy of sites that reflects the pilgrims' perceptions.⁸ For the purposes of this study a simple binary division between sites, firmly rooted in its historical setting, will attempt to take into account some of the pilgrim's perspective. It is plausible to distinguish between those sites which a Hindu saw as being of particular and intimate relevance to himself because of some patrimonial, regional or

Ibid., pp. 193-5; 'Pilgrimage and communitas', p. 321. Given Hinduism's many ancient, highly politicized and urbanized pilgrimage sites, this is a further serious limitation on the applicability of Turner's arguments to Hindu pilgrimage. Pilgrims going to Allahabad, Benares, Gaya, Hardwar or Mathura for the first time will probably witness extremes of social structure previously unknown to them.

⁷ Peter van der Veer, *Gods on earth: the management of religious experience and identity in a north Indian pilgrimage centre* (London, 1988).

⁸ As geographers, both Bhardwaj and Sopher tried to classify holy sites according to the cultural diversity of their pilgrims and the distances travelled by them, but they had to admit that the pilgrims did not share their conclusions. When Bhardwaj asked pilgrims at Badrinath to list the three sites most sacred to Hinduism he received 35 contenders for the first position alone. *Hindu places of pilgrimage in India*, p. 100. And Sopher could find no single shrine that served as the religious focus for modern Gujaratis. Given the appreciation of the uniqueness of each site, Sopher concluded that it had been pointless to look for one. 'Pilgrim circulation in Gujarat', pp. 407-10.

sectarian affiliation, and those in which the Hindu recognized a shared tradition with other Hindus.⁹ In the latter category I have concentrated on three big pilgrimage sites in north India - Gaya, Benares and Allahabad - and of their pilgrims I have devoted most space to foreigners of rank. This is partly the result of source bias. These three sites were either held or observed by the Company from the late-eighteenth century and, as foreign elites often sought Company aid in travelling through its territories, they are the ones who people the Company's political and revenue records. But my emphasis is also rooted in an interesting reality: in the mid- to late-eighteenth century elite Hindus from the Deccan and, to a lesser extent, from Gujarat and Rajputana invested immense amounts of time and money in journeying to these northern sites. Many took in Mathura, Soron, and Ajudhia on the way and some continued on to Jagannath on the east coast. Others travelled up to Hardwar and the northernmost Himalayan shrines, or else sponsored the journeys and residence of holy men there. They built temples, *ghats* and pilgrim rest-houses and patronized priests and scholars at all of the big sites, but especially at Benares. The section in this chapter entitled 'The Pilgrims' looks at the rise of this sort of religious investment amongst the Marathas, the religious patrons *par excellence* of the eighteenth century, and at what it might have been expected to achieve, both for the sponsors and for their community.

The second half of the chapter, 'The Pilgrimage Sites', examines the administration of both pre-British and British governments at Gaya, Benares and Allahabad and also, briefly, Jagannath. It traces the changes in pilgrimage that followed the birth of the new empire, notably the decline of the independent political elites as religious patrons and the rise of smaller, but more numerous patrons within the empire to take their place. The British, as with other matters of religious import such as *sati*, found that the administration of the pilgrim tax at Gaya, Allahabad and Jagannath opened up enormous political and moral questions about their role in India and the nature of their responsibilities to their Indian subjects. With hindsight, the long and acrimonious debate over the propriety of a Christian government's connections with idolatry seems trivial, as indeed many officers in the Government of Bengal thought so at the time, but it had important consequences. In a setting where

⁹ This of course leaves out many places of worship, but it is my contention that the 'average' Hindu in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would have known of only a few, pan-Hindu sites beyond those sites that he resorted to in his locality and region.

politics and religion had traditionally pursued a pragmatic engagement it confirmed the already strong tendency of European government to define religion as a sphere of activity apart from other areas of administration and, in the drive to set up rules and regulations so that Hinduism could be 'self-regulating' within a framework acceptable to the government, it encouraged the definition of rights and identities amongst religious specialists. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the emphasis on definition as an aid to better government was a theme of the British administration of Hinduism.

The textual inheritance

Even in second hand form only a few of Hinduism's pilgrims can have a thorough appreciation of their religion's voluminous literature on pilgrimage. Yet there can be no question of dismissing it as uninfluential, for the literature, despite its quantity, diversity, and indeed even contradictory detail, reiterates a very positive attitude towards pilgrimage. In scores of post-Vedic texts pilgrimage is shown to be a merit-producing activity which, by virtue of its accessibility and flexibility of observance, is essentially egalitarian in nature. Whether pilgrims are aware of specific sanctions for their activity or not, there is a sense in which the numerous textual exhortations have merged to form a formal climate or background of support. This may not act for many as a rationale or justification in itself. The appreciation of the sanctity of particular sites in India, whether the fame of such be localized or widespread, is so all-pervasive and real amongst the beholders as to suggest that direct textual evidence to that effect is for most just confirmation of a known or felt thing.¹⁰

The Sanskrit word for pilgrimage is *tirthayatra*, from *tirtha*, holy site, and *yatra*, journey. A pilgrim is a *tirthayatri*. The simple definition of a *tirtha* as a holy site is limited in that it leaves out the dynamic connotations of the word's secular origins as a ford or passage way. A *tirtha* is a holy site because it marks the spot where a divine being descended to the mundane world and impregnated the substances and atmosphere of the site with the essence of the divine. The site marks a corridor between

¹⁰ Morinis, in his study of contemporary West Bengali pilgrimage, distinguishes between implicit and explicit 'levels of meaning' of pilgrimage. The pilgrims provide the explicit understanding, viz., a rationale of why they are attending a particular shrine, what its deity is famed for, what they hope to gain there. However, implicit in the journeys of all the pilgrims whom Morinis met was a 'degree of commonality' - shared imagery, mythology, deities and beliefs 'deriving from membership in a common religious tradition based in the same language, sacred texts, history and regional identity...despite sectarian differences.' The pilgrims were not necessarily conscious of this broad cultural legitimation of their behaviour but this did not mean that it had been uninfluential in their choices. Morinis, *Pilgrimage in the Hindu tradition*, pp. 281-5.

the world of mortals and the paradise of the gods and people who come to the site or acquire some of its substances, its water or its dust for example, thus have a direct link with the gods.¹¹ At its most efficacious the dynamism of a *tirtha* such as Benares, the city of Lord Shiva, promises a dying pilgrim release from the numerous cycles of rebirth in the mundane world and an immediate passage to heaven.

The first major advocacy of *tirthayatra* is to be found in the *Vanaparva*, the book of the *Mahabharata* which tells of the Pandavas' forest exile. Using the device of a story within a story, *Tirthayatraparva* (chapters 80-157 of *Vanaparva*) tells first of the merits of pilgrimage and of numerous individual *tirthas* before accompanying the Pandavas on their own tortuous religious journey. Vedic literature admits the concept of holy sites, in particular water-associated ones, and stresses their aptness for the performance of sacrifices, but it recognizes no intrinsic merit in journeying to them.¹² In the *Mahabharata* the Sage Pulastya explains to Bhimsa why pilgrimage has been added to the list of 'approved' merit-producing activities:

The Rishis have told in due order the sacrifices and also their fruits to be obtained here and hereafter. O ruler of earth, the poor cannot perform these sacrifices, for the sacrifices require many materials and various things in large quantities. These sacrifices can therefore be performed by the kings and also by the men of wealth and affluence. They cannot be performed by men without wealth, and without friends, and by men destitute of means and destitute of friends. O ruler of men, O best of warriors, I shall now tell you about that which can be performed by the poor, and the fruits of which are equal to those sacred ones of sacrifices. O foremost of the Bharata race, visiting *Tirthas*, which are sacred and which are a great mystery of the Rishis, is even superior to the sacrifices.¹³

This is an oft-quoted passage. In the proliferation of Puranic writing on pilgrimage it introduces text after text, at times endowing specific *tirtha mahatmyas* (eulogies of sites) with the authority and breadth of vision of Vyasa, 'author' of the *Mahabharata*.¹⁴ Through the centuries the idea was reinforced that pilgrimage could serve the religious needs and aspirations of those barred by considerations of cost, caste and gender from the traditionally-sanctioned path of Vedic sacrifice. Only

¹¹ Diana L. Eck, 'India's *Tirthas*: "Crossings" in Sacred Geography', *History of Religions*, 20 (1981), pp. 323-4.

¹² P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra* (5 vols, Poona, 1930-62), IV, pp. 554-9. Both Kane and Eck note the frequent occurrence of the word 'tirtha' in Vedic literature but point out that at this stage it retained as its central meaning 'ford', 'crossing place', or 'passage', with few of its later connotations of 'holy place'. Eck, 'India's *Tirthas*', pp. 326, 344.

¹³ *Vanaparva*, chapter 82, verses 13-17, M.N. Dutt (trans.), *A prose English translation of the Mahabharata*, 3 (Calcutta, 1896), p. 120.

¹⁴ Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, IV, p. 565; Eck, 'India's *Tirthas*', p. 338. J. Ensink points to three authors of major treatises on holy sites who chose to introduce their subject with this passage: Laksmidhara (12th century), Vacaspati Misra (15th century) and Mitra Misra (17th century). J. Ensink, 'Problems of the study of pilgrimage in India', *Indologica Taurinensia*, 2 (1974), p. 59.

Ksatriya and Brahman men were eligible to perform such sacrifices. The legitimation of pilgrimage opened the doors of a very exclusive club to women, Vaisyas, Sudras, untouchables, people of mixed caste, and all those of restricted means.¹⁵

Hans Bakker, emphasizing that Brahman and Ksatriya men were also to be allowed the rewards of pilgrimage, has read into this the development of a new Brahmanic ideal. Increasing urbanization and sedentarization and the cost and rarity of Vedic sacrifice combined to promote the ascetic ideal of renunciation - 'a negative appraisal of the settled life'.¹⁶ This elaborate reasoning finds little support in Diana Eck's work. She has argued that the initial acceptance of *tirthayatra* in the *Mahabharata* and the subsequent flowering of texts expounding its virtues illustrates the process by which Brahmanic Hinduism tried to tap onto (or to 'encode' in Eck's words) a pre-existing phenomenon of religious travel based on indigenous appreciation of holy sites.¹⁷ The myths and deities associated with a certain site may have changed under the influence of an expanding and aggressive religion, but the site itself would have had an autonomous history of ritual and pilgrimage in the local setting at least.¹⁸

¹⁵ Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, IV, pp. 567-9; Eck, 'India's Tirthas', p. 338. Some texts extend the benefits of pilgrimage and *tirthas* beyond the human world. Kane translates this passage from the *Kurmapurana* (c.300-600AD): 'brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas, sudras, persons of mixed castes, women, *mlecchas* [non-Hindus, foreigners], and others who are born in evil forms and are of mixed blood, worms, ants, birds and beasts when they die in Avimukta (Benares) are born as human beings in Benares and no one guilty of sins dying in Avimukta goes to Hell.' Kane notes that this passage is quoted in Vacaspati's fifteenth-century *Tirthacintamani* and Mitra Misra's seventeenth-century *Tirthaprakasa*. *History of Dharmasastra*, IV, p. 568.

¹⁶ H.T. Bakker, 'Some notes on the practice of pilgrimage in India. A contribution to the discussion' in *Vaisnavism: the history of the Krsna and Rama cults and their contributions to Indian pilgrimage*, H.T. Bakker and Alan Entwistle (eds) (Groningen, 1981), pp. 79-81.

¹⁷ Eck, 'India's Tirthas', p. 339.

¹⁸ One of the best-illustrated examples of the supplanting of one set of deities at a site by another is the sixteenth-century 'rediscovery' of Braj by Vaisnavite devotionalists. Mathura and its surrounds were famed from ancient times as the birth place of Krishna, the cowherd god and avatar of Vishnu, but there appears to have been no strong tradition of Krishna worship and pilgrimage there until the arrival in Braj in the early 1500s of the reformers Vallabha from Andhra and Caitanya from Bengal. They set about pin-pointing the sites of Krishna's childhood exploits which were known to them from the texts but were said to be unknown to the locals because of centuries of Muslim oppression. Charlotte Vaudeville has argued that prior to the interest of the Vaisnavite reformers Braj had hosted successive traditions of Jain, Buddhist and Saivite worship, and that the reformers would have discovered goddess, tree and serpent worship amongst the local pastoral castes. She concludes that 'it may be doubted if any specifically "Krisnaite" cult, other than a primitive form of nature-worship (including hills, waters, cows, trees and snakes), combined with some form of Devi worship, existed among the rural (pastoral) populations of Braj before the arrival of the great Vaisnava reformers in Govardhan and Vrindaban at the beginning of the sixteenth century. It is probably to their disappointment with such primitive forms of worship that we owe the famous legend of the "loss" and "recovery" of the innumerable *tirthas* and *lila-sthalas* of Braj.' Charlotte Vaudeville, 'Braj, lost and found', *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 18 (1976), pp. 195-213. C.A. Bayly continues the story of Mathura's varied fortunes with a summary of the vicissitudes in its royal patronage in the centuries after its 'rediscovery', from the patronage of the Rajput kings and 'high Hindu officials of the Mughal court' in the seventeenth century, to that of the Jat kings in the eighteenth century and a Bengali holy man in the early nineteenth century. Bayly, *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars: north Indian society in the age of British expansion* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 130-1.

However, Eck's assertion that women and Sudras were probably already 'veteran pilgrims' is not necessarily incompatible with Bakker's observation that at the turn of the millenium Brahman and Ksatriya renouncers predominated at the pilgrimage sites of Benares and Prayag. By her own definition, Eck's veteran pilgrims were drawing the inspiration for their religious journeys from a different source of tradition than that of Bakker's high-caste renouncers. This points to a significant conjunction of diverse traditions at the formal level, thus producing a relatively tolerant and flexible ideological umbrella. The umbrella was sufficiently large to shelter many different traditions of motivation and belief.

With time the message of *tirthayatra* in the *Mahabharata* acquired ornate accretions, but the fundamentals were little altered. In the post-*Mahabharata* texts increasingly fantastic claims are advanced for the benefits (*phala*, literally 'fruit') that specific *tirthas* are said to confer, either in the form of spiritual salvation or tangible, earthly reward. The claims made on behalf of rival *tirthas* for primacy saw many contradictions committed to paper.¹⁹ Nevertheless Puranic literature never loses sight of the *Vanaparva*'s emphasis on the pilgrim's need of inner purity and control - without these none of the benefits attributed to pilgrimage will be enjoyed.²⁰ Early Puranas develop the concept of 'inner *tirthas*', or *manastirthas* - for example: honesty, patience, charity, purity - in which one must also immerse oneself if one hopes to taste the fruit of *tirthayatra*.²¹ There are also frequent warnings against abandoning one's prescribed duties in life in the name of *tirthayatra*.²² Thus there is an emphasis on the tempering nature of the pilgrim's responsibility in a lush setting of promise and reward. It is from this tension between the opposing forces of responsibility and reward that pilgrimage in the Hindu tradition draws its credibility and hence its durability as an ideology.

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¹⁹ Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, IV, pp. 565-6. Kane finds in this Puranic hyperbole an exaggeration which borders on the 'repellant'.

²⁰ *Vanaparva*, chapter 82, verses 9-12, Dutt, *Mahabharata*, 3, p. 120.

²¹ Eck, 'India's *Tirthas*', pp. 340-1; Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, IV, pp. 562-4, 570-1.

²² Both the *Kurmapurana* and the *Brahmapurana* are explicit on this point. Kane dates them between 300 and 600 AD and points to similar expressions in fifteenth- and seventeenth-century works. *Ibid.*, pp. 570-1.

THE PILGRIMS

Pre-eighteenth-century pilgrimage: disjunctions between the literary and the historical popularity of individual *tirths*

In the voluminous post-*Mahabharata* literature on pilgrimage numerous *tirths* acquired a history of textually-sanctioned eminence. The translation of that into periods of relative popularity and obscurity as places of resort is a less well-documented process. Consciously-historical literature - as opposed to sacred writings - reveals that there were considerable fluctuations in the history of pilgrim attendance at some *tirths*. For example, Mathura was long famed as the childhood home of Krishna, but Krishna devotees only began to travel there in the sixteenth century after the pertinent sites had been 'rediscovered' by Vaishnavite reformers from Bengal and Andhra.²³ A contemporary comment from Abul Fazl in the '*Ain-i-Akbari* is revealing: '*Mathura* is sacred for forty-eight Kos around, and even before it became the birthplace of Krishna, was held in veneration.'²⁴

It is Ajudhia that provides the clearest example of a disjunction between textual eminence and a popularity that can be measured in pilgrim numbers. Ajudhia is a city on the River Sarayu, famed since ancient times as one of the great urban sites of north India. Despite recognition in the *Mahabharata* and subsequent texts as the birthplace and earthly residence of Ram, Ajudhia's practical status as a *tirth* was for a long time uncertain. Not until the sixteenth century did Ajudhia rise to prominence as a popular resort of Vaishnavite pilgrims. This was when Rama cultists, most notably the Ramanandis, followers of the fourteenth-century saint Ramananda, made Ajudhia their base. Their worship was devotional in character, not ritualistic, and this along with the expression of Ramaite stories in the vernacular (most famously the *Ramacaritmanas* of Tulsi Das, 1532-1623) helped, in Hans Bakker's words, 'to propagate a more populist form of Rama worship, which found expression in a gradual increase in the flow of pilgrims.'²⁵ But Bakker believes that the religious developments in Ajudhia are inseparable from social and political ones. The foundations for its practical eminence as a site of Ram veneration may have been laid in the eleventh and twelfth centuries with the settlement in the Gangetic plain of many Rajput clans from the west. As Ksatriyas, '[d]evotion to Rama as a god

²³ See above fn. 18.

²⁴ H.S. Jarrett (trans.), '*Ain-i-Akbari* (2nd edn, 3 vols, Calcutta, 1939-48), III, p. 306.

²⁵ Hans Bakker, 'The rise of Ayodhya as a place of pilgrimage', *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 24 (1982), p. 108.

and hero may have helped to reinforce their identity with respect to the faith of the ruling Moslem intruders.²⁶ In the sixteenth century the presence of a stable Islamic authority may have even assisted Ajudhia's growth as a pilgrimage centre given that 'non-Hindu rulership provided opportunities for the development of populist, non- or anti-Brahmanical religious movements'.²⁷

Peter van der Veer nominates the late eighteenth century as the beginning of the expansion of Ajudhia's pilgrimage 'industry', much of which he attributes to the indirect patronage of the Nawabi court. Van der Veer notes that Hindus regard Asaf-ud-daula's 1775 transfer of his court from Faizabad to Lucknow as liberating, but observes that the avenues for administrative employment that were open to Hindu service groups in Awadh under the Nawab had enabled many Hindus to invest in Ajudhia as a pilgrimage centre.²⁸

Van der Veer's arguments about Ajudhia hold good for much of north Indian pilgrimage in the eighteenth century. The patronage of elite Hindus - royalty, administrators, military leaders and landholders - triggered a boom in pilgrimage in the 1700s that continued well into the British era. Elite patronage smoothed the way for many ordinary pilgrims so that long after the mid-nineteenth-century decline in lavish aristocratic patronage the pilgrims kept on coming. Most prominent amongst the elite patrons of the eighteenth century were the Maratha royals and administrators who bank-rolled mass pilgrimages to north Indian sites and lavished money and honours on the religious professionals based there. Second only to the Marathas in this were the Rajputana princes, although their days of largesse belonged more to the seventeenth century. Crowding in the wings to challenge the Marathas as religious patrons *par excellence* were members of the new commercial aristocracy: men grown fat on the opportunities of the Company Raj who were eager to secure their reputations in the traditional world of religious patronage.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Bakker is cautious about this theory and is unwilling to back it whole-heartedly.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109. Bakker notes that some of the textual ambiguity about Ajudhia's status as a *tirth* disappears with the flourishing of the devotional Ramaite cults. Mitra Misra (1600-1650 AD) is explicit in his *Tirthaprakasa* about Ajudhia's sanctity. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

²⁸ Van der Veer stresses the degree of collaboration that existed between the Nawabi court and Hindus. The administrative work was concentrated in the hands of Kayasths, and Saivite *nagas* wielded military power. Moreover Muslim officials are known to have made gifts of land and buildings to Hindus and to have employed Hindu priests. Peter van der Veer, *Gods on earth*, pp. 37-8.

Maratha religious patronage and pilgrimage in the eighteenth century

Company records of the late-eighteenth century show that Maratha pilgrims dominated the three biggest pilgrimage centres in the north: Allahabad (Prayag), Benares (Kashi) and Gaya.²⁹ Even if they did not outnumber the other pilgrims at a site, although the evidence suggests that often they did, their dominance could be measured in terms of the size of their parties, the money they spent, the elaborateness of their rituals, and their precocity in ignoring the laws of the host state.

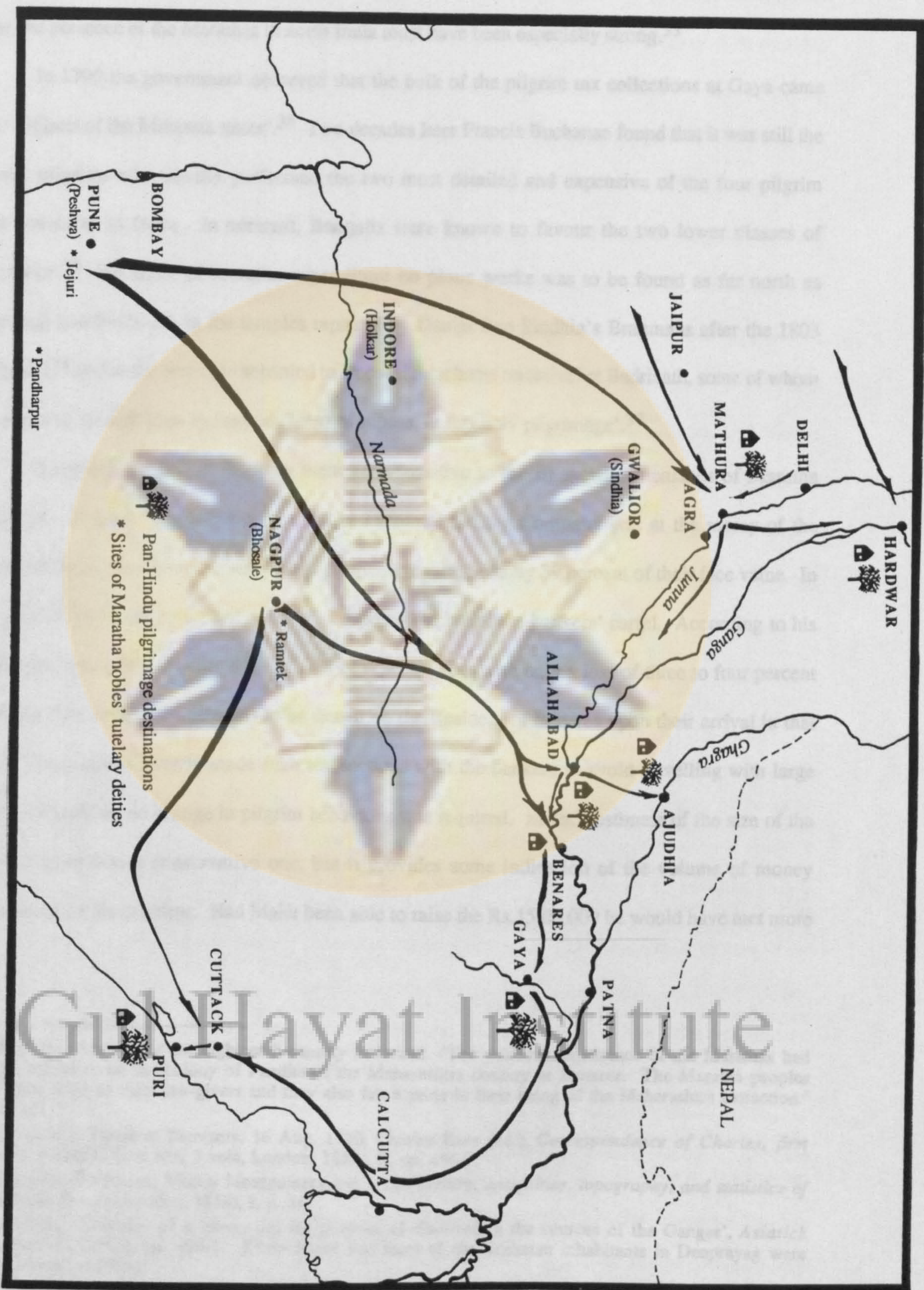
Modern Benares has been said by one of her historians to be 'largely a creation of the Marathas.'³⁰ The Marathas sponsored the rebuilding of many of the temples that had fallen to Aurangzeb's anti-Hindu zealotry: the Shiva temples of Vishvanatha and Trilochana, the Devi temple of Annapurna, the Ganesha temple of Sakshi Vinayaka, and the temple of the city's guardian deity, Kala Bhairava. They also built many *ghats* along the river front. From at least the mid-fifteenth century religious scholars from the Deccan were prominent in Benares. In the sixteenth century the foremost of these scholars, Narayana Bhatta, wrote the *Tristhalisetu*, a treatise on the conduct of worship in the three places of pilgrimage: Gaya, Kashi and Prayag. It is he who is credited with winning permission from the Emperor Humayan to rebuild the Vishvanatha temple that had been destroyed in the 1400s.³¹ Another Deccani *pandit*, the mid-seventeenth-century scholar Vidyanidhi Kavindra, is remembered for persuading Shahjahan to abolish the pilgrim tax then in force at Benares and Allahabad.³² Later scholars, including Gaga Bhatta, the Maharashtrian Brahman who identified Shivaji as a Ksatriya, maintained the high profile of Deccani scholarship at Benares into the eighteenth and nineteenth

²⁹ In all the documentation of eighteenth-century pilgrimage in the north these three sites loom very large. This in part reflects the geographical politics of the period; pilgrims with the resources and inclination to travel all the way to one of these sites from central or western India rarely missed the opportunity to visit the other two sites at the same time. There was also a textual sanction for this behaviour. Before setting out on a pilgrimage a pilgrim was required to make a declaration (*sankalp*) of the last holy site that he intended to visit; sites that would be visited *en route* did not have to be separately enumerated. Kane notes that the sixteenth-century *Tristhalisetu* of the scholar Narayana Bhatta advises pilgrims from southern or western India to make a *sankalp* about Gaya 'and pilgrimage to Prayaga and Kasi will be implied', whilst pilgrims from eastern India ought to make a *sankalp* about Prayag 'and pilgrimage to Gaya and Kasi will be included as a matter of course'. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, IV, p. 577.

³⁰ A.S. Altekar, *Benares and Sarnath: Past and Present* (2nd edn, Varanasi, 1947), p. 24, cited in Diana Eck, *Banaras: City of Light* (London, 1983), p. 90.

³¹ Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Shastri, 'Dakshini Pandits at Benares', *Indian Antiquary*, 41 (1912), pp. 7-10. The temple that Naryana Bhatta built is said to be the one that Aurangzeb later destroyed, but Shastri thinks the evidence for this is slim.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 11.



Long distance pilgrimage from central and western India into Hindustan,
c. 1780.

centuries. In the eighteenth century when this intellectual prominence was matched by rising political power the presence of the Marathas in north India must have been especially strong.³³

In 1790 the government observed that the bulk of the pilgrim tax collections at Gaya came from 'subjects of the Mahratta states'.³⁴ Two decades later Francis Buchanan found that it was still the Maratha pilgrims who usually performed the two most detailed and expensive of the four pilgrim 'tours' on offer in Gaya. In contrast, Bengalis were known to favour the two lower classes of pilgrimage.³⁵ Evidence of Maratha expenditure on pious works was to be found as far north as Deoprayag and Badrinath in the temples repaired by Daulat Rao Sindhia's Brahmans after the 1803 earthquake,³⁶ and in the welcome accorded to Deccani merchants on arrival at Badrinath, some of whom were reported 'to distribute and expend *lakhs* of rupees, in this holy pilgrimage'.³⁷

Company servants in Bombay were very sensitive to the financial dimensions of Maratha pilgrimage. Bombay was chronically short of currency and the Company was at the mercy of the independent bankers who cashed its bills at unattractive rates, usually 89 percent of their face value. In 1789 Charles Malet, the Resident at Pune, determined to break the bankers' cartel. According to his calculations he could raise over fifteen *lakhs* of rupees a year with only a loss of three to four percent by issuing bills to Maratha pilgrims to be drawn on the Resident of Benares upon their arrival in that city.³⁸ The pilgrims already made such transactions with the bankers to avoid travelling with large amounts of cash, so no change in pilgrim behaviour was required. Malet's estimate of the size of the pilgrim monies was a conservative one, but it provides some indication of the volume of money shifted about by the pilgrims. Had Malet been able to raise the Rs.15,00,000 he would have met more

³³ Shastri has observed of the eighteenth-century situation: 'The political importance of the Marathas had its reflex influence on the colony of Pandits of the Maharashtra country at Benares. The Maratha peoples looked upon them as their law-givers and they also felt a pride in their being of the Maharashtra extraction.' *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁴ Cornwallis to Court of Directors, 16 Aug. 1790, Charles Ross (ed.), *Correspondence of Charles, first Marquis Cornwallis* (2nd edn, 3 vols, London, 1859), II, pp. 496-7.

³⁵ F. Hamilton-Buchanan, Martin Montgomery (ed.), *The history, antiquities, topography, and statistics of eastern India* (3 vols, London, 1838), I, p. 54.

³⁶ F.R. Raper, 'Narrative of a survey for the purpose of discovering the sources of the Ganges', *Asiatick Researches*, XI (1810), pp. 490-1. Raper found that most of the Brahman inhabitants in Deoprayag were from the Deccan and Pune.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 537.

³⁸ This figure would not have included the transfers from Nagpur. Richard Jenkins, writing in the early nineteenth century, estimated that one *lakh* of pilgrims' monies went by *hundi* from Nagpur to Benares each year. Jenkins, *Report on the territories of the Rajah of Nagpore* (Calcutta, 1827), p. 99.

than a quarter of that year's cash deficit of 53 *lakhs*.³⁹ However Malet was disappointed in his plans (his first venture produced Rs.30,000) because the bankers threatened to withdraw all of their services from the Company if he set up too great a challenge to their operations. In future Malet restricted himself to occasional forays into the pilgrim money market as a way of reminding the bankers that the potential for competition existed.⁴⁰

Ahilya Bai Holkar (d. 1795), daughter-in-law of Malharrao I, illustrates in spectacular fashion the high visibility of Maratha religious patronage. Every year she sponsored the distribution by professional water-carriers of Ganga water to 34 *tirths* all over India. She built bathing *ghats* at Mathura, Hardwar, Benares and Allahabad, and temples at Pushkar, Rishikesh, Hardwar and Ajudhia, to name just a few of her works at the well-known sites. Most famously of all she built the Shri Vishnu Mandir (the Vishnupada) at Gaya and she rebuilt the Vishvanatha temple at Benares. She maintained numerous *dharmshalas* (pilgrim rest-houses) and sponsored costly rituals at many *tirths*, thus indirectly aiding the upkeep of many other temples and their priests.⁴¹ Ahilya Bai's charities guaranteed her fame throughout India. At Gaya she became a deity in her own right with her own temple where worshippers gave offerings in her name.⁴²

³⁹ Malet was convinced that the bankers did not need to charge such high rates of exchange. As far as he could see much of the cash with which they supplied the Company in Bombay came from the Maratha pilgrims and was not an expensive overland import. The beauty of his idea, as he saw it, was that it would be 'promotive of a competition amongst the Shroffs [i.e. *sarafs*, bankers], tending to a Reduction of the present enormous Rate of Exchange (which seems to have grown out of the Necessities of the Company) to its ancient reasonable standard.' C.W. Malet, Resident Pune, to Edward Hay, Secy at Fort William, 13 Feb. 1789, NAI, India Home (Public), 16 Mar. 1789, no. 5. It is clear that the Company's cash demands were a source of immense profit and convenience to the bankers who previously had had a surfeit of cash in the Bombay-Surat-Pune region because of the pilgrim traffic.

⁴⁰ C.W. Malet, Resident Pune, to Edward Hay, Secy at Fort William, 14 Feb. 1789, *ibid.*, no. 8. C.W. Malet, Resident Pune, to Sir John Shore, Governor-General, 9 Nov. 1793, IOR, Bengal Political Consultations P/115/15, 6 Dec. 1793, no. 27. In this letter Malet pointed out how heavily the pilgrims paid for the bankers' services: for Rs.110 given in Pune they could cash a bill for only Rs.100 in Benares, although this would have included an adjustment for currency differences. The Benares bankers' perception of these transactions was put in a letter to Jonathan Duncan in March 1795: '...this is a country of Teeruth, or Religious Resort and visitation, in the course of which there arrive from other countries, Hindoos, Pilgrims and Dukhin Traders...who bring with them large Drafts upon us, which we have to pay immediately and if they are not immediately supplied with cash, their Disappointment will become very serious, and our good names and credit will be lost throughout all the Provinces of India.' Quoted in K.P. Misra, *Banaras in transition (1738-1795): a socio-economic study* (New Delhi, 1975), pp. 193-4.

⁴¹ V.V. Thakur, 'A short note on the charities of Devi Shri Ahilya Bai Holkar', *Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings*, XIII (1930), pp. 141-2.

⁴² L.P. Vidyarthi, *The sacred complex of Hindu Gaya* (London, 1961), p. 27. A Telegu Brahmani who travelled to many holy sites in the 1790s spoke highly of her piety. She observed that in her own territory Ahilya Bai provided food daily for many Brahmans, an act worthy of great merit. And, many years after the event, she recalled staying in one of Ahilya Bai's rest-houses at Dwarka. 'Account of the Travels of Audee Letchmee a Braminee Woman on a Pilgrimage of 12 Years to all the Holy Places from 1790 to 1802', IOL, Mackenzie Collection of Manuscripts 15.12, pp. 229-30.

Why were the Marathas such enthusiastic patrons of religious sites both within and beyond their territorial limits? In spite of Shivaji's famed opposition to Aurangzeb the Marathas were not obvious candidates for the role of defenders of Hinduism. Shahji and later his son Shivaji (1630-80) began to build up the power of the Marathas during the relatively tolerant reign of Shahjahan. Aurangzeb's anti-Hindu zeal did not make itself felt until well into Shivaji's period of ascendancy when, if anything, it appears to have been Shivaji's audacity that provoked Aurangzeb's ire rather than a Hindu rebellion against Muslim oppression.⁴³ Old Maratha families and even Shahji himself had received favours from the Deccani Muslim princes, so that there was no objection to Muslim rule *per se*.⁴⁴ And later, when the Marathas had consolidated their gains, they actively sought legitimation of their political position from the Mughals.

Instead the Marathas' very conspicuous support of Hinduism appears to have derived its impetus from within the religion. Under Shivaji the Marathas were a heterogeneous group; the label 'Maratha' indicated no fixed position within the caste hierarchy, stretching as it did to accommodate both warriors, traditionally of Ksatriya status, and *kunbis*, Maharashtrian cultivators who, by the same token, ought to have been Sudras.⁴⁵ Its ill-definition was both a boon and a disadvantage to Shivaji as he carved out a kingdom for himself. For his soldiers of humble origins, peasants and artisans, it promised a much higher social status. But the taint of the agriculturist threatened Shivaji's own claim to pure Ksatriya status and hence his right to rule as an independent Hindu sovereign.⁴⁶ He did not skirt around the issue. In 1674 he had himself crowned as a Hindu king after Gaga Bhatta, one of the leading Maharashtrian *pandits* of Benares, had formally declared him to be descended from Rajput

⁴³ Aurangzeb had reigned for over a decade before ordering in 1669 the demolition of the famous Vishvanatha temple of Benares along with other temples and schools in the city that he feared were harbouring enemies of Islam and the Empire. In particular it seems to have been the persistent rumours that the Marathas were sending large sums of money to the Brahmans in Benares and that Shivaji himself had dared to pay a visit there that excited Aurangzeb's anger against the city's Hindus. Before this his policy had been one of allowing existing Hindu institutions to function without molestation from imperial officials. A *farman* of 1659 survives in which Aurangzeb instructs the Governor of Benares to ensure that Brahmans there are not disturbed in the possession of their rights in the city's ancient temples. S.N. Sinha, *Subah of Allahabad under the Great Mughals* (New Delhi, 1974), pp. 65-8.

⁴⁴ Satish Chandra, 'Social background to the rise of the Maratha movement during the 17th century in India', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 10 (1973), pp. 209-10.

⁴⁵ For a more sophisticated discussion of the many different ways of interpreting the label 'Maratha' see Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, conflict and ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and low caste protest in nineteenth-century western India* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 16-21.

⁴⁶ Chandra, 'Social background to the rise of the Maratha movement', pp. 214-16. Chandra quotes from the contemporary *Tarikh-i-Ibrahim Khan* on the composition of the Maratha army: '...most of the men in the Mahratta army are unendowed with the excellence of illustrious birth, and husbandmen, carpenters and shop-keepers abound among their soldiery.' *Ibid.*, p. 217.

Ksatriya stock.⁴⁷ Not everyone was convinced of Shivaji's high caste status; the Rajputana *rajas* continued to treat the Bhosales as an inferior clan and enough uncertainty remained to fuel many debates between elite Marathas and Maharashtrian Brahmans about the status of the former.

It is this question mark over the Marathas' caste status that seems to have inspired their extraordinary displays of piety. Before the Bhosales lost control of their state to their Brahman prime-ministers, the Peshwas, they used every opportunity to prove their worthiness as Hindu kings. The traditions of patronage were continued, indeed heightened, under the Peshwas' rule, but the foundations lay in Shivaji's reign. The rise in the eighteenth century of such families as the Sindhias of Gwalior, descended from peasants, and the Holkars of Indore, shepherds by caste, shows that even then there was room in the Maratha world for people of humble birth to win kingdoms by combining military skill with conspicuous piety.⁴⁸

The pious duty of the Maratha kings is laid out in the *Ajnapatra*, a document expounding the principles of the Maratha state. It was produced by Ramachandrapant Amatya (c.1650-c.1717), a great Maratha administrator who helped Shivaji establish his kingdom and remained at its helm until his death in 1717. It was issued in 1716 by Sambhaji of Kholapur (r. 1712-60).⁴⁹

The *Ajnapatra* begins with a history of the reigns of Shivaji and Rajaram (r. 1689-1700), stressing that one of Shivaji's greatest achievements was his restoration of *dharma* and the establishment of the Gods and the Brahmans in 'their due places'.⁵⁰ At a general level of principle the Maratha king is enjoined first and foremost to practise the *dharma* of his ancestors:

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 214; O'Hanlon, *Caste, conflict and ideology*, pp. 19-21; Shastri, 'Dakshini Pandits at Benares', p. 12.

⁴⁸ A comparison with the behaviour of the nascent Rajas of Benares in the mid-eighteenth century is valid. As 'Bhumihars', Brahmans who had resorted to the pollution of the plough, the Benares Rajas were not ideal royal material, especially as they derived their authority from a series of tenuous links with the Mughal Emperor through the Nawab of Awadh. More suitable candidates for princely status, such as the strong Rajput lineages in the region, also threatened the attempts of the first Raja, Balwant Singh, to assert royal authority. Philip Lutgendorf has argued that the Rajas' enthusiastic patronage of aspects of the *bhakti* Ramaite tradition 'reflected among other things their need to cultivate an explicitly Hindu symbol of royal legitimacy' which would help them 'achieve ideological as well as political independence from the Nawabs.' Lutgendorf attributes specifically to the Rajas' patronage of Tulsidas's *Ramacaritmanas* the awakening of elite interest in this vernacular epic, which already had a large following among people of low social status. Philip Lutgendorf, 'Ram's story in Shiva's city: public arenas and private patronage' in *Culture and power in Banaras: community, performance and environment, 1800-1980*, Sandria B. Freitag (ed.) (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 39-43.

⁴⁹ S.V. Puntambekar (trans. and ed.), 'The *Ajnapatra* or Royal Edict - Relating to the Principles of Maratha State Policy', *Journal of Indian History*, VIII (1929), pp. 81-105, 207-33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88. Puntambekar's translation reads: 'He rescued the *Dharma*, established Gods and Brahmanas in their due places and maintained the six-fold duties of sacrifice, officiating at sacrifice and others (study and teaching, giving and receiving gifts) according to the division of the (four) *varnas* (castes).'

Believing with a firm confidence that the practice of *Dharma*, the worship of God, the acquisition of the favour of saintly persons, the attainment of the welfare of all, and the prosperity of the dynasty of the kingdom should be uninterrupted and regulated, he should settle grants according to their special religious merit on temples of Gods, places of pilgrimage, holy centres of religion, hermitages of saints and places of *samadhi* [burial sites of holy men], so that the daily ablution of water, worship, offerings, annual pilgrimages (and) great festivals may be well performed; and he should continue them uninterruptedly by making frequent kindly inquiries.⁵¹

The king ought to seek out holy men and 'acquire their blessings for the increase of his welfare', but he should avoid false holy men. Although giving parcels of land as rewards for political services (*inam*) is frowned upon in the *Ajnapatra*, '[t]o give a gift of land for the purpose of maintenance of *Dharma* is an act of eternal merit.' However the circumstances of the gift must be fully investigated; no fraudulent claims promoting *adharma* should be admitted.⁵²

The *Ajnapatra's* emphasis on the religious duty of the king is justified by the oft-repeated observation that the king only holds office and the state only flourishes at the pleasure of God. Fail to uphold *dharma* and the state crumbles. Therefore, although the Marathas' famed piety was indeed part of their state-building strategy, it is a simplification of its inspiration to see in it only a pragmatic attempt to lure Hindus and Hindu states away from their allegiance to Mughal authority. And yet there is no doubt that the Marathas, in parading their piety very publicly, did assume the role of the southern defenders of Hinduism in Muslim-ruled north India. As Hindus, rather than Marathas, they lay claim to a larger constituency than their territorial gains would have admitted, and they seized every opportunity to emphasize the justness of their claims to this constituency. With the demise of Mughal authority these claims could be made more boldly, and with more chance of realization. Secret financial support for the Brahmans of Benares in Shivaji's time became open protest against Muslim rule of pilgrimage sites in the eighteenth-century era of the Peshwas.⁵³

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 218. The passage reads: 'Grants of revenue-free villages or land should be made at *Parvas* [holy days in lunar months] and other auspicious times or in great holy places for the protection of the good to those Brahmanas who are *Srotis* (well versed in sacred lore), family men, and those well conversant with the *Vedasastra* and possessing no income of their own, and whose leaving the house for begging alms would lead to a loss (of) religious duties and merit. Similarly, villages or lands should be granted to great temples where divine presence is felt, to hermitages of saints, to places of *samadhi* where for the purpose of worship, offerings, pilgrimages and other things distribution of food is regularly maintained.'

⁵³ Puntambekar, translator of the *Ajnapatra*, has written of this period: 'It is well-known that one of the great aims of early Maratha rulers like Shivaji, Sambhaji, and Rajaram was to release, to rebuild and to restore the great holy temples of Benares, Mathura, etc., which were demolished during Mughal rule. The early Peshwas also entertained strongly the same aims.' S.V. Puntambekar, 'The political and religious policy of the first two Peshwas in the north', *Indian Historical Records Commission*, XXII (1945), p. 30.

In 1836 Peshwa Baji Rao set out his demands in a letter to his agents in Delhi. He wanted the Emperor to grant Allahabad, Benares, Gaya and Mathura as *jagirs* to the Marathas so that the restoration of the demolished temples could begin.⁵⁴ In the 1740s Peshwa Balaji Bajirao (r. 1740-61) put pressure on the Raja of Jaipur to persuade the Mughals to abolish the pilgrim tax at Allahabad and to cede Benares to the Marathas.⁵⁵ In the 1750s he stepped up his efforts to gain control of the three big holy sites, displaying an eagerness that one researcher has acidly described as 'pious greed'.⁵⁶ In 1754 the Marathas experienced their first tangible success in these endeavours when the new Emperor, Alamgir II (r. 1754 -59), issued a *farman* entrusting to Maratha agents the collection of pilgrim taxes at Gaya and Kurukshetra (in present day Haryana).⁵⁷ Their next formal success was not until 1789 when Mahadaji Sindhia received from Shah Alam a *farman* nominating the Peshwa as Muhktar (Regent of the Emperor) and confirming Sindhia in the hereditary deputy-ship of this post. A second and a third *farman* granted Mathura and Brindavan to the Peshwa as *inam altamgha* (royal grant of holy land) and ordered a general prohibition of cow-killing.⁵⁸ In the 1803-04 treaty negotiations with the British the retention of these provisions proved to be of major concern to Mahadaji's successor, Daulat Rao Sindhia. After the signing of the Defensive Alliance on 27 February 1804, Resident John Malcolm

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ G.S. Sardesai, *New history of the Marathas* (3 vols, Bombay, 1948), II, p. 201.

⁵⁶ K.R. Qanungo, 'Some side-lights on the history of Benares, political and social, thrown by the selections from the Peshwas' *Daftar, Poona*, *Indian Historical Records Commission*, XIV (1937), pp. 66-7. In 1751 the Brahmans of Benares were reported to be terrified by rumours of Malharrao Holkar's intention to march on the city and pull down the grand mosque of Aurangzeb, erected on the site of the Vishvanatha temple. Malharrao was camped in the Doab and given his then friendly relations with Safdar Jang of Awadh there seemed every possibility that he could effect his pious threat. The Brahmans dreaded the prospect of the Muslim backlash once the liberating army had departed. But they were saved - the rumours came to nought. Sardesai, *New history of the Marathas*, II, p. 363.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 380. There was an element of a pay-off to the Marathas in this. Alamgir II had been put on the throne by the Vazir, Ghazi-ud-din, only with the help of Raghunath Rao, a member of the Peshwa's family who would briefly, in 1774, be Peshwa himself. Alamgir II acknowledged Maratha sensitivity on the issue of Muslim rule of Hindu holy sites by assuring Raghunath Rao that were it not for Safdar Jang the Mughals would hand over immediately management of Benares and Allahabad to the Marathas.

⁵⁸ Delhi Journal to the Peshwa, despatched 7 Dec. 1789, J.N. Sarkar (ed.), *Sindhia as Regent of Delhi (1787 & 1789-91)*, *Persian Records of Maratha History*, II (Bombay, 1954), p. 27. In the intervening period the Marathas did not lose sight of their pious goals. Madhav Rao I (r.1761-72), the Peshwa who presided over the Marathas' painful climb back to military and political consequence after the devastating battle of Panipat in 1761, specified in his will that: 'The two holy places Prayag and Benares should be released from Muslim control. This was the ardent desire of my sires and now is the time to carry it out.' He also asked that his mother's wish to go to Benares be effected as soon as possible and that the 'annuities assigned to the worthy Brahmans of Benares should be regularly paid and continued in hereditary.' Sardesai, *New history of the Marathas*, II, p. 542. In 1781 Peshwas Madhav Rao Narayan dictated his terms for a treaty with the British; it was specified that Kashi and Prayag be sold to the Peshwa 'as they are held sacred by him'. In the same context he demanded a guarantee that the British would not 'disturb' Cuttack, the site of the famed Jagannath temple then tenuously under the control of the Bhosales of Nagpur. The Peshwa's terms for a treaty are enclosed in a letter from John Holland to the Government, 21 Nov. 1781, Imperial Record Department (later National Archives of India), *Calendar of Persian Correspondence* (11 vols, Calcutta, 1911-30, Delhi, 1938-69), VI, p. 111.

continued to represent to the Governor-General Sindhia's agitation about the loss of Mathura and Brindavan and the lapse of the cow-killing prohibition. Sindhia had also asked that Hardwar be assigned to him to satisfy his need for a place of worship on the River Bhagirathi (the Ganga).⁵⁹ His final request was of particular relevance to his role as protector and sponsor of his dependants' religious activities: 'Pilgrims bearing the Maharajah's *dastak* (pass) to Kashi and Gaya and other places of Hindu worship will be allowed to pass free from all duties.'⁶⁰ It, like the other requests, remained unfulfilled.

The large royal pilgrimages also date from the era of Peshwa rule. With the decline of the Mughals and the increasing formality of Maratha power, Maratha nobles were able to travel north without fear of detention. In 1719 Balaji Vishvanath (r. 1714-20) became the first Peshwa to visit the north when he waited upon the Emperor to receive grants confirming the Marathas' rights in several territories. Before returning to Satara he went on a quick pilgrimage to Benares.⁶¹

In 1735 Radha Bai, Balaji Vishvanath's widow, embarked from Pune on a long circular pilgrimage up through the Rajput states, through Mathura, Kurukshetra, onto Prayag, Benares and Gaya, and back to Pune via Bundelkhand sixteen months later. As much a diplomat as a pilgrim, Radha Bai met with many *rajas*, distributing presents and courtesy and accepting in turn compliments for herself and her son the Peshwa.⁶²

In 1743 Peshwa Balaji Bajirao visited Allahabad as a pilgrim whilst *en route* to repulse Raghuji Bhosale's onslaught on Bengal. A newsletter of 1 February 1743 reported that the Peshwa 'had a holy bath along with his whole following of 75 thousand at Triveni near the Allahabad fort.... What a wonderful achievement never before attempted by anybody else, for such a concourse to have a successful pilgrimage thus attaining the highest bliss of life.'⁶³ The Peshwa hurried to Benares and Gaya for private religious ceremonies, before moving on to confront Raghuji.

⁵⁹ J. Malcolm to the Governor-General, 18 Mar. 1804, and 'An abstract of the parts in which the original demands of Sindhia differed from the peace treaty', Raghubir Singh (ed.), *The Treaty of Bassein and the Anglo-Maratha War in the Deccan 1802-1804*, Poona Residency Correspondence, 10 (Bombay, 1951), pp. 228-9. Hereafter PRC 10.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Sardesai, *New history of the Marathas*, II, p. 47.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 147-9; K.A. Acharya, *Maratha-Rajput relations from 1720 to 1795 A.D.* (Akola, 1978), pp. 168-70.

⁶³ Sardesai, *New history of the Marathas*, II, p. 216.

In the mid-1740s Kashi Bai, the mother of Balaji Bajirao, set off on an immensely lengthy pilgrimage to Benares. She departed with a sizeable Maratha escort and *hundies* (bankers' notes) worth Rs.1,00,000.⁶⁴ She travelled via Mathura, Allahabad and Ajudhia to Benares where her arrival in 1747 caused Raja Balwant Singh no little anxiety. He feared that she would use her pilgrim army to try to install his uncle, Dasa Ram, in his territories, and to forestall such aggressive piety he was forced to appeal to Nawab Safdar Jang and the imperial court to warn her off.⁶⁵

Throughout the eighteenth century the big pilgrimages of the Peshwas and the members of their immediate families were copied in only slightly less grandiose form by other Maratha nobles and warriors. The Sindhias, the Holkars and the Bhosales of Nagpur threw up innumerable noble and wealthy pilgrims who crisscrossed north India on their religious journeys.⁶⁶ These elite long-distance pilgrimages all conformed to a certain style which was moulded largely by security and political considerations. I have chosen to denominate pilgrimages in this style as state-sponsored pilgrimages for reasons which will become clear. Most of the evidence here is drawn from Maratha experiences, but the style will be shown to be applicable to other Hindu states as well.

The characteristics of elite long-distance pilgrimage

In state-sponsored pilgrimages the king or a member of the royal household, a high-ranking minister or perhaps a military commander would lead a party that was of sufficient size and variety (in

⁶⁴ D.B. Parasnis (ed.), *Selections from the Satara Rajas and the Peshwas' Diaries* (9 vols, Bombay, 1906-11), III p. 104.

⁶⁵ Qanungo, 'Some side-lights on the history of Benares', pp. 65-6.

⁶⁶ These pilgrimages are too numerous for all of them to be listed separately; however, the details of a few should suffice to illustrate the extent of the practice. In the 1750s Saguna Bai, sister-in-law of Peshwa Balaji Bajirao, travelled to the north. She complained bitterly of the tolls that were exacted from her party on its journey through Bihar to Gaya: Rs.65,000, of which she had to pay Rs.10,000. Qanungo, 'Some side-lights on the history of Benares', p. 67.

In 1746 Narayan Dikshit Patankar, presumably one of the Peshwa's advisers or administrators, reported to the Peshwa that he had successfully completed the pilgrimage of Prayag with a following of ten thousand people, and that the local Muslim officer, Mir Babar, had made satisfactory arrangements for the party. G.S. Sardesai (ed.), *Selections from the Peshwas' Daftar* (45 vols, Bombay, 1930-34), 27, p. 3523.

Bala Bao, a Maratha *sardar*, travelled with a thousand companions to Gaya in 1777-78. Letter to Bala Bao, 10 Oct. 1777, *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, I, p. 101.

In 1783 Vithal Rao, a general in Mahadaji Sindhia's army, travelled to Allahabad, Benares and Gaya. In the same year the daughter of Mudhoji Bhosale of Nagpur, Bala Bai, travelled to the same three sites. Her official entourage contained nearly 550 men. *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, VI, pp. 254, 304, 312, 331, 412.

In 1785 Mahipat Rao, Peshwa Madhav Rao Narayan's uncle, came on a pilgrimage to the north with two thousand followers. Five to six thousand people accompanied Appaji Raghunath Chitnis, a Brahman officer with Sindhia, on his pilgrimage to Allahabad, Benares and Gaya in 1786. *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, VII, pp. 129, 136, 170, 183.

terms of infantry, matchlock men, cavalry, etc.) to validate the lead individual's claim to high status and to ensure the group's safety against bandits and wild animals along long and often poorly-trafficked routes. Ultimately all power and responsibility were funnelled through the leader. While he (or she) derived status and security from the retinue, the followers were dependent upon him for the smooth running of the pilgrimage. It was his duty, or that of an appointed deputy, to secure from the host powers the right of way for the party and any necessary guides, to procure encampment grounds, fresh supplies and fodder at reasonable prices, and to negotiate with the rulers and priests at the sacred destinations the party's liability for pilgrim taxes and priestly charges. Sometimes the lead pilgrim's duty extended to the payment of these costs, in accordance with a long-standing tradition that a pilgrim ought to pay according to his means.⁶⁷ A large entourage was as much a declaration of means as of status, and both the state's representatives and the priests at the sites tended to adjust their levies according to their appraisal of the lead pilgrim's resources.⁶⁸ This practice was prevalent among government officers even at those sites where there was an official scale of government charges.⁶⁹ In 1806 when the Board of Revenue decided to introduce a flat-rate tax of one rupee at Allahabad the Collector protested strongly against the contravention of established practice. The Board thought his

⁶⁷ In 1779 Warren Hastings received a complaint that Mudhoji Bhosale's *pandit* had been hindered in his pilgrimage to Benares and Allahabad by the pilgrim tax farmers demanding a rate far superior to the established dues. The Benares Resident, Thomas Graham, who was called upon to investigate the allegations, reported that the rates were only a guide to what the pilgrims paid the government. Of Benares he said 'I know the Exactions of the Rajah's Farmer on that account are not so much regulated by what is by Custom established as by the Ability and condition of the Persons who come to Worship.' Thomas Graham, Resident Benares, to Warren Hastings, 11 Sept. 1779, IOL, Mss. Eur. G.3, Letter book of the Resident of Benares, 1775-1786, pp. 102-3.

⁶⁸ In 1803 the sister of Raghujii Bhosale, on a pilgrimage to Benares, petitioned Resident Neave's assistance when faced with a demand from the priests that she considered exorbitant. George, Viscount Valentia, *Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia, and Egypt, in the years 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806* (2 vols, London, 1809), I, p. 107. Francis Buchanan writes at length on the power of the priests at Gaya to withhold formal completion of the ceremonies until the pilgrim had agreed to the sum levied. He notes that this was supposed to have ceased under British rule, but that even in 1811 he could find two embittered pilgrims, one unhappy at the sum that he had felt compelled to give the Gayawals and the other fearful of the demands that might be made of him once he started upon his pilgrim round. Hamilton-Buchanan, *A history of eastern India*, I, pp. 55, 65.

⁶⁹ In 1784 Thomas Law was appointed as the Collector of Gaya, then hugely resorted to by Marathas after the cessation of the recent wars, and he set about systematizing the myriad of local customs dues and pilgrim taxes. He discovered that many Marathas had had no idea of the approximate rates of dues that they ought to have been paying and that in consequence they had paid heavily. James Anderson, the Resident with Sindhia, reported back to Law that Sindhia had been very pleased to receive notification of Law's new rates, observing that 'Their former ignorance on this Head had exposed them to the oppressions of the Aumils [*amils*, or revenue farmers], who under colour of demanding the Government Fees had exacted whatever they pleased from them.' James Anderson, Resident with Sindhia, to Thomas Law, Collector Rohtas, 13 Apr. 1784, IOR, Bengal Revenue Consultations P/50/54, 15 Oct. 1784, letter recd no. 349, enclosure. The lucrativeness of the pilgrim tax farm is suggested by the fact that when Law decided to withdraw the pilgrim taxes from the revenue farmer's contract and to manage them directly the farmer, Kallab Ali Khan, refused to re-engage for the revenue. D. Anderson and Members of Revenue Committee to Warren Hastings, Governor-General, 29 Nov. 1784, and enclosures, IOR, Bengal Revenue Consultations P/50/57, 3 Mar. 1785, letter recd no. 66.

concern ill-placed; it was expected that, motivated by charity, the wealthier pilgrims would continue as before to subsidize the poorer ones.⁷⁰

If the lead pilgrim did pay all the taxes and/or priests' fees (or have the former waived by the host state), then the saving to the poorer pilgrims of the party, especially those with few cash resources, would have been considerable. It would have made the difference for many pilgrims between a viable and a non-viable pilgrimage.⁷¹

Not all of the pilgrims travelling with a notable were invited followers. Wherever an elite pilgrim travelled with an armed escort thousands of non-elites followed. Official camps were hugely swollen by these hangers-on, who, even if somewhat troublesome in the matter of supplies, greatly added to the prestige of the chief pilgrim. There is an indication of the convenience and perhaps even auspiciousness that camp followers derived from making a pilgrimage under the wing of a notable in the records of Peshwa Bajirao II's 1807 pilgrimage to Kartikswami in south-east India. Company servants tried to limit the number of people crossing into their territory in the delicate pre-harvest period, but even so the Peshwa's party swelled to some 25,000 unruly pilgrims. The Pune Resident excused the Peshwa on the grounds that most of the pilgrims were uninvited extras 'who were returning from the annual festival at Tripity, heard of his Highness's arrival at Havenoor on his way to Sondoer, and conceiving it to be a favourable occasion to pay their devotions at the temple, there hastily followed his line of march.'⁷²

⁷⁰ Board of Revenue to G.H. Barlow, 3 June 1806, IOR, Bengal Revenue Council P/54/55, 12 June 1806, no. 30.

⁷¹ See below for details of government charges at Allahabad and Gaya.

⁷² Barry Close, Resident Pune, to N.B. Edmonstone, Secy to Govt, 2 Dec. 1807, G.S. Sardesai (ed.), *Poona Affairs (1801-1810) (Close's Embassy)*, Poona Residency Correspondence, 7 (Bombay, 1940), p. 323. Hereafter PRC 7. There are glimpses of this happening on other big pilgrimages as well which suggests that it was a wide-spread phenomenon. For example, in 1746 one of the officers travelling with Kashi Bai on her northern pilgrimage informed the Peshwa that the party with her 'has now swollen to 10,000 pilgrims' and that there were difficulties in getting passports from Delhi for such a crowd. Sardesai, *Selections from the Peshwas' Daftar*, 40, pp. 6864-5.

In 1785 the British explained to a dependant of the Peshwa, Moroba Pandit, that he could have pilgrim tax exemptions for all of his party *en route* to Gaya as long as he provided a list of them beforehand; a blanket exemption in his name would result in too many hangers-on claiming the concession. *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, VIII, pp. 32, 50, 51, 77.

In 1792, the Company, in dealing with a pilgrim of much higher rank, Raghuji Bhosale's mother, had no choice but to allow her whatever exemptions from the Gaya tax that she thought fit to apply for. Instead of applying for exemptions on behalf of her immediate entourage only, Chimna Bai offered to assist anyone who had joined in with her camp either whilst it was on the road or since it had settled in Gaya. After ten thousand pilgrims had thus gained tax-free entry to Gaya, Collector Seton attempted to stem the flow by suggesting to the Rani that she was cheapening her concession from the British. She was unmoved and the pilgrims kept on coming. A. Seton, Collector Bihar, to Hon. Charles Stewart, 9 Apr. 1792, IOR, Bengal Political Consultations P/114/57, 18 Apr. 1792, letter recd no. 9.

In practice this centralization of authority did not necessarily deprive the more humble followers of their capacity for independent behaviour, especially at halts where supplies or fodder were scarce and the pilgrims were inclined to loot bazaars or turn their livestock onto a village's fields.⁷³ This set up a fine tension between the lead pilgrim and the host power. The former could promise to control his party in return for guarantees of reasonably-priced provisions; there would be an implicit threat of looting if such a request were not met. But if his authority was shown to be merely nominal and his followers proved unresponsive to his orders of restraint, then the host power stood to gain little from a conciliatory policy. Surreptitious attacks on the camp were likely to prove an effective retaliation.

Group travel was common to 'ordinary' pilgrims also on long-distance pilgrimage, although here the rationale appears to have been chiefly one of mutual safety and companionship with few of the connotations of status and authority attaching to elite-led groups. The problem of security for pilgrims on the road was perhaps one of the most important factors in determining how and where pilgrims travelled. For an elite pilgrim a large entourage served the purpose of an army and, indeed, often was an army.⁷⁴ For pilgrims without access to that sort of defensive resource the scope for long-distance

⁷³ As many of the elite Maratha pilgrims, and to a lesser extent the Rajputs, travelled with thousands of followers and many carts, horses and elephants, the effect of one of these pilgrimages moving through the countryside was no different to that of an army on the march. The potential for damage to agriculture and local resources was just as great, especially as most long-distance pilgrimages started out in the autumn, after the monsoon and just when the *kharif* crops were nearing harvest. See, for example, the complaints of a Madras collector that followers of the Peshwa on the 1807 pilgrimage to Kartikswami had set their cattle to graze in fields ready for harvest, stuffed bags full of heads of ripe grain, and plundered the village houses of their thatch and rafters for firewood. He took a dim view of the pilgrims' piety, insisting that very few of them could have been seeking salvation: 'the rest are all freebooters who always follow a large camp; some looking for service, others for what they can pick up and who pay no regard to fields of grain, gardens, or inclosures of any kind, but make their way through everything plundering as they go.' Hector Shaw to Secy to Govt Madras, Pol. Dept, 18 Nov. 1807, *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, VII, pp. 320-1. In 1792 the Collector of Shahabad (in Bihar) shuddered at the prospect of Raghujai Bhosale's mother and 20,000 pilgrims bearing down on Gaya. He was sure that the district could not provide the necessary supplies and he called for two companies of *sipahis* to protect the locals from being pillaged. Thomas Brooke, Collector Shahabad, to Edward Hay, Secy to Govt, 19 Feb. 1792, IOR, Bengal Political Consultations P/114/57, 2 Mar. 1792, letter recd no. 6.

⁷⁴ Sardesai has observed of the Marathas that pilgrims 'took advantage of the constant movement of troops that journeyed to and back from their homeland for military purposes' and joined in with them, 'often encumbering the operations as in the case of Panipat'. *New history of the Marathas*, II, p. 243. At Panipat many of the Maratha generals and nobility had their wives and children with them who had been intent upon visiting as many holy sites as possible whilst touring the north with the army. This severely hampered the Marathas' ability to cut and run when they were boxed in at Panipat by Shah Abdul Durrani's forces. See the *Marathi Chronicle of Bhausaheb*, trans. by Ian Raeside as *The Decade of Panipat (1751-61)* (Bombay, 1984).

Apparently Raja Balwant Singh of Benares never forgot the lesson of Kashi Bai's pilgrim 'invasion' of 1747. In 1795 Jonathan Duncan reported that the Company had been unwise to break with Balwant Singh's 'constant precaution' of denying large Maratha camps entry to the city. When the Bhosale family had come on pilgrimage in 1792 they had had with them three thousand fighting men 'who all lodged within the city, and who could not probably have been driven out of it without much trouble and bloodshed, of which they were so sensible, that they did not scruple in more ways than one to domineer in it.' Extract of letter from the

travel was severely circumscribed. Until well into the nineteenth century Company records and travellers' accounts bear witness to the hazards faced by travellers who moved in groups too small to fend off *dacoits* and wild animals. On 15 April 1793 the European Customs Master at Sarun wrote to the Benares Resident that a small party of Bengali pilgrims returning from Brindavan and Allahabad had been ferociously attacked by bandits; two were not expected to survive. In consequence merchants of the area were refusing to travel west until they could get a large enough group together.⁷⁵ Thomas Twining's account of his 1794 journey up-country to Delhi is remarkable for the tension which it evokes. The trip was marked by a constant fear of wolves and bandits; everyone had to stay together and the party travelled at night through jungle, rather than risk the exposure of daylight and the plains.⁷⁶ Police in the Western Provinces believed that Jaunpur District posed a particular danger to pilgrims; it was traversed by those going west to Hardwar, Mathura or Brindavan, and by those coming from the west and north-west to Benares, Gaya and Jagannath. In the early years of the nineteenth century the number of pilgrim murders in the district led the authorities to suspect the presence of some *thag*-like association there.⁷⁷ In February 1825, travelling south-west from Jaipur, Bishop Heber found his camp steadily increasing as small knots of pilgrims joined in for the comparative safety of a large caravan. Some going to Ajmere had been trailing Heber's caravan since Meerut.⁷⁸ The Bishop realized, however, that an amount of apprehension accompanied unlooked-for travelling fellows; one was never quite sure that they were not the very people that one was trying to avoid.

The travails of the long-distance traveller are well illustrated by the extraordinary journey of Sobha Ram, *vakil* of the Raja of Travancore, who travelled north in 1800-01 to collect *gangajal* from Allahabad and *salagrams* (a stone common in the River Gandak and worshipped as a form of Vishnu)

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late Resident of Benares to the Governor-General in Council, 30 July 1795, IOR, Bengal Political Consultations P/115/51, 15 Apr. 1796, no. 5. para. 51. As late as 1811 Francis Buchanan observed of the Maratha pilgrims at Gaya that some of the great Marathas 'have rather armies with them than guards'. *A history of Eastern India*, I, pp. 55-6.

⁷⁵ W. Oldham, *Historical and statistical memoir of the Ghazee-poor District* (2 vols, Allahabad, 1870-76), II, p. 184.

⁷⁶ Revd W.H.G. Twining (ed.), *Travels in India a hundred years ago with a visit to the United States* (London, 1893), pp. 179-95.

⁷⁷ John Shakespear, Actg Supt of Police, Western Provinces, 'Observations regarding Bhadeks and Thegs', from a report dated 30 Apr. 1816, *Asiatick Researches*, XIII (1820), p. 291.

⁷⁸ R. Heber, *Narrative of a journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-1825* (2 vols, London, 1828), II, p. 43.

for his master. *En route* the *vakil* was caught in a flash flood near the Kistna River. Six men were killed and most of his horses, the jars for the water, and the provisions for the journey were swept away. Illness detained him for three months at Chinsur, on the banks of the Godavari, and at Rewa he was attacked by bandits who carried off his few remaining possessions, his bankers' notes and his customs pass for Benares. Only because of his high rank was he able to fulfil his purpose: Company officers rescued him from each subsequent disaster, lent him money and sent him on his way. No ordinary pilgrim party would have had recourse to such extensive support.⁷⁹

It is difficult to estimate the volume of long-distance pilgrimage at the turn of the century. Most of the figures available are notoriously impressionistic. We have already seen that Bajirao II's 1807 pilgrimage had an unofficial population of 25,000. This may have been small in comparison with Maratha groups of the late eighteenth century, when some were reputed to number 30 to 40,000.⁸⁰ This would not be extraordinary given the report of Balaji Bajirao's 75,000-strong holy bath in 1743. In 1766 the Peshwa's newswriter in Delhi reported that 1,00,000 Sikh horsemen had gathered at Amritsar for the festival of Diwali.⁸¹ In 1798 William Tennant witnessed the arrival of a party of 12,000 Marathas at Allahabad.⁸² Estimates of the numbers accompanying Raghuji Bhosale's mother on her 1792 pilgrimage fluctuate between fifteen and twenty thousand.

It is rare, however, to find mention of parties larger than 10,000 after 1800; references to parties of several hundreds or thousands are much more common.⁸³ Even in reduced form large-scale

⁷⁹ Translation of a memorial from Sobha Ram, *Vakil* of Raja of Malabar, to Mr Neave, Resident Benares, 25 Aug. 1801, IOR, Bengal Political Consultations P/117/21, 22 Oct. 1801, no. 13, enclosure. Destitute pilgrims did occasionally get support from sympathetic officers. In 1803 five Bengali pilgrims returning from Mathura to Calcutta were induced to take some food from two people who had accompanied them for part of the way. They were unconscious for nearly two days and upon recovery were destitute of all their belongings. The Magistrate of Cawnpore took pity on them and gave them three rupees each to help them get home. J. Stacey, Magistrate Cawnpore, to John Fombelle, Secy to Govt for Ceded Provinces, 15 Aug. 1803, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board (Judicial Ceded Provinces) P/90/68, 25 Aug. 1803, no. 8.

⁸⁰ 'Marattas and the English', IOR, Home Miscellaneous 610(2), p. 845.

⁸¹ J.N. Sarkar (ed.), *Delhi Affairs (1761-1788)*, Persian Records of Maratha History, I (Bombay, 1953), p. 6.

⁸² William Tennant, *Indian Recreations; consisting chiefly of strictures on the domestic and rural economy of the Mahomedans and Hindoos* (2nd edn, 2 vols, London, 1804), II, p. 249.

⁸³ Tennant writes of a party of 4,000 'Maharattas from Guzerat' at Allahabad in 1798, the retinue of a woman who had brought the bones of her husband for immersion at the sacred confluence. *Ibid.*, p. 247. In 1808 the Magistrate at Saharanpur reported bands of 3-4,000 Sikhs crossing Company territory *en route* to Hardwar. 'The Envoy to Lahore directed to remonstrate with Rajah Runjeet Sing for having suffered considerable bodies of armed Men to pass from his Territories through the Doab to Hurdwar', IOR, Board's Collections F/4/304 (6999), pp. 12-13. The Benares Magistrate wrote in 1814 of 'Marhatta Hindoos of Rank on pilgrimage to the City, [who were] not unfrequently attended by bodies of armed men, sometimes amounting to five or six thousand'. 'Benares City', IOR, Home Miscellaneous 775, p. 500. A search through the Company's Political Consultations quickly reveals many pilgrim parties of some two or three hundred.

and state-sponsored pilgrimage accounted for a considerable amount of the total pilgrim traffic, over long distances at least. In 1811 Francis Gillanders, farmer of the pilgrim tax at Gaya, told Buchanan that the average annual pilgrim population of about 100,000 could be doubled in any one year by the arrival of several large Maratha camps. This had been the case in 1811.⁸⁴

Special festivals could draw very large crowds. Captain Hardwicke estimated that some two and a half million people attended the Kumbh Mela at Hardwar in 1796. Even allowing for gross exaggeration - and Hardwicke believed that he was under rather than over the mark - the estimate still suggests an enormous turn out.⁸⁵ Captain Raper, present at the next Hardwar Kumbh Mela in 1808, suggested two million as a crowd estimate likely to fall short of the real total.⁸⁶ At the 1813 Allahabad Magh Mela, said to be the largest in 28 years, 2,18,792 pilgrim licences were distributed, but one officer noticed that thousands of pilgrims broke down the barriers and bathed without paying the one rupee tax.⁸⁷ This fair was preceded by numerous requests from pilgrims of rank for exemptions from the tax.⁸⁸ A majority of the pilgrims attending these sort of fairs would have been peasants from the surrounding region. Even so, when considering numbers of this magnitude, it is important to note how efficient the means for conveying information about festivals of peculiarly auspicious timing must have been. A journey of some weeks or months required considerable planning in advance, and the agents of priests often travelled far and wide months before the occasion to draw in as many pilgrims as possible.

State-sponsored pilgrimage

Elite pilgrimage was state-sponsored pilgrimage, according to my definition, when a dependant of a state travelled with the blessings and the assistance of the head of state or one of his advisers. In

⁸⁴ Hamilton-Buchanan, *A history of Eastern India*, I, pp. 55-6.

⁸⁵ Thomas Hardwicke, 'Narrative of a journey to Sirinagur', *Asiatick Researches*, VI (2nd edn, 1801), p. 312. Hardwicke based his estimate on the registers of the taxes collected at all the watering sites. Kumbh Melas are huge bathing festivals held every three years at one of four sites in rotation: Hardwar, Allahabad, Nasik (Trimbak) and Ujjain. Hence each site has a Kumbh Mela once in twelve years.

⁸⁶ Raper, 'Narrative of a Survey', p. 453.

⁸⁷ Account of Meer Behur duties May 1812-April 1813, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/451 (10858), 'Receipts & Disbursements on account of the Duties levied from Pilgrims resorting to Allahabad in 1811/12 & 1812/13', p. 4; Extract G.T. Brown, Actg Judge Allahabad, to Capt. Benson, 12 Mar. 1829, 'Pilgrim Tax', IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1306 (51856).

⁸⁸ 'Measures adopted in consequence of numerous applications from Persons of Rank for exemptions from the Tax on Pilgrims', IOR, Board's Collections F/4/421 (10371), pp. 1-7.

its ultimate form, the pilgrimage of a king in his capacity as the state's chief administrator, the act of religious journeying set up a mobile arena of sovereignty. Automatically many of the issues of the state were at hand. At a less-exalted level military men, administrators, ambassadors and prominent bankers and merchants would be given permission to absent themselves from the state for weeks or months at a time to pursue their religious goals. They would take with them letters of recommendation and passports procured by the home state to ease their passage through and reception in foreign states. Another variation of state-sponsored pilgrimage was the deputing of priests to various holy sites to fulfil life-cycle rites for the king who was unable to travel there himself. There are many examples in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of Maratha and Rajput princes sending their royal priests to Allahabad to immerse the ashes of a relative or a former sovereign in the Ganga or to Gaya to propitiate the spirits of royal ancestors.

From this brief outline it should be clear that, whatever the spiritual goals, state-sponsored pilgrimages were political events, concerned with affairs both inside and outside the state. This posed particular problems for the British in their dealings with Hindu powers, especially the Marathas. Eighteenth century Company servants often witnessed activities that claimed a religious sanction and yet fulfilled purposes which they would have described as secular or political. As non-Hindus these Company men were in no position of moral authority to contradict or challenge the religious justification for such behaviour. The frustration this engendered is most apparent in the complaints of the Residents who served with the last Peshwa, Bajirao II (r. 1796-1818), who was effectively a dependant of the British after 1803. Residents Elphinstone and Close in particular felt that Bajirao II and his ministers, resentful of the power of the British, deliberately delayed their business on account of transparently convenient religious callings. In 1803, shortly after the Peshwa's restoration to a shaky authority, Close complained to the Governor-General that he met with the 'utmost difficulty' in transacting any business with the *darbar*:

His Highness's habits incline him to the society of Bramins and the celebration of religious festivals; the dispensing of charities and the performance of stated devotions added to the discrimination of hours into good or bad, afford him abundant pleas for every species of temporal neglects.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Col. Close, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 9 Mar. 1803, PRC 7, p. 51. See also M. Elphinstone, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 23 June 1812, in G.S. Sardesai (ed.), *Poona Affairs (Elphinstone's*

The Residents were unsympathetic to and indeed non-comprehending of a world view which assumed divine intervention of a quite specific and immediate nature, as in the sense that some places, some objects, some times and some people were more sacred, more impregnated with divine powers, than others. Working from a perspective which assumed separation of the divine from the tangible, material world, European observers were limited to a vocabulary or terminology that, when describing activities with a religious sanction, implied a certain unholy manipulation of spirituality. Consequently their capacity to distinguish variety within Hindu religious behaviour was limited. Where Hindus themselves would see different inspirations and priorities and identify acts of religious subterfuge, Company servants could only see more of the same.

The difficulty with the terms 'religious' and 'secular' when discussing elite pilgrim motivation is that they suggest that behaviour that claimed inspiration from a religious tradition could not exhibit advantages of a secular nature without compromising the integrity of the spiritual rationale. This would be a denial of the Hindu custom of undertaking pilgrimage in the hope of attaining a reward of an immediate and tangible nature, e.g., the birth of an heir, the cure of an illness, the success of a military venture.

Ronald Inden, in unravelling the components of mediaeval Hindu kingship, is impressed with the complexity of royal religious duties and responsibilities:

Royal authority in the Indian context was inextricably bound up with notions of divine power, material prosperity, moral well-being, and cosmic regulation...ritual encompassed many more kinds of activities in the Hindu tradition than in the Christian.⁹⁰

This is important for our discussion of the interweaving of politics and religion in state-sponsored pilgrimage. Inden goes on to discuss the installation rituals of the ideal Hindu king in terms of oscillations between two apparently contradictory poles: that of the king as a transcendent divinity, passive and withdrawn from day to day affairs; and that of him as a human agent of the transcendent divinity, an 'immanent administrator' whose chief function was to act for the material and spiritual

Embassy) (Part I, 1811-1815), Poona Residency Correspondence, 12 (Bombay, 1950), p. 168. Hereafter PRC 12. This is not to take issue with the Residents' belief that they were being subjected to delaying tactics, but it does reject their assessment of the means as inherently irreligious and inimically opposed to the interests of the state.

⁹⁰ R. Inden, 'Ritual, authority, and cyclic time in Hindu Kingship', in J.F. Richards (ed.), *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (2nd edn, Madison, 1981), p. 28.

prosperity of the state.⁹¹ Inden ties this oscillation (the term is his) in with the annual cycles of day and night; the 'night' of the year being the four month rainy season, *caturmasya*, during which time the king was to retire to a private religious retreat, having suspended the administration of the state.⁹² The king's re-entry into his active state was heralded by lustration rituals - Inden calls them forerunners of the modern Navaratri, Dasehra and Diwali festivals - designed to reconstitute the state after the decentralizing trends of the earlier months.⁹³ Certainly there is sufficient evidence to show that in the eighteenth century Dasehra served the Marathas as a 'recentralizing' institution after the rainy season, which forced periods of inactivity and dispersal on armies in particular.⁹⁴

Certain royal pilgrimages invite comparison with Inden's model of active, administrative divinity, directed to win for both king and state a range of material and spiritual benefits, as it behoved the king to do. Such an appreciation of royal pilgrimage offers an alternative to the prejudice of contemporary British observers that ostentatious religious activity could only detract from the affairs of state. This does not restrict us to pilgrimages of the king himself, but includes those sanctioned or supported by him. It also covers the royal maintenance of pilgrimage sites, an act of benefit to all people, as the *Ajnapatra* made clear.

But there were also state-sponsored pilgrimages that seem to have come closer to Inden's model of transcendent, withdrawn divinity. In short, the two extremes of activity are represented: a

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-73, but see especially pp. 29, 36, 55-60.

⁹² Inden puts *caturmasya* between the full moon days of Asadh (June/July) and Kartik (October-November). *Ibid.*, p. 59. Other authorities date it between the bright elevenths of each of these months. See Ruth S. and Stanley A. Freed, 'Calendars, ceremonies, and festivals in a north Indian village: necessary calendric information for fieldwork', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 20 (1964), pp. 85-6; M.M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year* (Calcutta, 1921), p. 24. In either calculation *caturmasya* falls wholly within *dakshinayana*, that half of the year in which the sun travels south; it is held to be the inauspicious half of the year. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Shahu (r.1708-49), the Satara king whose reign saw the transfer of power from the sovereign to his Brahman chief minister, the Peshwa, lived the ideal life of a Hindu king even when he no longer had any authority. Every rainy season until his death he retired from his palace-cum-prison to a hut thatched with hay to pass the *caturmasya* in quiet contemplation. Sardesai, *Selections from the Peshwas' Daftar*, 8, pp. 865-7.

⁹³ Inden, 'Ritual, authority and cyclic time', p. 59.

⁹⁴ As late as 1809 the Resident with Daulat Rao Sindhia observed that: 'The force of...this army...will, in all probability, soon be increased on account of the approaching Dassera, a period at which it is customary to collect together the troops not otherwise particularly engaged...it is natural to suppose some employment will be found for the army after the Dassera, which is considered as the breaking of the rains.' R. Close to Earl of Minto, 30 Sept. 1809, PRC 14, p. 17. In September 1810 the Resident at Pune observed that one of the Peshwa's southern *jagirdars* had been recalled from a pilgrimage to 'attend his Highness on the occasion of the Dusserah, an annual festival, at which according to the ancient custom of the Marhatta government, all the different chieftains ought to be in attendance upon the Paishwa.' Henry Russell to Governor-General, 11 Sept. 1810, PRC 7, p. 491. See also A. Anderson to General Jones, 3 Sept. 1802, for the plans of Holkar and Sindhia to take to the field after Dasehra. *Ibid.*, p. 23. The 1766 Diwali season was the occasion for the regrouping of Sikh horsemen in Amritsar; nearly one *lakh* gathered and after the festival they moved off in smaller groups to do battle. Sarkar, *Delhi Affairs (1761-1788)*, p. 6.

state-sponsored pilgrimage might have constituted either an extension of the administrative duties of the state or else a withdrawal from such by the king or his dependant into personal, private worship. The distinction is by no means a clear one, but it helps to explain why some pilgrimages were characterized by behaviour that would have seemed out of place in others. As a general rule, it appears that greater flexibility in pilgrimage timing encouraged the incorporation of state affairs into the event, making it an act of worship in which the interests of the whole community were represented. The personal, private worship very often took place at the site of the pilgrim's tutelary deity, which was usually within a few days' march of the pilgrim's home. The Marathas lavished patronage on the temples of their tutelary deities, although they were not well-known to Hindus outside of the region, and in doing so gave an enormous boost to Marathi devotional worship.⁹⁵ In contrast, the occasions of grand, public pilgrimages, especially in the case of the Marathas, tended to be to the 'big' sites of Hinduism, *tirths* famed throughout India and immediately recognizable by name to all Hindus.

The least flexible of pilgrimages were those which culminated in a particular observance at a set time on a set day. Foremost among these were journeys taken to rivers to coincide with solar and lunar eclipses and other noteworthy constellations. In Hinduism eclipses had long been occasions for ritual bathing; the skill of the astrologers in forecasting them and in promoting them well in advance gave rise to huge eclipse *melas* at some *tirths*.⁹⁶ Central to the efficacy of eclipse bathing was the need to enter the water at the declared time of most auspiciousness. Records survive of Mahadaji's

⁹⁵ Peshwa Bajirao II's tutelary deity was at Wai (Wahy) near Pune. The Holkar family's tutelary deity was Khandoba/Malhari at Jejuri, also near Pune, while the Bhosales of Nagpur frequented Ramtek, near Nagpur city. In the early nineteenth-century Richard Jenkins wrote of Ramtek as a site of Rama worship with a huge ten-day *jatra* at the time of Kartik *purnmashi* (October-November full moon): 'It is frequented by persons from all parts of the Nagpore territories, and from the Nizam's districts, north of the Godavery, and in peaceable times, about one hundred thousand are supposed to resort thither at these periods.' Jenkins, *Report on the territories of the Rajah of Nagpore*, p. 53. Bala Bai, daughter of Mahadaji Sindhia, identified Mathura as her place of worship, although her ancestors traditionally looked upon Nathdwara, near Ajmere, as their intimate place of worship. It was not only elites who had tutelary deities. Every Hindu had (and has) a site which he saw as being of particular and intimate relevance to himself because of some patrimonial, regional or sectarian affiliation, and it would be at this temple that regular worship and sometimes life-cycle rites were performed. In support of this there is Francis Buchanan's interesting observation of the early 1800s that the locals of Gaya showed few intimate links with the famous *tirthas* of that city, preferring instead the less-renowned site of nearby Rajagriha for the celebrations of special days. Hamilton-Buchanan, *A history of eastern India*, I, p. 194.

⁹⁶ Well over a quarter of a million people bathed at Allahabad during an eclipse of the sun in 1813. G.T. Brown, Actg Judge Allahabad, to Capt. Benson, 12 May 1829, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1306 (51856), 'Pilgrim Tax'. The missionary James Kennedy saw the largest concourse of pilgrims in his long years in India at an eclipse of the moon at Benares in 1841. He attributed the huge crowd to the advertising skills of the Benares *pandits* and their agents: 'Brahman missionaries go great distances to inform the people the eclipse is to take place, and to press on them the benefit they will receive by bathing at Benares on that occasion. On their return they are accompanied by those whom they have succeeded in persuading.' J. Kennedy, *Life and work in Benares and Kumaon, 1839-1877* (London, 1884), pp. 97-8.

Sindhia's marches to the Ganga for the lunar eclipse of 23 October 1771 (possibly at either Ramghat or Soron) and the solar eclipse of 17 November 1789 at Ramghat.⁹⁷ Bajirao II retired to Wai, source of the Kistna River, for ablutions on the lunar eclipse of 21 May 1807,⁹⁸ and for the solar eclipse in February 1813 Daulat Rao Sindhia journeyed to the Ganga at Singhi Rampur.⁹⁹ In each case the entire journey consumed no more than two or three weeks, sometimes less, and the destinations lay within the pilgrim's territory (or that of a neighbouring, friendly power, as in the case of Daulat Rao's 1813 pilgrimage), being only a few days' march from the seat of state.

These features also characterized other royal pilgrimages of an inflexible nature, such as Bajirao II's annual journeys to Pandharpur for the Vithoba festival.¹⁰⁰ Although the Residents were quick to complain about Bajirao's frequent pilgrimages, he does not seem to have been immune to the demands of state as he was accused. Non-urgent pilgrimages were often postponed,¹⁰¹ and of those that would not admit delay Bajirao was careful to inform the Resident of his willingness to return immediately to Pune should matters of state demand it.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Letter to the Peshwa, 7 Nov. 1771, Sarkar, *Delhi Affairs (1761-1788)*, p. 45; Delhi journal to the Peshwa, despatched 7 Dec. 1789, Sarkar, *Sindhia as Regent of Delhi (1787 & 1789-91)*, p. 28. It has to be admitted that this pilgrimage did offer occasion for a display of political belligerence by Sindhia. Ramghat was exactly on the frontier between his territory and that of the Nawab of Awadh. Sindhia took with him 20,000 horse and foot and 25 guns, so that it was a sizable gathering for the bathing. He stayed only a week before beginning his return to his Mathura camp, but during that time the Nawab's agent, Almas Ali Khan, was encamped on the opposite bank of the Ganga with a force capable of repelling any incursions into the Nawab's territory.

⁹⁸ Barry Close, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 30 May 1807, PRC 7, pp. 305-6.

⁹⁹ R. Strachey, Resident with Sindhia, to Secy to Govt, 27 Jan. 1813, PRC 14, pp. 173-4.

¹⁰⁰ Barry Close, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 14 Aug. 1807, PRC 7, pp. 308-9. Pandharpur is home to the Vaishnavite god Vithoba, a seat of devotional *bhakti* worship and one of the most popular *tirths* in Maharashtra. Many of the Marathi poet-saints who wrote in the vernacular, notably Tukaram and Dnyanesvar, glorified Pandharpur as another Kasi (Benares) and its river Bhima as the equal of the Ganga. Many of the regional gods and goddesses were well patronized by the Marathas, but Vithoba most so, and there is no doubt that Pandharpur saw an enormous increase in its popularity in the early nineteenth century. See J. Murray Mitchell, *In western India: recollections of my early missionary life* (Edinburgh, 1899), pp. 222-46, for a detailed description of the type of devotionalism practised at Pandharpur in the 1850s. Irawati Karve's, 'On the road: a Maharashtrian pilgrimage', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 22 (1962), 13-29, is a first-hand account of a pilgrim march in which foot-images, *padukas*, of Vithoba are brought to Pandharpur for one of the annual *yatras*.

¹⁰¹ In 1805 the Resident at Pune reported to the Governor-General that he had allowed the Peshwa to leave on a short religious journey that he had been wanting to take for a long time. Thomas Sydenham, Resident Pune, to Marquess Wellesley, 27 May 1805, PRC 7, p. 235. In 1815 Resident Elphinstone reported that, after having discouraged a certain pilgrimage for some time, he had given the Peshwa approval to leave now that the pressure of state affairs had relaxed and would permit his absence. M. Elphinstone, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 29 Apr. 1815, PRC 12, p. 367.

¹⁰² M. Elphinstone, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 29 Nov. 1811, *ibid.*, p. 129; same to same, 10 Feb. 1812, *ibid.*, p. 142. It was rare that an inflexible pilgrimage would take the Peshwa more than several days' journey from his capital. One which did, a festival in 1814 at Kopargaum, for which the Peshwa proposed an absence of three months, occurred only once every twelve years. Bajirao's annual journeys to Kopargaum were much more flexible and were often postponed. M. Elphinstone, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 10 Feb. 1812, *ibid.*, p. 142.

Inflexible pilgrimages were resistant to the incorporation of state affairs. They come closest to the private devotions of the king as Inden has described him in his passive, transcendent state, worshipping at sites of intimate relevance. Symbols of administration were frequently excluded here where they would not have been on other pilgrimages. As a rule, the presence of the Resident was neither required nor desired when the Peshwa journeyed either to Wai or to Pandharpur, nor was it essential given the proximity of these sites to Pune. This withdrawal from a public position is emphasized in Resident Strachey's account of Daulat Rao Sindhia's pilgrimage to Singhi Rampur for the 1813 eclipse. Strachey travelled ahead of Sindhia to make the necessary arrangements for his entry into British territory, but he found his requirements to be modest:

Since the arrival of Daulat Rao Sindhia at this place on the 1st instant, His Highness has been almost exclusively engaged in the object of his pilgrimage, passing the greatest part of his time at the river and seldom returning to his tents from the *ghat* until night.

Having only provided the Maharajah with forage and occasionally with fruit and vegetable, I thought it right on our arrival here to send His Highness 500 Rupees as a *ziafat*, accompanied by a present of fruit. I also offered him an entertainment at the residency on the part of the Right Honourable the Governor General. I had refrained from providing other supplies as it appeared likely that the unavoidable expence had I adopted that plan would have been too heavy. His Highness refused the money in very civil terms and he desired the Munshi (by whom I had sent it with a suitable message) to inform me that as he was here merely for the purposes of devotion he was anxious not to receive anything during his stay on the bank of the Ganges, desirous of employing himself in distributing charity; moreover that he wished to decline it considering the inconvenience and expence which his journey must otherwise occasion.¹⁰³

This attitude was not characteristic of all state-sponsored pilgrimages. In those which were amenable to delay we find the symbols and issues of the state taking a much bigger role. Pilgrimages connected with vow fulfilment appear to have been some of the most flexible both in timing and in their potential political content, a circumstance well illustrated in a pilgrimage of the Satara royal family. In 1810 the Rani of Satara, mother to the nominal head of the Maratha confederacy, expressed a desire to fulfil a long-standing vow, but, as the Resident explained to the Governor-General, the Peshwa was not entirely comfortable with her plans:

The Rajah's mother had told him that she had many years ago made a vow that if she should ever have any male children, she would pay her devotions and offer up her thanks in person at the temple of Vithoba at Punderpore, that of Khundy Row at Jejoory and at a celebrated temple dedicated to Shumboo Mahadeo, about a hundred miles to the southward of Poona; and that having now two sons both of them grown up, she earnestly entreated

¹⁰³ R. Strachey, Resident with Sindhia, to John Adam, Secy to Govt, 5 Feb. 1813, PRC 14, p. 174.

that the Paishwa would allow her to discharge the obligation of her vow. The Paishwa told me he was apprehensive that if he did not comply with the Ranee's desire, and if any accident should happen to either of her sons, his refusal to allow her to perform her vow would be considered as in some degree the cause of it.¹⁰⁴

The Peshwa's cautious response to this apparently innocent request stemmed from the Rani's desire to take her sons, including the current Raja, on her pilgrimage. For several generations the Satara Rajas had served the Maratha state in a ceremonial capacity only, overseeing the investiture of the Peshwas, the Brahman ministers in whose hands real power lay. They had been confined to the Satara fort for many years and were only brought out on occasions of the Peshwa's initiative. Now, at a time, when the Peshwa's power was severely circumscribed by the terms of his treaty with the British, the Rani was initiating an excursion which would put the Raja on sustained public display. Bajirao could not refuse her pious request, but it is not surprising that the six week pilgrimage in September and October 1810 was reported as the pilgrimage of the Raja of Satara, not that of his mother.¹⁰⁵ The Peshwa took great care to greet the Raja with all due etiquette and respect. He was escorted on his travels by four thousand of the Peshwa's most trusted soldiery. The presence of these troops, half cavalry and half infantry, highlight the double-edged nature of the pilgrimage. On the one hand, the Raja had to be provided with a splendid retinue - anything less would have been humiliating for him and his 'servant', the Peshwa. But, on the other hand, the escort which Bajirao supplied doubled as security for himself; he chose troops that were either in his own pay or that of his chief minister because it was in them that he reposed most confidence.¹⁰⁶

Pilgrimages connected with the failure or restoration of health were also amenable to delay and hence to the incorporation of state affairs. In 1807 Bajirao's Chief Minister, Sadasheo Maunkaisur, set out on a journey to several *tirths* along the Kistna River. He intended giving thanks to his deity for the cure of a recent illness and it was hoped that the act of travel would further aid his recuperation. But Sadasheo timed his journey so that he could meet with some of the Peshwa's notoriously refractory southern *jagirdars*, and upon his return he carried with him many arrears of tribute from these chiefs.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ H. Russell, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 25 Aug. 1810, PRC 7, p. 486.

¹⁰⁵ Same to same, 30 Sept. 1810, *ibid.*, pp. 500-03.

¹⁰⁶ Same to same, 25 Aug. 1810, *ibid.*, p. 487.

¹⁰⁷ Colonel Close to Governor-General, 24 Feb. 1807, *ibid.*, pp. 283-7; same to same, 14 Aug. 1807, *ibid.*, pp. 308-09.

A most revealing pilgrimage of this sort concerned Jaswant Rao Holkar's attempts in 1809 to visit his tutelary deity at Jejuri in the Peshwa's territory. Holkar had last been to Jejuri in 1802-03 at the time of his attempt to install Bajirao's half-brother as Peshwa. Bajirao never forgave this act of aggression and, restored to power by the British, he was able to prevent Holkar from ever visiting Jejuri again, though the latter expressed many a desire to do so. Then, in November 1809, Bajirao was informed that Holkar had been possessed by his deity and that only an immediate visit to Jejuri could placate the offended deity and thus restore the ailing man to his senses. It was said that he was already on his way.¹⁰⁸ Bajirao was extremely disturbed by the news, fearing another invasion by Holkar, this time in concert with Amir Khan. Resident Russell observed that:

His Highness was more strongly convinced than ever that Holkar's avowed intention of visiting the temple of his tutelary deity was merely a pretext, under the cover of which were meditated designs of the most dangerous and extensive nature.¹⁰⁹

But Holkar did not attempt to enter the Peshwa's territory without the latter's permission. With the increasingly desperate tone of his pleas it transpired that the aging general was indeed very ill and in pitiful need of a visit to his deity. He urged the issue on his *vakil* in Pune, stressing the innocence of his intentions:

The illness from the deity having transmigrated into my body, forces me to visit him, and the expediency of this, must be evident to every one, that I do not come immediately when now the season is passing away, is occasioned by guarding against all suspicion from arising in any one's mind, by sending letters to them. As moreover I esteem the sight of the Peshwa equal to that of the deity, and to him the state of my health is well known, and he will concur in my wish. The coming into his country and all my actions both good and bad without the permission of the Peshwa and the concurrence of my allies the English, I do nothing, this is my intention. In short, let there be no doubt or suspicion either in my coming or in anything else.¹¹⁰

In 1811 the Peshwa relented and Holkar was given permission to travel to Jejuri, but there were strict limits imposed on the size of his entourage and, like the Raja of Satara, he was escorted by

¹⁰⁸ Translation of an Ackbar from the Camp of Jeswunt Row Holkar at Bilwara, in the Purgunna of Dhur, dated 7th November 1809, PRC 7, p. 434. The founder of the Holkar line, Malharrao (1724-67), had invested a lot of money in temple-building at Jejuri, the chief seat in Maharashtra of the Shaivite god, Khandoba or Khanderao. In the nineteenth century it was a particularly popular shrine with peasants, pastoralists and fishermen. See Mitchell, *In western India*, pp. 268-307, for a description of a twice-yearly festival there in the 1850s.

¹⁰⁹ H. Russell, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 24 Nov. 1809, *ibid.*, p. 436. The Peshwa had a right to feel apprehensive; in 1802 Holkar had advanced slowly but deliberately on Jejuri, reassuring the Peshwa all the while with presents and promises that his only intention was to worship the idol. See B. Close, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 4 June 1802, PRC 10, pp. 11-12.

¹¹⁰ Translation of a letter from Jaswant Rao Holkar to his Vakeel Khando Pant at Pune, 21 Zilhejje = 29 Jan, 1810, enc. in H. Russell, Resident Pune, to Secy to Govt, 9 Apr. 1810, PRC 14, p. 52.

a large body of Bajirao's best soldiers. At first Bajirao refused to see Holkar until the latter revealed a hitherto hidden object of his pilgrimage - the Peshwa's grant of a *khilat* of investiture to his son Malhar Rao, an act which would fix the line of succession after Holkar's own fast-approaching death. The British immediately vetoed this; it implied recognition of the Maratha confederacy which the 1802 Treaty of Bassein was supposed to have dissolved.¹¹¹ Holkar died in mid-1811 and, spurred by the promise of a lucrative *nazrana*, Bajirao made preparations with his ministers for the investiture of his son to be carried out in secret. Had not Resident Elphinstone been forewarned of the plan, there is no doubt that all of the purposes of Holkar's pilgrimage eventually would have been met.¹¹²

This last example also throws some light on the interplay of different types of pilgrimage and their destinations. A greater flexibility in timing allowed a greater flexibility in the territory of the observance; pilgrimages could be delayed until external relations permitted peaceful interstate travel. Holkar was unusual in having his tutelary deity at such a distance from his seat of power and, as we have seen, it greatly inconvenienced him. Religious journeys associated with a site of such intimacy ought to have been frequent and not subject to delay.¹¹³

Normally interstate pilgrimage operated on a much larger scale. Numerous examples survive of very long distance state-sponsored pilgrimages, involving entry into one or more foreign territories. Pilgrims on these journeys conform most to Inden's delineation of the king in his public, administrative role. These pilgrimages were often the most flexible of all; the long distances necessitated an absence of months, often over a year, and hence the participation of an important person of the state meant that they had to be fitted in around state affairs.¹¹⁴ It is interesting to consider in this light the many pilgrimages undertaken by women of rank. Often the immediate demands of the

¹¹¹ C.T. Metcalfe, Resident Delhi, to Secy to Govt, 13 July 1811, *ibid.*, p. 85.

¹¹² M. Elphinstone, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 10 Feb. 1812, PRC 12, p. 140.

¹¹³ In general, it was considered an act of aggression for the representatives of one state to enter another's territory without first seeking the permission of the latter, regardless of the inspiration of the visit. In Holkar's case the Resident and the Peshwa's Minister both intended to remind the *vakil* that: 'it was not customary for the princes and chieftains of this country to enter the territories of each other without having previously obtained express permission for the purpose'. H. Russell, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 24 Nov. 1809, PRC 7, p. 436. In 1808 the Envoy at Lahore, Metcalfe, was instructed to protest to Ranjit Singh about allowing large bodies of his armed men to cross Company territory *en route* to a Hardwar *mela* without first seeking British permission. 'The Envoy to Lahore directed to remonstrate with Raja Runjeet Sing for having suffered considerable bodies of armed Men to pass from his Territories through the Doab to Hurdwar', IOR, Board's Collections F/4/304 (6999), pp. 19-20.

¹¹⁴ The Rao Raja of Bundi's 1842 pilgrimage to Mathura, Allahabad, Benares, Gaya and Jagannath had been planned for some eight or nine years earlier, but was long delayed owing to pressures of state. 'Desire of the Rao Rajah of Boondie to proceed on a Pilgrimage to Gya and Juggernath', IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1984 (87464), pp. 6-7.

state pressed more lightly on them than on the male members of their families and it was they who could advertise the piety of the leading members of the state by lavishing their patronage on pilgrimage sites. Of these, Allahabad, Benares and Gaya once again stand out, although in any journey involving these three sites it is very likely that sites such as Mathura, Soron and Ajudhia were also visited. In addition to the journeys of Radha Bai (1736), Kashi Bai (1740s), and Saguna Bai (1750s) records survive of northern pilgrimages undertaken by: Ahilya Bai Holkar (1769-70),¹¹⁵ the mothers-in-law of Raja Mudhoji Bhosale and his successor Raghuji (1782),¹¹⁶ the mother of Jan Rao Iswant and Sakharam Udwant, servants of Mudhoji Bhosale (1783),¹¹⁷ Bala Bai, daughter of Mudhoji Bhosale (1783-4),¹¹⁸ the mother of Bhao Bakhshi, Mahadaji Sindhia's chief minister (1784),¹¹⁹ the Maharani of Jaipur, queen of Pratap Singh (1786),¹²⁰ the mother and brother of an officer of the Nizam of Hyderabad (1787),¹²¹ the mother of Raja Deshmukh, a dependant of Mahadaji Sindhia (1788),¹²² the mother of Roorjee Sindhia, a principal *sardar* in Mahadaji's army (1790-91),¹²³ Chimna Bai, the mother of Raghuji Bhosale (1792),¹²⁴ Durga Bai, the Peshwa's grandmother (1793-5),¹²⁵ Tai Bai, the mother of Appaji Rai (1798-9),¹²⁶ the mother of Sadasheo Rao, Subahdar of Cuttack (1800),¹²⁷ the mother of Rajeshari Narayan, a *vakil* to the Peshwa (1802),¹²⁸ the sister of Raghuji Bhosale (1803),¹²⁹ Tamma Bai, aunt of the Raja of Nagpur (1807),¹³⁰ the Rani of

¹¹⁵ *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, II, p. 427.

¹¹⁶ *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, VI, p. 129.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 312, 364-5, 412.

¹¹⁹ Statement of duties exempted the Pilgrims by Order of Government, from the first of Assun to the 23rd of Sawun 1191 Fussily, signed by the Canongoes and sealed by the Cawzy, IOR, Bengal Revenue Consultations P/50/54, 15 Oct. 1784, letter recd no. 349, enclosure.

¹²⁰ *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, VII, pp. 160-1, 166.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 244-5, 267, 268, 379.

¹²³ William Palmer, Resident with Sindhia, to A. Seton, Collector Bihar, 23 Oct. 1790, IOR, Bengal Political Consultations P/114/46, 24 Dec. 1790, no. 3.

¹²⁴ *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, IX, pp. 307, 314, 326; *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, X, pp. 4, 48, 65, 68-9, 194.

¹²⁵ *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, XI, pp. 42, 49, 65, 178, 187, 209, 224, 232.

¹²⁶ J. Lumsden, Resident Lucknow, to Persian Translator, 17 Oct. 1798, IOR, Bengal Political Consultations P/116/49, 12 Nov. 1798, no. 35.

¹²⁷ Letter from Sadasheo Rao, Subahdar of Cuttack, to Governor-General, recd 15 Nov. 1799, IOR, Bengal Political Consultations P/116/58, 26 Nov. 1799, no. 2.

¹²⁸ National Archives of India, *Descriptive list of Persian Correspondence* (2 vols, Delhi, 1974-84), II (1802), p. 40.

¹²⁹ Valentia, *Voyages and Travels to India*, I, p. 107.

¹³⁰ Extract of letter from Resident at Nagpur, 8 Dec. 1806, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Commissioners C&CP P/90/57, 13 Jan. 1807, no. 12.

Sambhalpur (1809),¹³¹ Saulhau (?) Bai, Daulat Rao Sindhia's aunt (1812),¹³² and Bala Bai, daughter of Mahadaji Sindhia (1813).¹³³ We also know that the last-named travelled to Mathura, Ramghat and Garhmuktesar in 1810.¹³⁴ In 1786 the mother of Bishambhar Pandit, Mudhoji Bhosale's *vakil* with the British, travelled to Jagannath; it is probable that this was also a destination for many other women of rank, especially for women from Nagpur.¹³⁵

If a minister or an army official undertook one of these lengthy pilgrimages then considerations of state were quite important. The would-be pilgrim was either not needed for duties at that time or else it was hoped that he could accomplish some mission, often of a diplomatic nature, during his absence. In this way the pilgrim conformed to the textual injunctions that one should never seek out a *tirth* at the expense of one's duties in life. Under these 'state-approved' conditions the lead pilgrim would be sent off with the blessings of the royal head, often effected by the presentation of a *khilat* of leave by the head, whose responsibility it was to support the pilgrim's case for *dastaks* (passports) and to ask foreign states for exemptions from pilgrim taxes and customs dues. If a pilgrim travelling under this degree of patronage was well treated by the host territory it was seen as a reflection of the latter's respect for the patron. Similarly, maltreatment was seen to indicate a lack of respect for the pilgrim's state of origin.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Extract proceedings in the Pol. Dept, 17 Oct. 1809, IOR, Bengal Revenue Council P/55/24, 27 Oct. 1809, no. 42.

¹³² Extract of letter from Persian Secretary, 11 Dec. 1812, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Commissioners C&CP P/92/10, 31 Dec. 1812, no. 10B.

¹³³ R. Strachey, Resident with Sindhia, to Lord Minto, 18 Jan. 1813, PRC 14, p. 173.

¹³⁴ C. Metcalfe, Resident with Sindhia, to N.B. Edmonstone, Secy to Govt, 27 Oct. 1810, *ibid.*, p. 69.

¹³⁵ *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, VII, p. 216. In 1799 Raghuji Bhosale's mother travelled to Jagannath from Nagpur. H.T. Colebrooke, Resident Nagpur, to Earl of Mornington, Governor-General, 20 Nov. 1799, Y.M. Kale (ed.), *Nagpur affairs: 1781-1820*, Poona Residency Correspondence, 5 (Bombay, 1938), p. 41. In 1802 the mother of Babu Dwaraka Das Sahu, one of Benares' leading bankers, went on a pilgrimage to Jagannath. *Descriptive list of Persian Correspondence*, II, p. 7. In 1806 the Rani Mukhta Dai, late of Sambhalpur and now a *jagirdar* of Khurda, also went on pilgrimage to Jagannath. Capt. Roughsedge to James Hunter, Pilgrim Tax Collector Jagannath, 6 Nov. 1806, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Commissioners C&CP P/90/55, 21 Nov. 1806, no. 22.

¹³⁶ In 1786 Thomas Law, Collector at Gaya, refused to grant pilgrim tax exemptions to a party of the Maharani of Jaipur until he had received an official letter to that effect from Calcutta. Impatient at the delay, the Maharani paid a certain sum so that she could perform her ceremonies, but the ministers and servants of the Maharaja who were in charge of her entourage said that they were frightened to allow payment for all of the party because it would amount to an insult to the Maharaja and a negation of friendly relations between Jaipur and the British. *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, VII, p. 160.

If a prominent member of a state embarked on a pilgrimage without first obtaining the permission of the head this was seen, within varying degrees, as an act of disobedience and disrespect. In 1765 Malharao Holkar learnt that his daughter-in-law, Ahilya Bai, was planning a visit to Mathura instead of marching straight to Gwalior with her troops as instructed. In consternation, he wrote to her: 'you have not done well in halting at Mathura against the orders given to you...If you have not to listen to us and do what comes to your mind then you may well visit holy places...you should not stop at Mathura even to drink water, but proceed to Gwalior after crossing the Chambal.' M.V. Kibe, 'Fragments from the records of Devi Shri Ahilya

These lengthy and flexible pilgrimages could also serve as a form of political retreat-cum-exile. For out-of-favour elites a long pilgrimage promised meritorious use of otherwise uncomfortable and unproductive months. Towards the end of his long career as senior minister to the Peshwas, Nana Fadnis found himself increasingly devoid of supporters. At times of greatest isolation he threatened to retire on a pilgrimage to Benares.¹³⁷ That he never carried out this threat is perhaps an indication that the degree of remove would have been too great for his purposes. Amrit Rao, the brother who took over Bajirao's place in Pune in 1802, was no longer suffered to remain in the Peshwa's territory upon his restoration. While the British tried to arrange an amicable retirement and pension for Amrit Rao, he went on a long and very expensive pilgrimage to Benares, one which eventually stretched into years.¹³⁸

Two examples of long-distance pilgrimages by heads of state will bring out all of these issues in more detail. In 1807 Peshwa Bajirao II travelled to Kartikswami, a pilgrimage which took him into both the Company's Madras territory and the state of Mysore. In 1842 the Rao Raja of Bundi journeyed from his Rajputana capital across north India to Jagannath in the east. The second pilgrimage was a much smaller affair; by the mid-nineteenth century the British were much less tolerant of large royal tours and the Rao Raja had to ask for many of the concessions that the Peshwa took as his right some thirty-five years before. Nevertheless in the similarity of the expectations of the two leaders we can see just how a pilgrimage of this style and duration was meant to serve the interests of the state.

Both leaders wanted to be accompanied by British officials of importance.¹³⁹ In the Peshwa's case this was granted automatically, but the British would not assign a European officer to the Rao Raja's camp until he, grossly insulted by the withholding of this honour, halted his march and refused to proceed any further without one. His determination won him the officer and also an agreement that

Bai Holkar', *Indian Historical Records Commission*, XIII (1930), pp. 132-3. A more deliberate act of disrespect was committed in 1810 when Bajirao's brother, rarely on good terms with him, left on a short pilgrimage without informing the Peshwa of his intention. Bajirao was most offended. H. Russell, Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 17 Nov. 1810, PRC 7, pp. 517-8.

¹³⁷ J. Duncan, Resident Benares, to C. Malet, Resident Pune, 30 June 1789, PRC 2, p. 150.

¹³⁸ Amrit Rao to Governor-General Wellesley, 26 May 1805, PRC 7, pp. 241-3.

¹³⁹ I have used one main source for each of these pilgrimages: for the Peshwa's journey, the series of letters from the accompanying officials and the Pune Resident, sent between 10 September and 22 December 1807, and reprinted in PRC 7, pp. 313-25; and for the Rao Raja's journey, the thirty-page collection of letters in IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1984 (87464), 'Desire of the Rao Rajah of Boondie to proceed on a Pilgrimage to Gya and Juggernath.'

he could continue with five thousand followers rather than the three thousand that the British had originally allowed. Both points highlight the diplomatic nature of these top-level, interstate pilgrimages. The lead pilgrims expected to be greeted with ceremony at every border and major settlement, as would befit a leader of high status. Gun salutes and official receptions set the tone for a highly-publicized tour. In addition to these honours, the Peshwa's return to Pune was heralded by the royal salute and the presentation of arms by the Company's brigade stationed there. The Rao Raja took with him two cannons to sound the morning and evening salutes and to mark his arrival at and departure from a halt.

These efforts to win acknowledgement of importance and rank from the host territories were not only geared towards external relations. In both of our examples the rulers took with them most, if not all, of their subordinate chiefs, who in turn were accompanied by the followers of their choosing. This set up a giant, highly-visible network of patronage for the pilgrimage; in effect the state's complete leadership moved with the king. It could well be argued that only a foolhardy ruler would contemplate an absence of some months without taking all of his nobles and their soldiers with him. This in turn implied that the state had to be in a very satisfactory state of stability before the king could consider undertaking such a pilgrimage. In Bajirao's pilgrimage, the longest of his Peshwaship, his rebellious southern *jagirdars* were given a prominent role, and the fact that they travelled with Bajirao right back to Pune in the north before returning to their *jagirs* was considered an act of diplomatic triumph.

The more customary power that the king could retain while his 'state' was mobile, the more impervious his sovereignty would be shown to be. Both the Peshwa and the Rao Raja wanted to establish the right to judge and punish members of their own camp who might have committed offences in the host territories. The Peshwa was allowed this privilege, at least in practice, but the Rao Raja's request for the same was flatly rejected. So too, not surprisingly, was his request that he be allowed to deal with any residents of the host states who might have offended against his people.

In short, there can be no suggestion that the religious character, as we might see it, of these pilgrimages was any less important than that of the quieter, more personal pilgrimages considered earlier in this section. However, there was a difference in the sphere of impact that the meritorious behaviour was intended to effect. The spectacular, long-distance royal pilgrimage was an act of worship

directed towards the benefit of the entire state. Its smaller, shorter, less-publicized counterpart brought benefit to the state only in an indirect fashion, in that the king or his dependants, while worshipping privately, were better fitting themselves for their public roles.



Gul Hayat Institute

THE PILGRIMAGE SITES

Pre-eighteenth-century priests and tax collectors

Thus far we have concentrated on the pilgrims at the expense of their destinations. But the *tirths*, their priests and their governors were as much determinants of the pilgrimage process as the travellers themselves. The pilgrim experience varied from site to site, not only in its emotional and spiritual quality, but also in the more quantifiable impact of material demands and concessions. Most of the easily accessible information about this aspect of pilgrimage relates to the government taxation and policing of pilgrims, and that circumstance is heavily reflected in the discussion that follows. First of all, though, it may be helpful to provide an outline of the relations between pilgrim, priest and government officers in the big northern *tirths* upto and including the eighteenth century.

The priests

The oldest extant records show that it was usual for priests at pilgrimage sites to have a set list of patrons. These patrons, often registered in a series of documents or a book, would have been inherited from an ancestor or benefactor; likewise successive generations of pilgrims would return to the same family of priests. The pilgrim registers recorded not only the names of a pilgrim's ancestors who had come on earlier pilgrimages, but also details of the gifts that had been made to the priest serving them. Where pilgrims had got into debt at the pilgrimage site, there were details of the sums lent by the priest and of the repayments.¹⁴⁰

When a family started up a tradition of pilgrimage to a site the priest was not chosen at random. Most priests had regional specialities, perhaps as narrow as a concentration on a particular village or suburb of a city, and then again, within that limitation, caste and sub-caste preferences. It

¹⁴⁰ In the 1960s B.N. Goswamy began studying the priests' records at Kurukshetra and Hardwar, amongst other places, for information about families of Punjab hill painters. He discovered that such records had been 'maintained with remarkable continuity over the past three hundred and fifty years or so', i.e., from the early seventeenth century. Chief amongst the *pandas*' records are the *bahis* or *pothis*, the pilgrim registers listing each pilgrim's place of origin, his place of residence, his caste, his name, and the names and exact relationships of the male members of his family stretching back to his grandfather. The date and occasion of his visit are also recorded and in this way the *pandas* can forecast from which region most pilgrims will come for a particular festival. A single *bahi* may contain tens of thousands of names, and each *panda* may have dozens of *bahis*, some 'current' and many more in storage. Each *bahi* will represent a geographical specialization; the pilgrims from that area will be listed in it according to a loose caste hierarchy. In this way the *pandas* of a famous site like Hardwar will between them have *bahis* covering every corner of Hindu India. B.N. Goswamy, 'The records kept by priests at centres of pilgrimage as a source of social and economic history', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 3 (1966), pp. 174-84.

was possible for a pilgrim to arrive unannounced at a *tirth* and, within a few minutes, to be assigned to a particular priest because of his place of origin and caste. He then began a family tradition in his own right. At times of rapid social change, however, when pilgrim numbers might be increasing or decreasing rapidly this system did not work neatly and priests and their agents often fought over new arrivals.

The specialization of the priests meant that they endowed the *tirth* with the heterogeneity of its entire pilgrim population, at the very big sites setting up a microcosm of Hindu India.¹⁴¹ The internal politics of the pilgrim site could be lively because of the many interest groups thus created.¹⁴² Moreover, the regional and caste specialization enabled individual priests to go out and drum up business (or else to depute an agent to do so) with the promise of a good return on their investment in the journey. This could take the form either of inviting pilgrims to the site or, in the case of established patrons, of 'taking the site' to them.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ A study of the organization of services in the Bhubaneswar (Orissa) temple of Lingaraj shows how 43 families of *pandas* shared all of the pilgrims between them according to each pilgrim's place of origin. For example, families numbered 23 and 24 received pilgrims from Danpara state, while family number 26 took pilgrims from Banki in Orissa. The researchers note: 'An arrangement which prevails among the Baru Servants is to distribute among themselves by mutual agreement pilgrims coming from various parts of India.' Nirmal Kumar Bose, Nityananda Patnaik and Ajit Kishore Ray, 'Organization of services in the temple of Lingaraj in Bhubaneswar', *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, XXIV, 2 (1958), p. 129.

¹⁴² A minor example of such internal politicking survives from the records of Radha Bai's 1735-36 pilgrimage to Benares. We know that Shivaji and subsequent Satara Rajas, as Ksatriyas, had been quite liberal in their donations to the Maharashtrian Brahmans in Benares. But there were complaints to the Peshwa about Radha Bai's largesse because she only distributed *dakshina* to Brahmans of her own *jati*, the Chitpavans, and ignored the other Maharashtrian Brahmans. Some Chitpavans were said to have received upto Rs.10, whilst others received nothing. One Deshastha Brahman accused Radha Bai of sowing dissension amongst the Maharashtrian community in Benares. Qanungo, 'Some side-lights on the history of Benares', p. 67.

¹⁴³ Peter van der Veer has found that this latter practice, 'inverted pilgrimage' as he calls it, is not uncommonly performed by the *pandas* of Ajudhia: 'In such cases the panda is the hereditary Ayodhya-priest of Hindu families living in different parts of - mainly - North India. When visiting his jajman...the priest brings sacred articles like Sarayu-water, some red paste which is smeared over Hanuman and distributed among devotees, *prasad* (lit. 'grace'): some food or fruit that has been offered to Ram, etc. Moreover, he himself is the representative of the sacred place and by worshipping him the jajman worships Ayodhya. In this way a jajman can keep in touch with the tirtha without visiting Ayodhya....Often gifts are given to the panda in a special ritual, but in addition the panda is in each case given some payment in cash or kind for his services.' Van der Veer, *Gods on earth*, p. 185. Vidyarthi's work on Gaya provides examples of this practice. One of his Gayawal informants speaks of a long pilgrimage he took across northern India: 'After staying at Kashi, Prayag, Mathura, Brindaban, Rawalpindi, Karachi, Peshawar, we went up to Kabul in Afghanistan. We used to meet and stay with our *jajman* in all the places of pilgrimage....We were specially invited by rich pilgrims of these places. They met all our expenditures and escorted us to their respective places....At the time of departure, they used to give us all types of clothes, money in cash and a large variety of things. Wherever I went, I was very much respected.' Vidyarthi, *The sacred complex in Hindu Gaya*, p. 150.

An interesting case of a successful speculative journey made by a priest's agent is recorded on a copper plate found at Puri. There is no date but as it concerns Amrit Rao, Peshwa Bajirao II's adopted 'brother', it presumably dates from the late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth century. The plate is inscribed in Marathi and reads: 'To Gaurang Pande, resident of the Kshetra of Puroshottama Jagannatha. Amritrao Raghunatha, with compliments, informs that at the request of Jagannatha Harihara, your agent, who requested His grace in camp for the conferring of the dignity of his Tirthopadhyaya [i.e. *tirthpurohit*], he is pleased to confer on you in writing the same. Hence if any of our family visit this sacred place they will continue to patronize you. This

The earliest evidence of this *jajmani* (client-patron) relationship comes from copper-plate inscriptions of a king or prince's gift to his priest. Some of these date from the tenth century. More commonly there are paper records of such relationships from the early sixteenth century. A priest who served a royal family was fortunately situated. The gifts he received were liberal, the high rank of his *jajman* ensured him a position of influence at the site, and his *jajman's* followers were a source of new customers.¹⁴⁴ Here at the site, as well as on the road, the existence of elite pilgrims helped to establish patterns of non-elite pilgrimage. This is particularly important for our period: the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a marked shift from grand royal pilgrimages to more modest, individual efforts, but very often these humbler pilgrims drew upon links with pilgrimage sites that had been established by the elites of their community.

Religious specialists at *tirths* were (and still are) differentiated according to their specific function. Broadly speaking, any Brahman who receives a gift (*dan*) for absolving a pilgrim of his sins is considered to be less pure than a Brahman who avoids these transactions.¹⁴⁵ In accepting the gift (in cash or kind) the priest takes on some of the worshipper's impurity, and even his own status as a Brahman does not entirely protect him from the taint.¹⁴⁶ Moreover those Brahmans who do accept *dan* are ranked according to the services that they provide and the caste status of their patrons. Lowest of

charter should be considered null and void if any one else is able to produce a document (conferring the same priesthood) by any of our forefathers. 1st day of Shawal; Let this be known.' K.N. Dikshit, 'Marathi copper-plate of Puri', *The Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, V (1919), pp. 216-17.

¹⁴⁴ Goswamy writes of the *pattas* and *farmans* 'carefully preserved' in their hundreds by the *pandas* whose livelihood partly depends upon them: 'The *pattas* received by the *pandas* from the Rajas of yesteryear, recording gifts made, or grants endowed, or again, confirming their status as family priests, were a source of great pride for the *pandas*, for their status in their own community depended considerably on the status of their *jajmanas* or clients.' Goswamy, 'The records kept by priests at centres of pilgrimage', p. 181. Peter van der Veer has also discussed the importance of royal patrons for *pandas*: 'When a panda had a ruling dynasty as his *jajman* than [sic] he had the right to have all the subsequent *jajmani*-bonds with the pilgrims from the king's realm. This situation was clearly expressed in the rule: "*Uska raja, Uski praja*, meaning: Whose King, whose people". Van der Veer, *Gods on earth*, p. 214.

¹⁴⁵ Theoretically there is a big difference between the gifts (*dan*) that may be given to a priest and the fee (*dakshina*) which it is his right to receive in payment for having performed a ritual. It is the former that are reckoned tainted, not the latter. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-1. Nominally *dakshina* is low; Buchanan records a ritual repetition of the demand 'give me a *paysa*' at Pretashila (the rock of the ghost) in Gaya, noting that had anyone offered just that sum it would have been rejected with scorn. Hamilton-Buchanan, *A history of eastern India*, p. 65. At Jagannath and Gaya the British tried to set up rules whereby the pilgrims would not have to pay more than the declared rate of *dakshina*. However, certainly in British reportage and possibly in the eyes of many pilgrims there was a confusion between what was being paid as a fee and what was being volunteered to a Brahman as a way of worshipping the gods or their own ancestors.

¹⁴⁶ Jonathan Parry's 'Ghosts, greed and sin: the occupational identity of the Benares Funeral Priests', *Man* (N.S.), 15 (1980), pp. 88-111, is probably the best modern discussion of the ambiguous status of the priestly Brahman. In his summary of this article he writes: 'the status of the priest is irremediably compromised by his calling. So far from being a paragon of purity he is an absorber of the sins of his patrons, which are transmitted through their gifts. The perfect Brahman could theoretically "digest" these sins without jeopardy to himself; but the paradox is that he is precisely the one who spurns the priesthood. Those who accept priestly offerings are liable to a ghastly death.'

the low in the eyes of all other Brahmans are the Mahabrahmans, the priests who oversee cremations and see to the welfare of the malignant spirits of the recently-departed. Of less impure status are the priests who perform riverside rituals, amongst them the Prayagwals of Allahabad, the Gayawals of Gaya, the Gangaputra (lit. 'sons of the Ganga') communities of Benares and Ajudhia, the Chaubes of Mathura and the Gaur Brahmans of Hardwar. As we have seen, holy rivers represent a bridge between heaven and earth; hence they are excellent sites for rituals associated with death. At Allahabad it is common for the Prayagwals to oversee the immersion of a person's ashes at the sacred confluence and at Gaya the Gayawals specialize in the worship of ancestral spirits. Ancestor rituals are commonly performed at all of north India's river *tirths*.¹⁴⁷ Temple priests tend to have a higher status than the preceding groups. This may be because they have little connection with the pollution of death; on a more prosaic level, it may reflect their degree of remove from the often violent competition for pilgrims between the riverside priests.¹⁴⁸ Most elevated of all are the ascetics who may teach a pilgrim disciple by instruction and example but are not contaminated by a direct transaction of sin and merit. An ascetic or a scholar who is supported by a wealthy patron is not sullied in the way that a priest is in taking a gift from a pilgrim who needs professional assistance to purify himself.

It is the riverside priests and the temple priests, particularly the former, that are of most interest here. Both groups are often referred to as *pandas*, an elastic classification derived from the Sanskrit *pandita*, meaning 'he who has knowledge'.¹⁴⁹ In Benares Jonathan Parry has observed that pre-eminent amongst the *pandas* is the *tirthpurohit*, 'the hereditary pilgrimage priest', but that the title

¹⁴⁷ Parry has summed up the difference in purity between a priest who deals with the 'disembodied ghost', *preta*, the state of the soul immediately after death, and a priest who deals with the ancestral spirit, *pitr*, which much less malignant state a *preta* should ideally attain: 'Rites addressed to the *preta*-ghost are presided over by a specialist subcaste of highly degraded Brahman Funeral Priests known as Mahabrahmans; while those addressed to the ancestral-*pitr* are conducted by priestly Brahmans with a rather less equivocal status.' Jonathan Parry, 'Death and digestion: the symbolism of food and eating in north Indian mortuary rites', *Man* (N.S.), 20 (1985), p. 615.

Gaya's symbolic version of the Mahabrahman appears to be the Dhamins, guardians of the sites around the Ramshila and Pretashila hills where the pilgrims make offerings in the name of Yama, the God of Hell, and several deities of ghosts and spirits. Vidyarthi, in *The sacred complex in Hindu Gaya*, p. 82, notes that the Dhamins live an isolated and outcaste life and are not known for their adherence to Brahmanic ideals of abstinence. They call themselves 'Pretiya Brahmans' or Brahmans associated with ghosts, one of the less-flattering epithets that Parry found was applied to Mahabrahmans in Benares. Parry, 'Ghosts, greed and sin', p. 108, n. 7.

¹⁴⁸ The latter is the type of analysis preferred by Peter van der Veer. Whilst acknowledging the importance of the recent work of anthropologists like Parry in questioning Dumont's purity/impurity rationale of Hinduism, he asks that a little history be imported into the discussion. He believes that the particularly hard times of the late twentieth century for Hinduism's pilgrimage priests has as much to do with their lowly reputation as an ahistorical assessment of the priestly Brahman's impurity. Van der Veer, *Gods on earth*, pp. 186-7, 197-211.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

stretches to include the *tirthpurohit's* *gumasta* or agent, who collects the pilgrims from the bus or railway station and nearby pilgrimage centres, or rounds them up from their homes, and the *ghatias*, priests who shelter under umbrellas at the riverside and watch over the belongings of the bathers and preside over the offerings that they make to their ancestors.¹⁵⁰

By the late-nineteenth century all over north India the different groups of religious specialists operated in what were, in effect, 'closed shops', defined by caste and justified by ancient usage and myth. Peter van der Veer argues that for Ajudhia at least this was not always the case, but that the definition of professional rights and the establishment of endogamous caste exclusivity was a development only of the nineteenth century, following on from the great period of expansion in the pilgrimage industry around the turn of the century.¹⁵¹ One of the main proofs Van der Veer advances in support of this theory is the amount of violence and disputation between different groups of *tirthpurohits* in Ajudhia in the nineteenth century as each tried to shore up its rights in the shifting and expanding trade and, after 1856, attempt to prove them to the satisfaction of the British.¹⁵² Although the Prayagwals and Gayawals do seem to have had fixed priestly lineages by the late-eighteenth century, in the early-nineteenth century they too were notorious for their disputes over the distribution of patrons and income and for their readiness to take such disputes into the new British courts.¹⁵³ At

¹⁵⁰ Parry, *Ghosts, greed and sin*, pp. 92-3.

¹⁵¹ Van der Veer writes: 'Before the nineteenth century there was probably never a clearly demarcated group or caste of Brahmans calling themselves Gangaputras. The documents [their pilgrim registers and statements of gifts from elite *jajmans*] mention all kinds of Brahmans with a great variety of names who act as *pandas* for *jajmans*, but from the fog of history a few lineages gradually emerge as the core of the later group of *pandas* who call themselves Gangaputra. I would speculate that there have always been families of the Sarayuparin caste of Brahmans, which forms the great majority of Ayodhya's Brahman population, specializing in the pilgrimage trade. They entered the profession and maybe they sometimes left it as well, but there were no clear boundaries between those who did and those who did not. The Gangaputras are therefore not originally an endogamous caste, but an occupational group of Sarayuparin Brahmans who had specialized in the pilgrimage trade.' *Gods on earth*, p. 215. See also pp. 227-9.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 217-37.

¹⁵³ When Thomas Law became the Collector of Gaya in 1784 he was strident in his condemnation of the amount of disputation between the Gayawals. At first he believed that the Gayawals were victims of the local revenue farmer who, as he claimed a percentage from every dispute he settled about the sharing of rights, profits and patrons, could be seen to have a clear interest in fomenting disputes. Law wanted to believe that, left to their own devices, the Gayawals would co-exist peaceably, dividing any disputed or joint income between themselves without recourse to outside adjudication. Although he never changed his opinion about the impropriety of the *amil's* behaviour, Law did later come to believe that the Gayawals were not the innocent victims of state oppression that he had thought them to be, and he acknowledged that it served the financial interests of some of them to work against resolution of disputes. Thomas Law, Collr Rohtas, to David Anderson, President, and Members of the Rev. Comtee, 11 Aug. 1784, IOR, Bengal Revenue Consultations P/50/54, 15 Oct. 1784, letter recd no. 349, enclosure. Thomas Law, Collr Rohtas, to Warren Hastings, Governor-General, n.d., *ibid.* Thomas Law, Collr Rohtas, to William Cowper and Members of Rev. Comtee, 18 Apr. 1785, IOR, Bengal Revenue Consultations P/50/58, 10 May 1785, letter recd no. 148, enclosure.

Benares the whole of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were marked by conflict between the Gangaputras, the Panch Dravids (priests who had migrated to Benares from the Deccan and the south to minister to the pilgrims from those areas) and the *ghatiyas*. Many of the *ghatiyas* appear to have been newcomers to the priesthood and by setting themselves up on the riverside hoped to pick up new, 'uncommitted pilgrims' before the representatives of the more established priestly groups got to them.¹⁵⁴

The tax-collectors

The interest that pre-eighteenth-century governments took in Hindu pilgrimage sites is mainly traceable through their pilgrim taxation policies. It is inviting to liken the taxation of Hindu pilgrims by Muslim rulers to the imposition of the *jizya*, or poll tax, on non-Muslims, but the comparison is difficult to sustain. Exaction or abolition of the *jizya* by Muslim rulers always reflected an element of the ruler's religious policy, from its introduction in 712 by Muhammad bin Qasim, Arab conqueror of Sind, to its abolition under Akbar in 1564, and its eventual reintroduction by Aurangzeb in 1679.¹⁵⁵ The decision to tax Hindu pilgrims, on the other hand, only occasionally seems to have been directed by religious policy.¹⁵⁶ Economic and political considerations largely determined the incidence and level of pilgrim taxation. Pilgrims entering a city represented an influx of wealth and, accordingly, they were taxed as other imports would have been. Reductions in or abolition of pilgrim taxes tended to reflect short-term political objectives. With the exception of Akbar's abolition of pilgrim taxes in

¹⁵⁴ H.R. Nevill, *Benares: A Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909), pp. 68-70; W.O. Salmon, Benares Collr, to M. Moore, Actg Secy to Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP, 28 Nov. 1810, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP P/91/51, 28 Dec. 1810, no. 17.

¹⁵⁵ Aurangzeb reintroduced the *jizya* with harsher conditions than any of his predecessors. All healthy non-Muslim males, including those in feudatory states under Hindu rule and those rulers themselves, were meant to pay it. Previous Muslim rulers had only collected the tax from non-Muslims living under their direct rule. The *jizya* had to be paid to the revenue officials in person; Hindus of high rank were not supposed to be able to pay by proxy. Sri Ram Sharma, *The religious policy of the Mughal Emperors* (2nd edn, London, 1962), pp. 1-8, 152-62. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami has written at length on the origins of the *jizya* as a tax that non-Muslims, who were not conscripted into the armies of Muslim states, paid for the protection they received from their Muslim rulers. But he notes that it changed rapidly to acquire its more familiar reputation as a punitive tax exacted from people who would not convert to Islam.. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Some aspects of religion and politics in India during the thirteenth century* (Aligarh, 1961), pp. 310-15. Sharma has pointed out that, as the *jizya* was applied under Aurangzeb, there were no traces of its origins as a tax paid by citizens who were exempted from military service. Muslims were not conscripted, and never had been in Muslim-ruled India, and those Hindus who were in the Mughal army were still expected to pay the tax. *The religious policy of the Mughal Emperors*, pp. 153-4.

¹⁵⁶ At most the taxation of pilgrims by Muslim governments can be seen as an act of religious tolerance, a compromise whereby Muslim rulers would not be seen to be allowing idolatrous practices to continue unhindered. A particularly zealous ruler, Feroz Shah Tughlaq, outlawed pilgrim taxation because it implied government recognition of idolatry. He also tried to ban all Hindu festivals and pilgrimage. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

the 1560s, other Emperors lightened the burden on pilgrims when they wanted to conciliate particular individuals or groups. We have already seen above that a Maharashtrian *pandit* persuaded Shah Jahan to abolish pilgrim taxes at Allahabad and Benares. Pilgrim taxes must have been reimposed under Aurangzeb, for in 1714 and 1716 the Saiyid brothers forbade the collection of pilgrim taxes at Allahabad, Agra and other places. In 1719-20 Farrukhsiyar issued another *farman* forbidding the collection of a pilgrim tax on Hindus crossing the Ganga at Benares after pleas from Gujarati and Maratha merchants and travellers to this effect.¹⁵⁷

The repeated abolition of pilgrim taxes at the imperial level suggests that they had a way of sneaking back onto the local or regional fund-raising agenda once the initial impact of the imperial order had faded. Moreover the nature of pilgrim taxes was not always distinct. Local revenue collectors and tax farmers were able to exact a myriad of customs dues, taxes on vehicles and taxes on 'strangers'; and visitors to a city such as Allahabad or Benares were not always readily identifiable as pilgrims rather than merchants or traders. Local landholders *en route* to a site often exacted protection money from pilgrim parties, subtly threatening them with plunder unless they paid up. This too was experienced by the pilgrims as a form of pilgrim tax, although it had no official status as such. It was a form of taxation that increased sharply in the eighteenth century with the decline of Mughal authority and the creation of shady border areas between regional successor states. The routes from Benares to Gaya and from Bengal to Jagannath were notorious for the exaction of protection tolls.¹⁵⁸

Pilgrim taxation was not only levied by Muslim governments. The Peshwas urged its abolition whenever they could but they seem to have been alone in their aims and not very

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¹⁵⁷ *Balmukund Nama*, trans. and ed. by Satish Chandra as *Letters of a King-Maker of the eighteenth century* (Aligarh, 1972), p. 99.

¹⁵⁸ In 1807 the Company finally decided a compensation claim in favour of the Rani of Moharbhaj who had been in the habit of collecting protection money from Bengali pilgrims travelling south through her jungly territory to Cuttack. The Commissioner of Cuttack reported that this arrangement had enjoyed the unofficial approval of the Nagpur state which, although it controlled Cuttack, did not have sufficient resources to protect its access roads. He noted that: 'The Mahratta Government it is probable had it in their power to have prevented or interrupted any regular collection of that tax [*i.e.*, that levied by the Moharbhaj authority]; but if they could not at the same time have entirely removed the annoyance, to which pilgrims were exposed such impediment would have operated greatly to the diminution of their own collections at the temple; they appear therefore to have consented to the tax, on condition of the Moharbhaj authority becoming responsible for robberies committed on pilgrims.' J. Melvill, Late Comr Cuttack, to G. Dowdeswell, Secy to Govt, Rev. Dept, 20 May 1807, in H.N. Sinha (ed.), *Selections from the Nagpur Residency Records* (3 vols, Nagpur, 1950-3), II, pp. 65-8.

successful.¹⁵⁹ Other Hindu rulers openly declared their economic interest and collected taxes without admitting any suggestion that such behaviour harmed Hindu interests. Moderate pilgrim taxes continued to be levied at Benares throughout the independent reign of the Benares Rajas, and the Nagpur Rajas had no qualms about maintaining pilgrim taxation at the shrine of Jagannath. At Hardwar the Sindhias did not tax pilgrims *per se*, but they taxed the vehicles and the animals which conveyed them hither. There were also numerous smaller pilgrimage sites and shrines throughout the north where the local power-brokers, regardless of religious affiliation, demanded a share of the pilgrimage proceeds.¹⁶⁰

As a prelude to a discussion of the taxation systems inherited by the British, however, it is safe to argue that pilgrim taxes, whether levied by Muslims or Hindus, were most organized in their collection and moderate in their demands where the imperial or regional government was strongest and most able to keep a close watch on its collection agency. High and complicated rates of pilgrim taxation were not proof of a rapacious Muslim government's intent to squeeze infidel pilgrims, but rather a legacy of any government's declining power: middle-men were always ready to seize the opportunity to milk the pilgrims of their wealth. A corollary of strong government was the power that its officers exerted over the religious functionaries to ensure that pilgrims did not manage to perform their ceremonies without first paying the government tax. Very often this was formalized to the extent

¹⁵⁹ In 1754 the Peshwa attached a *chauki* near Trimbak when it was discovered that the *chaukidar* there was exacting transit tolls from pilgrims going to Trimbak. D.B. Parasnis (ed.), *Selections from the Satara Rajas' and Peshwas' Diaries* (9 vols, Poona, 1906-11), II, p. 206.

When the Marathas were granted control of the sacred sites of Gaya and Kurukshetra, also in 1754, the new manager of the sites, Damodar Mahadev, was instructed firmly to take no pilgrim taxes. *Ibid.*, I, p. 53. However, as far as Gaya was concerned, the Mughals were handing over something which had long since ceased to be under their control. The Marathas never took permanent charge of Gaya and the exorbitant pilgrim taxes there, in themselves a reflection of the lack of any single authority in the area, continued to be exacted.

¹⁶⁰ The Mughal district of Etawah, annexed by the Nawab of Awadh in 1774, stretched out between the Ganga and the Jumna. At several of the *ghats* on the Ganga pilgrims paid a variety of taxes: a tax on the shaving ceremony, a tax on sealed *lotahs* of *gangajal*, a tax on bullocks and vehicles bringing pilgrims to bathe. W.O. Salmon, Collr Etawah, to Charles Buller, Secy to Bd of Rev., 29 Mar. 1805, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP P/90/47, 26 Apr. 1805, no. 6. These taxes were particularly well-developed at the town of Soron, where hundreds of thousands of pilgrims gathered at a *mela* in the month of Kuar, but in the early years of British rule Company servants discovered that for years most of the income had disappeared into the pockets of the *darogah* of customs. T. Fortescue, Actg Collr Etawah, to H. Newnham, Actg Secy to Revenue Board of Comrs, 17 Apr. 1810, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP P/91/42, 27 Apr. 1810, no. 53A.

At the top of the Company's northern division of Moradabad Company servants discovered four Sitala Devi shrines, two in Kasipur *pargana*, and one each in Sarkara and Sambhal *parganas*, at which it was customary to divide the pilgrims' offerings between the government and the local priests, the lion's share going to the former. This practice dated from the Nawab of Awadh's rule of Rohilkhand, but once again the government's take seems to have been dictated entirely by economic motives; the priests of the shrines were Hindus but the devotees were a mixture of Muslims and Hindus. H. Batson, Collr Moradabad, 'An Account of the origin of the Collections made at the Shrine denominated Racen Sutte in the Pergunnah of Kasheepoor', 22 Feb. 1827, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1239 (40593), 'Abolition of the Pilgrim tax at Sorone'.

that pilgrim guides, priests, barbers and *lotah*-closers signed undertakings to this effect, forfeiting part of their income if they were discovered to have served an unlicensed pilgrim. Under strong governments, *tirthpurohits* such as the Gayawals were often subjected to some form of taxation; at the very least across-the-board exemptions on the grounds of a group's religious character were not commonplace. As we shall see below, the priests seem to have been treated as occupational groups rather than as specifically religious ones. This type of control also slackened in times of political turmoil.

Pilgrim taxation systems inherited by the British

Despite the variety of pilgrim taxation systems inherited by the Company in the late-eighteenth century two points are common to the experiences of all the pilgrims. First, as we have already seen above, it was accepted that a pilgrim ought to pay both priest and government according to his ability. However, representatives of these two groups of power-holders commanded quite different resources to effect their financial expectations. Priests, by virtue of their religious authority, held the key to the success or failure of the months of effort and expense in a long-distance pilgrimage. They could withhold formal completion of a pilgrim's ceremonies until the sum demanded had been paid, or they could frighten recalcitrant devotees with threats of self-mutilation.¹⁶¹ Government officials had strictly earthly means at their disposal: a combination of executive force and registers of pilgrim charges. The flexibility that both priests and officials customarily exercised in assessing the dues to be paid often led to arguments with pilgrims. It seems however that a pilgrim was more likely to resist the demands of a government representative than those of a priest. Several examples survive of pilgrim parties evading government taxes,¹⁶² but I have found none of pilgrims actively avoiding priestly

¹⁶¹ In 1799 William Tennant saw the Brahmans of Allahabad threaten to wound themselves in an attempt to get a certain party of pilgrims to agree to a higher fee. The attempt was successful. William Tennant, *Indian Recreations* (2nd edn, 2 vols, London, 1804), I, p. 159.

¹⁶² In 1806 the Collector at Allahabad complained that the Company's *sipahis* were 'forcibly bathing' without obtaining a licence. 'Native Soldiery exempted from the Tax levied on Pilgrims bathing at the Conflux of the Jumna and Ganges', IOR, Board's Collections F/4/229 (5150).

At a huge *mela* in Allahabad in 1813 many pilgrims broke down the barriers and bathed without paying the licence fee. G.T. Brown, Actg Judge Allahabad, to Capt. Benson, 12 Mar. 1829, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1306 (51856), 'Pilgrim Tax'.

In 1833 the son of the Raja of Rewa and his entourage bathed at Allahabad a little down from the sacred territory of the confluence, thus avoiding the licensing establishment. IOR, F/4/1573 (64239), 'Evasion of the Pilgrim Tax, by the Son of the Rajah of Rewah'.

In 1834 the wife of a European officer in the Company's service noted the response of one of her servants to the government's one rupee tax at Allahabad: 'One of our sirdar-bearers seemed highly delighted at having

dues. At best resistance to them was passive, even though complaints against the rapacity of priests, particularly at Gaya, were legion. It is probable that priests encountered little active resistance because of the sacred nature of the pilgrim's journey. People who might otherwise have commanded authority were in no position when on a pilgrimage to countermand Brahmanic demands. As we have seen above, metaphorical bathing in *manastirthas* was considered the necessary counterpart of bathing at *tirths* proper; to resist the authority of a priest would have undermined the purified state of mind and heart that was to be maintained throughout the journey.

Second, when a pilgrim was of a particularly high social, political or religious rank, it was an act of courtesy and diplomacy to exempt him from the government dues. However, there was no similar expectation regarding the donations to the priests. The grander the pilgrim the more generous the patronage of the religious institutions and their functionaries ought to have been.

Allahabad

European observers of the late-eighteenth century tended to view the Nawab of Awadh's pilgrim taxes at Allahabad as repressive, although few people could substantiate their belief. In 1776 Francis Fowke, Resident of Benares, condemned the Allahabad pilgrim taxes as a dampener on interstate travel; pilgrims from the Deccan, he said, were being discouraged by the high rates.¹⁶³ Although Asaf-ud-Daula supposedly retained control of his internal affairs under the terms of Awadh's subsidiary alliance with the Company, pilgrimage, especially that involving the Marathas, was enough of an external affair for the British to exert pressure on him to reduce his taxes. On several occasions Asaf-ud-Daula fended off Company criticism of his taxation policy without actually revealing what the rates were. He resented keenly the inference that he was exploiting the pilgrims.¹⁶⁴

been able to cheat the revenue; as he said, that, by dipping a little below the usual spot, he had avoided the tribute, and had only paid four annas to the Brahmin. He would not on any account, he said, injure the padre, but he did not see any use in giving money to "John Company". Harriette Ashmore, *Narrative of a three months' march in India and a residence in the Dooab by the wife of an officer in the 16th foot* (London, 1841), p. 206.

See below, chapter 3, for a discussion of evasion of pilgrim taxes in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

¹⁶³ Francis Fowke, Resident Benares, to Warren Hastings, Governor General, 7 Mar. 1776, IOL, Mss. Eur. G. 3, Letter book of the Resident of Benares, 1775-86, pp. 21-2.

¹⁶⁴ Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula to Resident Lucknow, recd 1 Aug. 1789, *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, VIII, p. 563. Asaf-ud-Daula repeatedly pointed to the concessions he had made to the pilgrims in his years as Nawab. In view of the proven readiness of pilgrims to resist government charges, it is tempting to suggest that one of the Nawab's concessions - for several years he collected no pilgrim taxes at all during Magh (January-February), the month of Allahabad's big bathing festival - was prompted by the difficulties of

Eventually, in 1790, the Resident at Lucknow secured a schedule of new, lower taxes to be levied upon Maratha and Gujarati pilgrims. With it were details of the old, higher rates which Asaf-ud-Daula had reluctantly abandoned.¹⁶⁵ Both schedules provide insights into the politics of pilgrim taxation, the most obvious of which is the existence of special rates for pilgrims of different states of origin. Although Resident Ives did not clarify the point it is safe to assume that the rates for pilgrims from the Deccan and Gujarat were higher than those for pilgrims of less-distant origins.¹⁶⁶ Awadh was not alone in making this sort of distinction. During the period in which Jagannath was under the control of the Bhosales of Nagpur pilgrims coming from the Deccan paid Rs.6 in tax, whereas Bengalis were charged Rs.10. A European observer's comment that this arrangement prevailed because of the greater wealth of the Bengalis¹⁶⁷ sits unhappily with Buchanan's appreciation of the Marathas as more extravagant than the Bengalis in their pilgrimages at Gaya.¹⁶⁸ It was not perceptions of wealth which dictated different rates of tax, but rather degrees of foreignness. This was a sound policy for several reasons: first, it made sense to favour one's own subjects and regional allies, as did the Nagpur Rajas at Jagannath; second, it was reasonable to assume that the more time and money a pilgrim had invested in travelling to a site the less likely he was to surrender the object of his journey because of a government impost; and third, pilgrims coming from afar were likely to have more money than those living within only a few days' journey of a site. Pilgrims from distant states were also unlikely to repeat their journeys frequently, if at all.

The Allahabad tax schedules also bring out the close relationship between the pilgrim's payments to the state and to his priest. On the old schedule Awadh's dues during the month of Magh (January-February, the month of Allahabad's big bathing festival) had four components: an arrival charge; a departure charge; 'hunda', an administrative charge of either Rs.2 or Rs.5 for every pilgrim,

levying taxes on tens and hundreds of thousands of pilgrims at any one time. The logistics of collection could sometimes be horrendous, as the British were to discover.

¹⁶⁵ 'Statement of Duties to be collected at Allahabad on the Marattah and Guzzerat Pilgrims shewing the former established Duties, & the remissions now granted therein', IOR, Bengal Political Consultations P/114/42, 7 July 1790, no. 5.

¹⁶⁶ This assumption is borne out by an account of the Nawab's collection practices made in 1810 by the Collector of Allahabad which includes the statement that 'Pilgrims from the Punjab paid more than those from the Dooab'. H.G. Christian, Actg Collr Allahabad, to H. Newnham, Actg Secy to Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP, 5 Sept. 1810, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP P/91/48, 18 Sept. 1810, no. 1.

¹⁶⁷ D.R. Leckie, 'Journal of a route to Nagpore by the way of Cuttac, Burrosumber, Dongur Ghur and the southern Bunjare Ghat, in the months of March, April, May, to the 3rd June, 1790' in *Early European travellers in the Nagpur territories* (Nagpur, 1930), p. 56.

¹⁶⁸ Buchanan-Hamilton, *The history of eastern India*, I, p. 54.

animal and vehicle; and 'hashtum', the state's share of the fees given by the pilgrim to the priest officiating at his ceremonies. The first three charges were paid by the pilgrim, but the fourth was collected through the priests. All the charges increased in line with perceived rises in a pilgrim's status and wealth, but the fourth charge increased disproportionately. For example a pilgrim arriving on foot in Magh ought to have brought the state Rs.6/4/-: Rs.1/4/- on arrival; Rs.2 on departure; Rs.2 as hunda; and Re.1 as hashtum. However, a pilgrim who arrived either on a horse or in a palanquin, clearly a person of much greater means than a foot pilgrim, would have brought the state an extra Rs.23/11/-: Rs.2/3/- on arrival; Rs.4 on departure; Rs.2 as hunda; and a whopping Rs.15/8/- as hashtum. Obviously if the government was hoping to make this much out of the pilgrim then the priest must have had his sights set even higher.¹⁶⁹ At seasons other than Magh the state's earnings were lower, largely because of the remission of the hunda and reduced arrival and departure charges; there was almost no difference in the amounts due under the heading of hashtum. By this means the state ensured that it benefited from the arrival of wealthy pilgrims without having to expend much energy on collection. Its direct charges were modest compared with that which it claimed through the priests and, as we have seen, priests were less likely than secular officials to encounter resistance to demands for money.¹⁷⁰ At the same time the state was levying an income tax on the priests which required remarkably little independent assessment work.

In spite of the apparent simplicity of the scheme there may have been problems in administering it, especially as the Nawab of Awadh leased out the pilgrim tax to a farmer. In Asaf-ud-Daula's new schedule of rates the charges of hunda and hashtum were abolished, thus giving the impression of very much lower dues overall without admitting much of a reduction in the charges paid directly to the government. This suggests that the chief advantage of the hashtum - its indirect mode of collection - was also its biggest drawback, and that income under this head was perhaps not very secure, Asaf-ud-Daula preferring to retain the most reliable part of the collections. However, the effect of

¹⁶⁹ Even more lucrative for the state was a pilgrim arriving in a *bahli*, a two-wheeled vehicle drawn by two oxen. Another Rs.51/7/6 were collected on top of the basic foot pilgrim rate: Rs.5/7/6 on arrival; Rs.10 on departure; Rs.5 as hunda; and Rs.31 as hashtum.

¹⁷⁰ There was another advantage in taxing the pilgrims through the priests. Pilgrims did not necessarily have large reserves of cash. They had to pay the government's demands in cash, but they often paid their priests in kind: brass vessels, jewellery, cows, etc. This meant that it fell to the priests to convert the goods into cash to meet the government's demands, thus saving either the government or its revenue farmer the trouble of collecting scarce cash directly from the pilgrims.

abolishing the *hashtum* ought not to be underestimated. Overnight the state's administrative and financial demands on Allahabad's priests were swept away. It does not appear that new controls replaced them, for the British inherited a priesthood unfettered by government demands.

Under either schedule the pressure for pilgrim tax exemptions must have been considerable. Asaf-ud-Daula only introduced the new rates on the understanding that the Marathas would stop expecting to receive certificates of exemption. But as the government's direct charges barely decreased and as there is no evidence that the priests passed on their unexpected boon to the pilgrims, the cash demands on the pilgrims must have changed little. A Maratha cavalryman arriving in Magh would still have had to pay Rs.9/7/-, and his companion on foot, Rs.3/4/-. At other seasons these charges would have been Rs.4 and Rs.1/8/- respectively. It is understandable therefore that, although the Maratha leaders were instructed by the British to press no longer for such extensive exemptions from government charges, there was no discernible decrease in these demands.¹⁷¹

Benares

Information about pilgrim taxes at Benares is patchy, but what is known provides an interesting contrast to the more elaborate systems prevailing in Allahabad and Gaya. Despite its abolition by imperial *farman* in 1719-20 a pilgrim tax was collected at Benares during the reign of the independent Benares Rajas, but its incidence was never reckoned heavy.¹⁷² During the early years of the British residency the tax was farmed, but the proximity of the Raja and the vigilance of the Resident ensured that any complaints about excessive taxation received prompt attention.¹⁷³ Like the taxation at Allahabad a distinction was made between 'strangers', principally Marathas, Rajputs and

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¹⁷¹ It also appears that the Nawab did not have the authority to resist the demands; in 1799 the Resident at Lucknow reported that there was 'almost indiscriminate exemption of Duties in favour of Maratha Sirdars'. William Scott, Resident Lucknow, to G.H. Barton, Secy to Govt, 18 Aug. 1799, IOR, Bengal Political Consultations P/116/57, 29 Aug. 1799, no. 1.

¹⁷² In 1776 when Francis Fowke complained of the repressive pilgrim taxes in force at Allahabad he did not rate the evil so great at Benares. Francis Fowke, Resident Benares, to Warren Hastings, Governor-General, 7 Mar. 1776, IOL, Mss.Eur.G.3, Letter book of the Resident of Benares, 1775-86, pp. 21-2.

¹⁷³ In 1779, when Mudhoji Bhosale lodged a complaint with Warren Hastings about the treatment meted out to his *pandit* who was on a pilgrimage to Allahabad, Benares and Gaya, the Resident of Benares, Thomas Graham, immediately pressured the tax farmer at Benares to reduce his demands. The Benares Raja, Chait Singh, did the same, although it was recognized that the greater harassment had occurred at Allahabad. Graham and Chait Singh both approached the Nawab's *amil* with requests that he be more reasonable in his demands in future. Thomas Graham, Resident Benares, to Warren Hastings, Governor-General, 11 Sept. 1779, *ibid.*, pp. 102-03.

Gujaratis, and pilgrims arriving from north of the Ganga and from Bengal. In 1781, after Chait Singh's rebellion, Hastings abolished the 'brokerage from strangers', thus granting free entry to the long-distance pilgrims.¹⁷⁴ A nineteenth-century historian, Wilton Oldham, has suggested that the 'brokerage from strangers' was actually a licence tax taken from the pilgrim guides of Benares, and that there was a second, direct charge taken from the pilgrims and other travellers, the *talashi* (lit. search), which was also abolished by Hastings in 1781.¹⁷⁵ This is probably correct as it tallies with the system employed in Allahabad, with the state collecting some pilgrim taxes directly and others indirectly. It means that here too, with the indigenous government under pressure from the British, religious professionals were suddenly freed of their obligations to the state.¹⁷⁶

Gaya

At Gaya, a site famed throughout Hinduism for *shraddha*, or ancestor propitiation, the pilgrim taxation system was very complicated and subject to frequent adjustment in the eighteenth century. The basic principle of taxing people according to their ability to pay was preserved in the high rates that were charged for the more elaborate pilgrimages. Pilgrims at Gaya had long been divided into four main classes: 1) Kauper pilgrims, who visited the most *tirths*, between 45 and 54, depending upon the authority cited; 2) Darshani pilgrims who visited fewer *tirths*, although still between 38 and 40; 3) Phalgu Vishnupada pilgrims who performed ceremonies only at the River Phalgu and the Vishnupada temple; and 4) Phalgu pilgrims, who visited only the Phalgu. Most authorities also acknowledge the existence of a fifth category of pilgrimage: the Pinda Balu - a super-cheap means of ancestor worship

¹⁷⁴ C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries* (5th edn, 14 vols, Calcutta, 1929-33), II, p. 80. The new Raja, Mahip Narayan, attempted to claim some compensation, in the form of a deduction of the amount to be paid in his *jamma* to the British, for the loss of this revenue. On one occasion the Resident of Benares, then William Markham, represented Mahip Narayan's case with a description of the tax as the 'Dilloby Pairdaissie...a Tax collected on all Travellers - people coming from the Decan to Benares on Religious purposes &c &c - which the Governor General forbid to be collected as great impositions were made on the people that [were] coming to Benares. William Markham, Resident Benares, to Warren Hastings, Governor-General, 16 Jan. 1783, IOL, Mss.Eur.G.3, Letter book of the Resident of Benares, 1775-1786, pp. 152-3.

¹⁷⁵ Oldham, *Memoir of the Ghazeepoor District*, II, p. 7.

¹⁷⁶ After Hastings's 1781 changes, taxes still remained in force on Bengali pilgrims; in 1787 Jonathan Duncan extended Hastings's concessions to pilgrims from the Company's territories. Duncan informed Cornwallis that he had ordered that 'all Bengal pilgrims, not being merchants or traders, shall be excused from the payment of any toll for merely passing through the Zemindaree.' J. Duncan, Resident Benares, to Earl Cornwallis, Governor-General, 25 Feb. 1788, in A. Shakespear, *Selections from the Duncan Records* (2 vols, Benares, 1873), II, p. 54. From this date officially-sanctioned pilgrim taxes ceased to be collected in Benares. They were not to be reimposed for another century.

for those who could not afford any of the fees associated with the other *tirths*.¹⁷⁷ On this basic structure imperial *amils* and local power-brokers imposed a bewildering array of 'government' charges, the variety and excesses of which reflected the political turbulence around Gaya in the eighteenth century and the prolonged absence of any single authority.

The eighteenth century saw the rise of many powerful chieftains in Bihar, who, whenever opportunity allowed, held back the revenues from the imperial representatives. These chieftains, among them Sundar Singh (d.1760) of Tikari in the centre of Gaya district, the brothers Kamgar and Namdar Khan to the east, and the Raja of Ramgarh in the hills to the south, steadily built up small standing armies and entrenched themselves in small forts. As early as 1730 Alivardi Khan, Subahdar of Bihar, invaded the area to try to teach Sundar Singh and Namdar Khan a sense of their imperial duties. He succeeded for a time, but was unable to maintain the pressure.¹⁷⁸ Ten years later, as he himself was establishing his independence from imperial authority, Alivardi Khan again invaded the area, this time attempting to subdue the Raja of Ramgarh. Twice the Marathas invaded Bihar, first in 1743, and again in 1745. On each occasion the invading armies levied contributions from the locals, plundering any towns unwise enough to resist their demands.¹⁷⁹ The troubles of Alivardi Khan's successor, Siraj-ud-Daula, with the British brought yet more uncertainty to the region. For Ram Narayan, Naib Diwan of Bihar for much of this transitional period, it was a constant struggle to get revenue out of Gaya's rebellious *zamindars*. In 1759 and 1760 the Shahzada, soon to be the Emperor Shah Alam, invaded Bihar in an attempt to reassert imperial authority over the area. Gaya district bore the brunt of the imperial army's ravages in the months prior to a settlement with the British and Mir Kasim of Bengal; in particular the opposition of Sundar Singh's successor to the Shahzada's cause cost the area dearly in terms of imperial revenge.

These revolutions in government and the consequent uncertainty of revenue collection did not cease with the granting of the *diwani* to the Company in 1765. For some years the British continued to collect the revenue through Indian agents; their Naib Diwan in Bihar had enough freedom of activity

¹⁷⁷ A *pinda* is a ball of rice or flour essential in *shraddha* ceremonies, and *balu* means sand, hence a Pinda Balu pilgrim was one of extreme poverty, reduced to propitiating his ancestors with a make-do *pinda*.

¹⁷⁸ L.S.S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Gaya* (Calcutta, 1906), pp. 23-4.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* See P.J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead. Eastern India, 1740-1828*, The New Cambridge History of India, II, 2 (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 71-92, for a concise history of Bengal and Bihar during this period and an estimation of the impact that the political turmoil had on the region's economy.

to alienate the lands of Gaya's semi-independent chieftains, in some cases impoverishing and imprisoning them. Many British observers were not surprised when several of them rallied around Chait Singh in 1781.

Although the Court of Directors ordered the Company to take direct control of its revenues in 1771, the sayer collections at Gaya, including the pilgrim tax, do not seem to have come under European scrutiny until the appointment in 1784 of Thomas Law as Collector of Rohtas 'with special instructions to inform himself of the mode by which the Taxes and other fees of whatever nature are levied on Foreigners resorting to Gya and the Nature of the Grievances of which they complain.'¹⁸⁰ The authorities in Patna and at Fort William had been embarrassed by the steady stream of complaints about official harassment of pilgrims at Gaya, especially from Maratha elites, and were worried that an apparent increase in pilgrim numbers was not reflected in the revenue returns which were frequently 'a part of the accumulating Arrears of the Collections of the Behar Province'.¹⁸¹

The effect of fifty years of political flux on pilgrim taxation at Gaya is well brought out in Warren Hastings's 'On Hindoo Pilgrims', an essay about Gaya's pilgrimage industry which drew upon his early postings in nearby Murshidabad and Patna.¹⁸² Hastings's history of the pilgrim tax shows the relative independence of the Raja of Tikari under the Nawabs of Bengal. He notes that, before Sundar Singh's rise to power, pilgrim taxes amounting to Rs.8/8/- were collected from Kauper pilgrims and Rs.1/9/- from Darshani pilgrims. All other pilgrims were exempt.¹⁸³ But Sundar Singh's *amils*, probably revenue farmers who had contracted to pay the Raja a certain sum, introduced charges on the Phalgu Vishnupada and Phalgu pilgrims, Rs.2/10/- and Rs.1/6/- respectively. (This implies, although Hastings does not mention it, that the rates went up for Darshani pilgrims at the same time.) Additional road duties (*rahdari*) appear to have stayed the same for all the pilgrims: Rs.3 on coming and Rs.3 on going.

In 1770 a new *amil*, Mirza Zehooralla Beg, answerable to the Company's Naib Diwan, attempted to rationalize the existing scheme by amalgamating the *rahdari* and pilgrim tax collections.

¹⁸⁰ Rev. Board's Minute and Resolution on Mr. Law's Appointment, 6 Feb. 1784, IOR, Bengal Revenue Consultations P/50/50. 6 Feb. 1784, unnumbered.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² 'On Hindoo Pilgrims', BM, Add.Mss.29233, Warren Hastings Papers - Political and Literary Essays & Papers, fols. 75-87.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, fol. 76.

Under him Kauper pilgrims were meant to pay Rs.12/11/1, Darshani pilgrims Rs.5/-/6, Phalgu Vishnupada pilgrims Rs.2/10/- and Phalgu pilgrims Rs.1/6/-. These however were still only the basic rates; they were doubled for any pilgrim with a vehicle, riding animal or palanquin. These rates had to be paid in cash at Morapore *chauki*, on the outskirts of Gaya. At Gaya proper there were some more smaller dues to be paid which went to the local administrative staff. In all classes of pilgrimage these dues were trebled if the pilgrim was accompanied by a vehicle, etc. The following table shows what Hastings believed to have been the official demands on pilgrims, c.1770.



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Table I: Official Pilgrim Taxes at Gaya, c.1770*

Type of Pilgrim	Cash demand at Morapore	Cash Demand at Gaya
Kauper	Rs.12/11/1 x 2 if with vehicle, etc.	12 tungahs/25 dams x 3 if with vehicle, etc.
Darshani	Rs.5/-/6 x 2 if with vehicle etc.	10 tungahs/18 dams x 3 if with vehicle etc.
Phalgu Vishnupada	Rs.2/10/- x 2 if with vehicle etc.	10 tungahs/18 dams x 3 if with vehicle etc.
Phalgu	Rs.1/6/- x 2 if with vehicle etc.	10 tungahs/18 dams x 3 if with vehicle etc.
Pinda Balu	3 tungahs**	1 tungah

* Hastings, 'On Hindoo Pilgrims', fols. 76-7.
** A tungah was a copper coin equal to two *kachcha* pice. A dam (or daam) was equal to a 24th part of a paisa.

Local officials had ample scope to enhance these rates, as Thomas Law discovered in the mid-1780s. Although the basic Morapore charges as given by Law and Hastings are almost identical, Law uncovered a host of 'extra collections', the existence of which was ample proof of insufficient supervision over the collecting authority. All were designed to extract extra money from pilgrims who advertised their wealth and some of them clearly doubled up on the standard charges outlined above.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Thomas Law includes a sixth category of pilgrim for taxation purposes in his documentation of the sayer duties at Gaya. He believed that Kumarthis (Comartoos), 'professional pilgrims' who travelled from *tirtha* to *tirtha* collecting holy water and anointing the gods with it, were taxed Rs.9/2/6 at Morapore. If correct, and Law's information tallies well with Hastings and Buchanan, this would be more evidence of a taxation system operating without adequate supervision. Traditionally, Kumarthis were regarded as very holy and very poor; they were usually allowed free access to all holy sites. Thomas Law, Collr Rohtas, to Rev. Comtee, 13 Nov. 1784, IOR, Bengal Revenue Consultations P/50/57, 3 Mar. 1785, letter recd no. 65.

Table II: 'Extra Collections' on pilgrims at Gaya in the mid-1780s*

Upon hiring a carriage to go to the places of worship	Re.-/6/3
Upon each coolie accompanying a pilgrim	Re.-/4/-
Upon each bangywalla**	Re.-/8/-
Upon each bullock and horse	Re.1
Upon each carriage	Rs.3
Upon each camel	Rs.3
Upon each elephant	Rs.5
Salami from guides conducting pilgrims from Benares	Rs.1/12/-
Salami from guides conducting pilgrims from Bengal	Rs.5/6/-
Upon hiring a carriage to return home	Rs.1/9/-
Upon each coolie hired for return to Benares	Re.-/1/-
Upon each bangywalla hired for return to Benares	Re.-/2/-
Upon each bullock hired for return to Benares	Re.-/4/-
Upon each Deccani child accompanying its father	Rs.5
Upon each Bengali child accompanying its father	Re.1
Upon making out a replacement pass	Re.-/4/-
For the Darogah of the Sayer for fixing his seal	Re.-/6

* Thomas Law, Collector of Rohtas, to Rev. Comtee, 13 Nov. 1784, IOR, Ben. Rev. Cons. P/50/57, 3 Mar. 1785, letter recd no. 65. The category 'pilgrims from Benares' would have included pilgrims from the Deccan, Gujarat, Rajputana and a good part of the north west; they all travelled first to Benares and then to Gaya.

** A bangywalla was a man who carried loads suspended from either end of a long bamboo pole which was slung across a shoulder.

Law also discovered that within ten miles of Gaya there were at least twelve *rahdari chaukis* levying unsanctioned road tolls.¹⁸⁵ All of these extra collections and tolls encouraged wealthy pilgrims to leave their vehicles, their baggage and most of their servants behind in Benares before coming on to Gaya.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Law, Collr Rohtas, to William Cowper and Members of Rev. Comtee, 18 Apr. 1785, IOR, Bengal Revenue Consultations P/50/58, 10 May 1785, letter recd no. 148, enclosure.

Another consequence of the eighteenth-century political turmoil was the erosion of state control over Gaya's religious specialists. We have already seen how rulers under pressure surrendered their control over priests in Allahabad and Benares. Gaya does not appear to have been an exception. Since the time of Aurangzeb, the Gayawals had been obliged to pay Rs.14,000 annually into the imperial coffers, but they were relieved of this burden in the 1750s as a result of their 'appeal' to a local Hindu power-broker, Raja Ram Narayan, Naib Diwan of Bihar. The Naib had come as a Kauper pilgrim to Gaya, only to find that the Gayawals refused to pronounce his ceremonies complete until he remitted the annual tribute. This he did by ordering the local rajas and *zamindars* to split the obligation between them, thus freeing the Gayawals from the tax.¹⁸⁶ Taxes were never reimposed on the Gayawals, although some lesser groups of religious professionals, especially pilgrim guides who were hired to go out and round up pilgrims for business, were taxed.¹⁸⁷ Some control did remain in place over the Gayawals, nominally at least. Bonds were taken from them by the tax farmer to ensure that they did not foster tax evasion by servicing unlicensed pilgrims,¹⁸⁸ and by Thomas Law's time the farmer was also claiming the right to solve the Gayawals' frequent internal disputes over the distribution of *dakshina*, attaching between 1/7th and 1/10th of the disputed money as an adjudication fee.¹⁸⁹

A parallel development in this period was the growth of the Gayawals' ability to defend themselves from physical onslaught. In the eighteenth century Gaya's citizens, particularly its wealthy priests, fortified their town, took up arms, and earned themselves a reputation as tenacious defenders of the *tirth*. In spite of the numerous invasions of Bihar in the middle part of the century and in spite of the town's obvious wealth, it was never once raided or sacked.¹⁹⁰ In the nineteenth century, despite

¹⁸⁶ Hastings, 'On Hindoo Pilgrims', fol. 82.

¹⁸⁷ Hastings says that the Jotishees who traditionally brought pilgrims from the immediate region, from the east, the west and the north, and from Bengal, Bihar and Orissa generally, received a fee (*dakshina*) from the pilgrims, but paid no tax to the government. Guides who brought pilgrims from Nagpur, Satara and Pune, however, were supposed to pay the government Rs.62 for every pilgrim procured, an extraordinary sum which reflects the perception in the north of the Marathas as the economic and political leaders of the day. *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, fols. 86-7.

¹⁸⁹ Thomas Law, Collr Rohtas, to William Cowper and Members of Rev. Comtee, 18 Apr. 1785, IOR, Bengal Revenue Consultations P/50/58, 10 May 1785, letter recd no. 148, enclosure.

¹⁹⁰ In 1811-12 Francis Buchanan reported that Gaya was a substantial and wealthy town, with 6000 houses in the time of Thomas Law, most of them of brick and stone and many of them two or three storeys high. Buchanan says that old Gaya, the residence of the Gayawals, was often attacked but that its predators were always repulsed. Of the Nagpur and Pune armies, he writes that 'when these invaded the district, the priests boldly formed themselves into 14 companies, to each of which was entrusted the defence of an entrance into the town.' Hamilton-Buchanan, *A history of eastern India*, I, pp. 49-50.

the new era of Pax Britannica, the Gayawals' kept up their traditions of defensiveness, much to the concern of the officers stationed in the district.

Company administration of pilgrimage sites, 1780-1840

Although the management of pilgrimage sites, and indeed that of all native religious institutions, was later to stand out as a separate administrative issue in the Company's affairs, at the time of their acquisition the pilgrimage sites of north India were just one more of many new responsibilities taken on by the Company. Decisions affecting their management were not dictated by any distinct religious policy, but according to the overall political tone of the times. The treatment of the two early acquisitions, Gaya (1765) and Benares (1775), reflects the curious combination of pragmatism and Enlightenment thought that prevailed in the Company's government of the late-eighteenth century, whereas the administration of the two big later acquisitions, Allahabad (1802) and Jagannath (1803), was clearly shaped by the more centralized and more self-conscious bureaucracy of the nineteenth century. The early lack of a distinct religious policy does not mean that British attitudes to Indian religion were unimportant in the administration of the sites; it is merely a warning not to take their government out of context.

Nancy Cassells in her study of pilgrim taxation and Company government has rightly stressed the reverberations of the Company's undertaking to protect Indian religious customs and institutions and to administer justice according to Hindu and Muslim law.¹⁹¹ The policy, codified by Cornwallis in 1793 but in existence as a principle of Company rule from a much earlier date, was to lay the foundations of a much-vaunted tradition of religious tolerance throughout the era of British rule in India. But the policy was essentially pragmatic in its origins. Early British rulers, few in number and heavily dependent upon Indians to advance capital for trade and to collect the land revenue, were wary of alienating their barely-subject populations with innovatory social and judicial practices. What was spawned by necessity rather than conviction could never legitimately claim a sound ideological base and it is not surprising that, although subsequent generations of British officers all claimed to be pursuing the ideals of religious tolerance, the substance of the policy changed markedly with different stages of

¹⁹¹ N.G. Cassells, *Religion and pilgrimage tax under the Company Raj* (New Delhi, 1988), pp. 1-2.

colonial rule. Religious tolerance served as the ultimate sanction for many different approaches to social administration without ever imposing much definition on the policies it was underwriting.

Warren Hastings was the archetypal Enlightenment administrator in India. Praised and damned within his own lifetime, Hastings combined a pragmatic - his enemies said opportunistic - approach to government with a practised interest in the arts of the Orient and a genuine affection for the Indians of his acquaintance.¹⁹² He is justly famous for his patronage of Oriental scholarship; by improving the Company's pool of skills in Persian, Hindustani and Bengali he hoped to inspire in the rulers an appreciation of the culture and traditions of the ruled and to modify the reputation that Britons had acquired for unrefined greed.¹⁹³ Where later administrators would rail that Hastings and his contemporaries had been corrupted by Indian money and tainted by their associations with Indian middle-men, Hastings himself took the view that money alone was sufficient to corrupt Company servants who were poorly-paid and recommended by their patrons rather than their skills. His efforts at reforming Company government hinged on improved salaries for the Company's employees and commissions for good service; he was not concerned to expel Indians and Eurasians from the machinery of government as were later reformers, nor did he identify inherently corrupting elements in Hinduism.¹⁹⁴

Hastings was not alone nor the first in his open-minded approach to Hinduism. Several scholar-administrators of the Plassey era, notably J.Z. Holwell and Alexander Dow, attempted to correct what they saw as the lamentable prejudice and misinformation with which Europeans approached all things Hindu. As Peter Marshall has observed, these early British defenders of Hinduism were

¹⁹² In the years after his impeachment Hastings was to write an impassioned defence of the character of the Hindus, spurred on by the growth of illiberal evangelicalism which, according to Hastings, blackened all that it saw without the delicacy of discrimination or the advantage of broad experience: 'The Hindoos...are pure in their affections, simple in their domestic habits, gentle in intercourse, expert in business, quick of perception, patient of inert labour, respectful to authority, faithful and attached servants...This character of Indians I can attest from a longer and more intimate experience of them, than any other Englishman of this day possesses: and the impression which it has left upon my remembrance is such as exceeds in sentiment, though not, I trust, in principle, the attachment which I owe to my own country.' Untitled essay, BM, Add.Mss.29233, Warren Hastings Papers- Political and Literary Essays & Papers, fols. 14-15.

¹⁹³ It is typical of Hastings that he encouraged the early Sanskritists in their work, whilst acknowledging that 'the study of the Sanskreet cannot, like the Persian language, be applied to official profit, and improved with the official exercise of it'. Warren Hastings, 'Letter to Nathaniel Smith' from *The Bhagvat-Geeta*, dt. 4 Oct. 1784, reprinted in P.J. Marshall, *The British discovery of Hinduism in the eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 190.

¹⁹⁴ For Hastings's attempts to reform the Company's government see P.J. Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes: the British in Bengal in the eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 181-4. On the development of racial exclusivity in the government see C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: the British Empire and the world, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), pp. 147-9.

constrained in their analyses by their reliance on Christian terminology, with the result that 'Hindus emerged from their work as adhering to something akin to undogmatic Protestantism.'¹⁹⁵ In spite of the Eurocentrism there remains something attractive in their spirited defence of a religious philosophy independent of Christianity. In the preface to the 1767 publication of his 'Shastah of Brahmah'

Holwell observes:

That every nation and sect should have a high and even superior opinion of the religious principles, under which they were born and educated, is extremely natural and just; provided they do not, from an intemperate zeal of religious vanity (now so much the fashion) presume to condemn, depreciate or invade the religious principles of others...

Men who have been conversant with foreign countries, and made proper and benevolent remarks on the manners and principles of their inhabitants; will not despise or condemn the different ways by which they approach the Deity; but revere it still as a divine worship, though they may piously lament it deviates so much from their own.¹⁹⁶

The use of Indian agency in revenue and judicial administration helped to maintain the fiction of a stable traditional order at a time of rapid economic and social change. This, combined with the Indianized lifestyles of many post-Plassey Company servants, led many to act and to perceive their acts as a continuation of Indian administrative methods.¹⁹⁷ From one point of view, Hastings's abolition of the pilgrim taxes on the Marathas and other foreigners at Benares in 1781 could be seen in the tradition of Indian rulers being able to grant boons to their subjects. It reflected a variety of Hastings's concerns: the liberalization of interstate travel and trade; an intention to sweep away the oppressive legacies of 'corrupt' governments, such as Chait Singh's was now seen to be; a desire to please foreign allies; and, not least of all, a respect for the piety of the pilgrims. Ironically Hastings appears to have shored up the recently-acquired privileges of the priests - their freedom from government control and taxation - and to have reversed the traditional taxation bias in favour of pilgrims from nearby territories, so that they continued to pay taxes whilst the long-distance travellers did not. This effect

¹⁹⁵ Marshall, *The British discovery of Hinduism*, p. 43.

¹⁹⁶ John Zephaniah Holwell's chapters on 'The Religious Tenets of the Gentoos', from the 2nd part of *Interesting Historical Events relative to the Provinces of Bengal and the Empire of Indostan* (1767), reproduced in Marshall, *The British discovery of Hinduism*, p. 49. For similar sentiments from Alexander Dow see his 'Dissertation concerning the Customs, Manners, Language, Religion and Philosophy of the Hindoos', *History of Hindostan*, I (1768), *ibid.*, pp. 107-8.

¹⁹⁷ Peter Marshall has argued persuasively that Clive and his fellow Britons hoped not for a revolution in eastern Indian government after the Battle of Plassey, but for a return to the old style of accommodation and adjustment between Indian ruler and European trader. Their 'impeccably conservative motives', he says, blinded them to the significance of their victory. P.J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead*, pp. 78-81.

was not countered until 1787 when Jonathan Duncan abolished pilgrim taxes on Bengalis and other residents of the Company's territories.

At Gaya the pilgrim tax was preserved. For years, 1765-83, the tax remained in the hands of an Indian revenue farmer, but, as we have seen, repeated complaints about the farmer's exactions and numerous requests for exemptions forced the Revenue Board to appoint a European Collector to Gaya with a brief to clean up the tax's administration. Thomas Law made only a few changes. He separated the pilgrim tax from the other revenue, establishing it as a quite distinct field of taxation, and he put it under direct European scrutiny. Considerations of finance were probably of greatest concern here; Law did not trust the Indian farmer to collect the tax fairly or to admit the extent of his profits. He feared that both the government and the pilgrims were losing out financially. Importantly, however, Law and his superiors saw nothing wrong in taxing pilgrims; Law's instructions, after all, had been to rationalize the system so that fewer claims for exemptions would have to be admitted. His reforms therefore were not radical. In line with the Company's desire to simplify internal customs and to enhance trade he abolished all of the double duties and the extra duties (see above Table II) on servants, coolies, vehicles, etc., noting that these had retarded Gaya's economic progress. Elite pilgrims had often left their property and attendants behind in Benares, the better to resist the demands of the *zamindars en route*, the government and the priests. Law hoped that Gaya's economy would be boosted by the servicing that the pilgrims' 'extras' would require. But otherwise he preserved the five-tier structure of the pilgrim tax. Exemptions for persons of rank remained a question of diplomacy to be decided by the powers at Fort William. Law retained the practice of taking bonds from the Gayawals to prevent them from serving unlicensed pilgrims, but he did not resurrect any of the taxes that, according to Warren Hastings, former governments had asked of them. Indeed he prided himself on freeing the Gayawals from the imposts of the revenue farmer. Law viewed the Gayawals as entrepreneurs: their travels abroad to round up clients served the interests of the local economy. Given the rhetoric of internal free trade and the absence of a determined opposition to Hinduism, Law's actions at Gaya are entirely understandable. His aim was to foster interstate travel and the importation of wealth into the Company's territories. None of his changes ever appeared in print; instead a clause in a wide-ranging

regulation, no. XXVII of 1793, simply preserved from abolition 'the duties levied on pilgrims at Gaya'.¹⁹⁸

Law's contemporaries shared his approach to pilgrimage. For several decades some of the most popular *tirths* lay under Company jurisdiction whilst the most prominent pilgrims were foreigners: substantial Hindus from the Maratha territories. These pilgrims were seen to bring with them cash and trade, boosting the economies of the Company's towns.¹⁹⁹ Company officials hoped that they would return to their homes with news of the tolerant and just rule of the British and marvelling at the respect shown to their most sacred sites.²⁰⁰ Pilgrim traffic was also valued as an indicator of the safety of cross-country routes; where travellers motivated by piety would go, others, motivated by profit, would follow.

Possession of the pilgrimage sites also brought with it a certain diplomatic leverage which was well suited to the political atmosphere of the late-eighteenth century. Ever since the Company's explicit intervention in Benares's affairs senior officers had been at pains to stress the role of Benares as a safe-haven for dispossessed foreign notables. Cornwallis was especially keen that the British be seen to be protecting Benares's sanctity. He directed his arguments towards out-of-favour Maratha notables, instructing Malet at Pune to let it be known that:

¹⁹⁸ Cassells, *Religion and pilgrim tax under the Company Raj*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁹ Historically, the links between trade and pilgrimage had been much stronger, although they were now rapidly weakening. For most of the eighteenth century a good deal of the internal trade in valuable items, particularly silks, gold and precious stones, drugs and spices, Kashmiri shawls and copper, had been carried on by Shaivite ascetics, variously called *sanyasis*, Gosains or *nagas*. Many more were engaged in banking and money-lending. The Gosains' social and religious structure gave them peculiar advantages over other would-be traders, especially in the unsettled conditions of the eighteenth century. At several centres, notably Benares, Mirzapur, Murshidabad, Pune and Nagpur, there were clusters of *maths* or monasteries presided over by a *mahant* or head priest. A monastic way of life ensured that capital accumulated and was reinvested; less frequently than in a normal domestic situation was capital dissipated amongst heirs upon the death of an elder, and often *maths* acquired new capital in the form of endowments from wealthy disciples and devotees. Moreover the trade routes often coincided with the Gosains' pilgrimage routes and the religious fairs they attended *en masse*, especially the cycle of Kumbh Melas at Hardwar, Allahabad, Nasik and Ujjain, were big marts in themselves. The Gosains' religious network gave them trading partners and receiving houses all over north India and the Deccan, and the alternative employment of numerous fellow Gosains as mercenary warriors ensured that they were well protected on the hazardous cross-country routes. Mishra, *Banaras in transition*, pp. 95-100; B.S. Cohn, 'The role of the Gosains in the economy of eighteenth and nineteenth century Upper India', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 1 (1964), pp. 175-82; Jenkins, *Report on the territories of the Rajah of Nagpore*, pp. 92-3; Safi Ahmad (ed.), *Topography and statistics of Southern Districts of Awadh* by Donald Butter (Delhi, 1982 reprint of Butter's 1839 original), pp. 89-90. Bayly has argued that the Gosains were the most flexible of the commercial communities in adapting to the demands of the nineteenth century and colonial rule and that they took up investment opportunities with the British and retained a stake in money-lending and banking. *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars*, pp. 241-2.

²⁰⁰ This was almost certainly part of the thinking behind Hastings's abolition of the pilgrim taxes at Benares. He was unhappy that British rule had such a bad reputation amongst Indians, that 'Every power in India dreads a connection with us.' Feiling quotes from his writings that his attempts to protect the Benares pilgrims were intended for 'conciliating a great People to a Dominion which they see with envy and bear with reluctance'. Keith Feiling, *Warren Hastings* (London, 1954), pp. 235-6.

[W]e consider Benares in particular, being the principal seat of the Hindoo religion, as a sacred asylum for all those of that faith, who may resort to it occasionally for religious purposes, or for those who may choose to settle and end their days in it, on account of their belief in its sanctity.²⁰¹

To the Company's chagrin, however, many of the Marathas resident in Benares refused to acknowledge the sovereignty of the British. Jonathan Duncan, the Resident from 1787 to 1794, was particularly frustrated by their sense of independence: 'the Marathas seem to consider Benares as much more theirs than ours, and it is looked on as a sort of Hindu republic, where all the nations of India consider themselves as at home.'²⁰² Cornwallis was provoked on at least two occasions to send strong letters of reprimand to Maratha powers over the behaviour of their subjects in Benares; it was the deliberate by-passing of the Company's judicial procedures which most exercised his concern.²⁰³ However Cornwallis ought not to have been surprised in finding his own sovereignty undermined when he advertised Benares as a haven of indigenous religion. As we have seen, when Hindu kings and their representatives went on pilgrimage they effectively took their state with them; a busy pilgrimage site like Benares was bound to play host to many conflicting sovereignties.²⁰⁴

Not surprisingly it was again Cornwallis, with his instructions to purge the Company's administration, who rationalized the Company's diplomatic initiatives with pilgrim tax exemptions. In 1796 he ruled that exemptions be allowed only to those pilgrims who could be clearly defined as representatives of the Company's allies. At no time were there to be more than a hundred exemptions

²⁰¹ Earl Cornwallis, Governor-General, to Charles Malet, Resident Pune, 29 June 1789, PRC 2, p. 149. Expressions of a similar character are to be found in J. Duncan, Resident Benares, to Charles Malet, Resident Pune, 30 June 1789, *ibid.*, p. 150; Joshua Uthoff, Actg Resident Pune, to Governor-General, 29 July 1797, PRC 6, p. 31.

²⁰² J. Duncan, Resident Benares, to Charles Malet, Resident Pune, 14 Feb. 1792, in Oldham, *Memoir of the Ghazeepoor District*, II, p. 191.

²⁰³ In 1792 Cornwallis accused Mahadaji Sindhia's *vakils* of treating the Court of Adalat with 'a degree of indecency and insolence' which 'no well regulated Government can suffer.' Earl Cornwallis, Governor-General, to Major William Palmer, Resident with Sindhia, 9 Aug. 1792, PRC 2, p. 246. See also Earl Cornwallis to Charles Malet, Resident Pune, 24 June 1792, *ibid.*, p. 244.

In October of the same year Cornwallis addressed Raghuji II, Raja of Nagpur, in severe terms about his brother's behaviour on a recent pilgrimage to Benares. Vyankoji Bhosale had detained and caused the death of a British subject, one Goburdas, said to have been a debtor of his. Earl Cornwallis, Governor-General, to Raghuji Bhosale, 9 Oct. 1792, PRC 5, pp. 13-15.

²⁰⁴ It was in the same political atmosphere that Cornwallis and Malet were prepared to offer to the residents of the Nagpur territories - indeed, to all the Marathas, if necessary - free access to Gaya and Benares if this would facilitate the cession of Cuttack to the Company. The Nagpur Rajas were to be given to understand that they could retain full control over the temple of Jagannath should they agree to cede the territory. Charles Malet, Resident Pune, to Earl Cornwallis, Governor-General, 21 Jan. 1789, PRC 2, pp. 135-7; Cornwallis to Malet, 16 Mar. 1789, *ibid.*, pp. 137-40. They did not take up the offer.

for any one party.²⁰⁵ Cornwallis had realized that most of the pilgrims who received exemptions, especially the numerous hangers-on of a party, identified not the Company as their benefactor but - and quite rightly - the lead pilgrim of rank who had had the diplomatic clout with the British to win the exemptions. By his 1796 move he hoped to increase the prestige of the exemptions by reducing their availability at the same time as increasing the Company's revenue by making more people pay the taxes. He was not completely successful. Lesser pilgrims of rank had to accept the new rules gracefully, but the Maratha and Rajput royals refused to bow to a system which restrained their largesse. They continued to press for numerous exemptions and, as long as the big parties kept coming, usually enjoyed more success than Cornwallis would have liked.²⁰⁶ Although the size of state-sponsored pilgrim parties began to shrink around the turn of the century this particular government policy does not seem to have been very influential.

In spite of the initiatives that Cornwallis took with pilgrimage, his was still a pragmatic approach, little concerned with the rights and wrongs of British administration of an alien religion. This position was questioned during Wellesley's time in office, when Allahabad and Jagannath were acquired by the British. Wellesley's tenure was famous for its expansionism and for the continuation of Cornwallis's 'cleaning-up' of government - the expulsion of Indians and Eurasians from all but the most menial levels of the executive.²⁰⁷ Wellesley's great monuments of empire, the new Government House and Fort William College, the latter with its emphasis on the liberating use of oriental languages, were the physical evidence of Britons' new consciousness of themselves as responsible rulers and of their subjects as natives unequal to the task of proper government.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Extract of a minute from the Governor-General in the Political Dept, 20 May 1796, in Sinha, *Selections from the Nagpur Residency Records*, III, pp. 11-12.

²⁰⁶ This is underlined by the periodic reappearance of Cornwallis's original minute in government correspondence for the next twenty years or so. See, for example, Political letter from Bengal, 15 June 1813, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/421 (10371), 'Measures adopted in consequence of numerous applications from Persons of Rank for exemptions from the Tax on Pilgrims'.

²⁰⁷ Bayly has discussed the uncomfortable relationship between the attractive notion of 'independency' in government service and the growth of Britons' appreciation of themselves particularly, and whites in general, as a superior race. Under Cornwallis and Wellesley previous debacles of British government in India - the corruption, the fortune-hunting, the decadent inter-racial alliances - were attributed to the connections with Indians themselves, amongst whom the taint of corruption was endemic. To govern fairly the Company's employees would have to abstain from intimate relations with Indians and cultivate honesty and propriety in a pure, Anglicized, preferably Protestant, environment. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, pp. 147-55.

²⁰⁸ Bayly has noted how the Fort William College education in oriental languages was meant to free the Company's recruits from a damaging dependency upon Indian go-betweens. *Ibid.*, p. 142. Warren Hastings had also stressed the value of learning oriental languages and as Governor-General he often asked the Court of Directors to put money into language instruction in Britain to better prepare the recruits for their new duties. In 1773 it was with this aim in mind that he suggested establishing a professorship in Persian at Oxford.

Under Wellesley's rule pilgrimage sites lost some of their attraction. Allahabad and Jagannath with their complex taxation systems were particularly troublesome acquisitions, fraught with administrative problems and, more importantly, philosophical ones. Evangelicalism, both the enthusiastic Methodist and Baptist varieties and the more cautious Anglican strain, was on the rise at home and in India.²⁰⁹ Many years previously the Company had promised to preserve the religious institutions of the natives, but now within that seemingly cast-iron guarantee there appeared to be room for debate. The debate, especially that part centring on the pilgrim tax and the propriety of a Christian government's connections with idolatry, did not ease until Act X of 1840 freed Hindus from government imposts at pilgrimage sites.²¹⁰

At Allahabad the pilgrim tax was not long kept up as it was inherited, although ironically one of the manifestations of the previous government's weakness - the untrammelled existence of the Prayagwals - was preserved out of respect for native traditions. For the first few years the collections continued as part of the sayer duties, although no longer in the hands of the sayer farmer.²¹¹ *Rahdari*,

David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835* (Berkeley, 1969), pp. 17-19. Thus we can see how the same means could served radically different ends: either the relatively liberal, Indianizing approach to government favoured by Hastings or the anti-Indian policies of Cornwallis and, even more so, Wellesley. Fort William College, established in 1800, was Hastings's dream but it served none of his ideals.

²⁰⁹ Although missionaries were not officially allowed into British India until the passing of the Charter Act of 1813 it was during Wellesley's tenure that they began their work in the Company's territories. By 1800 missionary work was under way in Serampur, the Danish enclave up-river from Calcutta; the famous 'Serampore Trio', the Baptists William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward, had taken refuge there because of the Company's hostility. But all three were excellent linguists and Carey - in India since 1793 - particularly so. In 1801 Wellesley appointed him professor of Sanskrit, Bengali and Marathi at the newly-founded Fort William College. Wellesley's admiration for the missionaries' linguistic skills persuaded him to let them start educational work in British territory. Within a few years there were mission schools in Jessore, Dinajpur and Katwa. The missionaries thus gained both an entry to British territory and, perhaps just as importantly, an entry to government circles in Calcutta. Together with some of Charles Grant's proteges in the Company's employ - such as George Udny, the Commercial Resident at Malda - they made up an influential evangelical community, not afraid to scrutinize and comment upon the government's activities. M.A. Laird, *Missionaries and education in Bengal, 1793-1837* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 63-4.

²¹⁰ This, it ought to be stressed, was not the end of pilgrim taxation in colonial India, as we shall see in the final section on the post-1857 administration of religious fairs; but it was the end of a pilgrim taxation debate that employed a specifically Christian vocabulary. Nancy Cassells, in her *Religion and Pilgrim Tax under the Company Raj*, pp. 147-9, appears to assume that the British taxation of pilgrims ended with Act X of 1840 and she comments on the 'surprising' and 'ironic fact that the Government of independent India continues to levy a Pilgrim Tax'. Given the post-1857 history of pilgrim taxes in India as an aid to the better sanitary management of pilgrimage sites, the occasional continuation of this in independent India is not surprising at all. Otherwise Cassells provides a good study of the politics of the pilgrim tax debate in the first half of the century, with a particularly clear delineation of the irritation and resentment that many civil servants in India felt at the interference in their day-to-day administration by British-based, populist evangelicals.

²¹¹ A proposal in 1807 to lease the tax out to a farmer again, perhaps a European, was flatly rejected by Fort William. It was feared that pilgrims were the most vulnerable section of the travelling population and least able to detect illegal imposts. Secy to Govt, Rev. Dept, to Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP, 15 Jan. 1808, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP P/91/18, 12 Feb. 1808, letter recd no. 2. It is interesting to note that at the time this decision was made the pilgrim taxes at Gaya were being farmed. Francis Gillanders leased the pilgrim tax farm there for some twenty years until his death in 1821. That he did so is further proof

or transit dues, which had cost pilgrims as well as traders, were abolished shortly after the cession. In these initial years the Company's revenue from the pilgrim tax never exceeded Rs.20,000.²¹² There were complaints about the cost of the collection establishment and the difficulties of preventing tax evasion.²¹³

In 1805 the first big changes were mooted. The Board of Revenue of the Ceded and Conquered Provinces informed Fort William of its dislike of the 'objectionable' tax structure whereby 'the inhabitants of different places both in the Company's provinces, and in foreign states pay different rates of duties.' The Board favoured a flat rate for all pilgrims, regardless of rank or state of origin.²¹⁴ This was turning every established principle of pilgrim taxation on its head, and not everyone shared the Board's enthusiasm for change. Wellesley's conservative successor at Fort William, George Barlow, agreed that a tax difference based on country of origin was unacceptable, but he thought that there may still have been room for a tax schedule reflecting a pilgrim's ability to pay. Whatever changes were made, Barlow wanted the new rules to be able to stand comparison with those in place at Gaya and Jagannath, an indication of the centralizing moves afoot within the government.²¹⁵ In 1806 the Board of Revenue suggested a flat rate of one rupee on every pilgrim, arguing that such a 'moderate' duty would not deter attendance, but that it would stem collection abuses and taxation avoidance. The Allahabad Collector, E.A. Cuthbert, objected strongly to the reversal of established principles, but the Board's members dismissed his fears that the tax would operate unequally on people of different wealth, arguing that pilgrims of rank and fortune would independently subsidize the costs of indigent

of the extent to which decisions affecting Gaya's pilgrimage industry were taken very much upon an ad hoc basis, reflecting the political climate of the time that it came under European control.

²¹² E.A. Cuthbert, Collr Allahabad, to Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP, 15 Dec. 1807, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP P/91/18, 8 Jan. 1808, letter recd no. 42.

²¹³ R. Ahmuty, Collr Allahabad, to Charles Buller, Secy to Bd of Rev., 26 May 1804 and enclosure, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP P/90/44, 4 Dec. 1804, nos. 1-2. It was a long time before the collection and evasion difficulties were reduced. In 1810 the Collector complained about the delays that the issuing of individual licences forced on the pilgrims; there were always bottle-necks at the tax stations and often disturbances broke out, sometimes with pilgrims rushing the barriers. On a busy day, such as during the Magh Mela, upto six thousand people could arrive, completely overwhelming the collection staff and rendering the licensing system useless. H.G. Christian, Actg Collr Allahabad, to H. Newnham, Actg Secy to Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP, 6 Mar. 1810, IOR, Bengal Revenue board of Comrs C&CP P/91/44, 5 June 1810, letter recd no. 1; same to same, 5 Sept. 1810, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP P/91/48, 18 Sept. 1810, no. 1.

²¹⁴ Secy to Bd of Rev. to G.H. Barlow, Vice-President in Council, 8 Oct. 1805, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP P/90/50, 8 Oct. 1805, letter sent no. 2.

²¹⁵ G. Dowdeswell, Secy to Govt Rev. Dept, to Thomas Graham, Actg President, and Members, Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP, 24 Oct. 1805, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP P/90/51, 1 Nov. 1805, letter recd no. 39.

pilgrims.²¹⁶ Some remnants of a wealth tax were retained: there were additional charges of Rs.20 on elephants, Rs.3 on camels, and Rs.2 on palanquins and hackeries. These rates, applicable from mid-1806, were formalized in Regulation XVIII of 1810, which formed the basis of pilgrim tax collection at Allahabad until its abolition in 1840. No control was reimposed on the Prayagwals, but the barbers who shaved the pilgrims before they bathed were always required to pay a registration fee and sign an undertaking not to serve an unlicensed pilgrim.

The temple of Jagannath, Lord of the Universe, properly lies beyond the bounds of this study, but the debate generated by the British administration of the pilgrim tax there had so much influence on the fortunes of the other sites that it is necessary to consider it here, if only briefly. The Company's administration of the Jagannath temple is remarkable for its radical degree of official interference and regulation - in seven years the Government of Bengal passed no less than five regulations concerning its management - and, paradoxically, for its conscious attempts to reconstruct the past. The Jagannath regulations marked a turning point in the Company's appreciation of Hinduism. Although the rhetoric of protecting native religious institutions did not change - if anything, it grew louder - the local officers showed a willingness to attempt to shape Hindu behaviour. In effect they had a new perception of themselves as instruments of social change.

The pilgrims who went to Puri became part of a temple culture which, although it has its parallels in the grand temple complexes in the south, was unlike anything they would have experienced at Allahabad, Benares or Gaya. The temple employed a huge number of priests and other religious specialists, and it was famed for its elaborate rituals and car (*rath*) festivals. Its expenses were heavy and it relied upon structured state patronage to maintain its grand scale of worship. Ever since the thirteenth century, according to a recent historian, 'it had been established that every legitimate ruler of Orissa must control Puri and Jagannath temple.'²¹⁷ In this mutual exchange of means and authority the ruler, traditionally the Raja of Khurda, was responsible for the upkeep and protection of the temple. In 1759 that responsibility had passed to Janoji Bhosale of Nagpur, the Raja having defaulted on a debt. The Marathas wasted no time in proving their excellence as patrons; already in 1755 they had endowed

²¹⁶ Bd of Rev. to G.H. Barlow, Governor-General in Council, 3 June 1806, IOR, Ben. Rev. Council P/54/55, 12 June 1806, no. 30.

²¹⁷ Cassells, *Religion and pilgrim tax under the Company Raj*, p. 22.

the temple with an estate intended to bring in Rs.27,000 annually. Much of the pilgrim tax revenue, estimated at between Rs.250,000 and Rs.500,000 a year, was ploughed back into the temple and the Bhosales made up any deficits with annual grants of Rs.30-40,000.²¹⁸ Whereas in Allahabad, Benares and Gaya the pilgrim taxes went into government coffers as a part of the sayer dues and were in effect money taken away from the religious specialists, at Jagannath the money returned to the temple priests. The ruling power was intimately connected with the management of the temple and the priests had a vested interest in seeing the pilgrim taxes kept up.

Thus the British inherited novel responsibilities when they took over Cuttack in 1803. For three years they collected no pilgrim tax at all; in their unhesitating condemnation of 'Maratha rapacity' they assumed that the suspension of the collections would be welcomed by the pilgrims and the temple's officials.²¹⁹ In 1805, after a report by Charles Groome, Collector of the southern division at Puri, had accused the temple's officials of mismanagement of funds, avoidance of duties and maltreatment of pilgrims, the Government of Bengal decided to stick more closely to the Marathas' style of management. This included the reimposition of the pilgrim tax, something that the temple officials had been requesting ever since its abolition.²²⁰ There were hopes on the Government's side that the tax might turn a profit given the increase in pilgrim numbers at the other big pilgrimage sites under British control. Groome's report introduced a spate of regulations: Regulation XII of 1805 and Regulations IV and V of 1806. Quite at variance with contemporary developments in pilgrim taxation at Allahabad, the 1806 regulations specified different rates of tax according to a pilgrim's means: Rs.10 on 'Lal Jattris', wealthy pilgrims, and Rs.2 on everybody else, with exemptions for mendicants,

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²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4, 38. Gifts and endowments from individual Maratha notables like those made at Benares and Gaya were also commonplace.

²¹⁹ As we have seen above, Cuttack had long topped the list of the Company's most wanted possessions and Wellesley was acutely aware of Jagannath's importance to Orissa and Hinduism as a whole. He therefore instructed the officer commanding the invasion to ensure that the temple's inhabitants and the pilgrims were not molested. In particular the priests were not to feel that their authority or their perquisites were threatened by the change of ruler. K.M. Patra, 'The management of Jagannath Temple during the East India Company's administration of Orissa', *Bengal Past and Present*, LXXXVIII, 1 (1969), pp. 61-3; Cassells, *Religion and pilgrim tax under the Company Raj*, pp. 36-7.

²²⁰ Patra, 'The management of Jagannath Temple', pp. 63-5; Cassells, *Religion and pilgrim tax under the Company Raj*, pp. 43-5. Under the Marathas the Subahdar of Cuttack had had the right to appoint four custodians (*parichhas*) to the temple. Between them they were responsible for the management of the accounts and the endowments, and they controlled all the activities in the temple and its functionaries. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4.

carriers of *gangajal*, residents in the surrounding 'holy land' and poverty-stricken pilgrims known as Kangals. Towards the end of 1806 the Rs.2 fee was increased to Rs.3.²²¹

With Regulation IV of 1806 the Company committed itself to the management of the temple. The Company had always accepted responsibility for the temple's income, but now it promised formally to appoint, pay and supervise a Council of Pandits to watch over the temple's affairs. This was a copy of the Marathas' administration and it came about because the British wanted the idol of Jagannath's seal of approval on their rule of Orissa. Not every Briton, however, was happy with this collaboration with idolatry. George Udny, a Council Member of evangelical inclinations and a friend of Charles Grant, heartily criticized the Government's readiness to manage the temple: 'The provision by law for such purpose, it appears to me, would operate to sanction, and tend to perpetuate a system of gross idolatry which Government is neither bound nor does it seem becoming in it to do.'²²² Udny's distaste and fears were matched by the Board of Revenue in Cuttack and they struck a chord with influential evangelicals in Britain who were already on the offensive over the Company's hostility to missionary activity. Their vigorous campaigning forced the Governor-General's Council both to modify the Company's managerial role in the temple and to curtail its fondness for pilgrim taxation. From now on it could only be justified as a means of conciliating the Hindus and as a source of income for protecting the pilgrims. By 1810 it was no longer politically safe to declare an intention to raise revenue from pilgrim taxation, nor was it wise to express a desire to see pilgrim numbers increase.²²³ This signalled a reversal of the official appreciation of pilgrimage that had characterized the 1780s and '90s.²²⁴

²²¹ Patra, 'The management of Jagannath Temple', pp. 65-6. Showing a remarkable lack of insight into the ascetic ideals of pilgrimage, the Pilgrim Tax Collector at this time, James Hunter, complained frequently about erstwhile Lal Jattris 'disguising' themselves as poor people in order to avoid the higher rate of tax. It was presumably to counter the disappointingly low collections of the Lal Jatri class of pilgrims that the rise from Rs.2 to Rs.3 was sanctioned for the other class. James Hunter, Pilgrim Tax Collr, to G. Dowdeswell, Secy to Govt, 14 Feb. 1806, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/223 (4892), 'Revenue derived from a Tax on Pilgrims resorting to the Temple of Juggernaut', p. 76.

²²² Cited in Cassells, *Religion and pilgrim tax under the Company Raj*, pp. 47-8.

²²³ The clearest statement of this turn around came in 1814 in a letter from the Court of Directors to the Government of Bengal. In approving the expenditure of some of Jagannath's surplus pilgrim tax collections on a wall at Atharanala *ghat*, the Court firmly told the government that 'We do not consider the tax on Pilgrims as a source of Revenue but merely as a fund for keeping the Temple in repair.' Extract Revenue Letter to Bengal, 28 Oct. 1814, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1306 (51856), 'Pilgrim Tax'. This grudging acceptance of pilgrim taxation by the Court had been hard won, for the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Court of Directors, Edward Parry and Charles Grant respectively, were noted evangelicals. The statement became the Government of Bengal's standard defence in the pilgrim tax debate for the next two decades.

²²⁴ From here it was not such a long step to condemning pilgrimage as a social evil, an attitude eventually taken up even within the government in India. The following from the secretary in the legislative department

Regulation IV of 1809 brought the Raja of Khurda out of confinement in Midnapore and restored him to his old post of Superintendent of the Temple. He did not regain his independence, however; the British retained the right to supervise his activities and to dismiss him if the Pandits of their appointment proved him guilty of misbehaviour.²²⁵ The most influential pressure to restore the Raja to his old post came not from British-based evangelicals, but from the Company's officers in Cuttack, many of whom believed that the Raja's reappointment would go a long way towards restoring 'discipline' in the temple. It seems that the Company's appointees had had difficulty controlling the temple's many religious specialists.

In another attempt to recreate the past by legislation, Regulation IV of 1809 also altered the pilgrim taxes. The Lal Jatris were now divided into two classes: those who entered Puri from the northern *ghat* of Atharanala were to pay Rs.10, and those who entered from the southern *ghat* of Lokanath were to pay Rs.6.²²⁶ This was a duplication of the Marathas' taxation system, but without any of their political justification based on the distinction between foreigners and locals. Furthermore, although the concept of paying according to one's ability appeared to be enhanced by the new system - two more categories of pilgrimage were introduced to produce a gradation of pilgrims that only Gaya could rival - the thinking behind the new rates was radical for Jagannath. Despairing at the amount of tax lost by erstwhile Lal Jatris declaring themselves to be poor, the Government had decided that the categories of pilgrimage should be made optional and that the reluctant Lal Jatri should be enticed out of his beggar's clothes with promises of much better facilities and greatly increased access to the idol.²²⁷ This inspired element of manipulation and the extent to which the new rules only paid lip

in 1838 indicates how far the pendulum was to swing: 'Leaving out of Consideration the more prominent Objections, in a moral and religious point of view, to the Encouragement of Idolatry, the Evils of an economical Nature that must inevitably result from the Habit of the lower Orders undertaking Pilgrimages of this Description are deserving the Attention of an enlightened Government. To say nothing of the considerable Proportion of Pilgrims who perish annually, on their Return from Juggernaut, from Disease and Famine, the Men entail upon themselves pecuniary Difficulties, from having sold or pledged their whole Property to raise Funds necessary for the Pilgrimage; and the Women, more numerous than the Men, having been allowed to leave their Homes free for once from all the Restraints which Custom and Self-respect place on the Indulgence of their Passions, and the Gratification of their Vanity, while living among their Family and Relatives, after a Carnival of some Months Continuance, and Association with all the Impurity of Hindoo Worship, must return to their Homes contaminated in Morals, and unfit, for the modest Seclusion to which they had been before accustomed.' Memo. by T.H. Maddock, Offg Secy to Govt of India, Legislative Dept, 16 July 1838, PP, 1841, V, pp. 23-4.

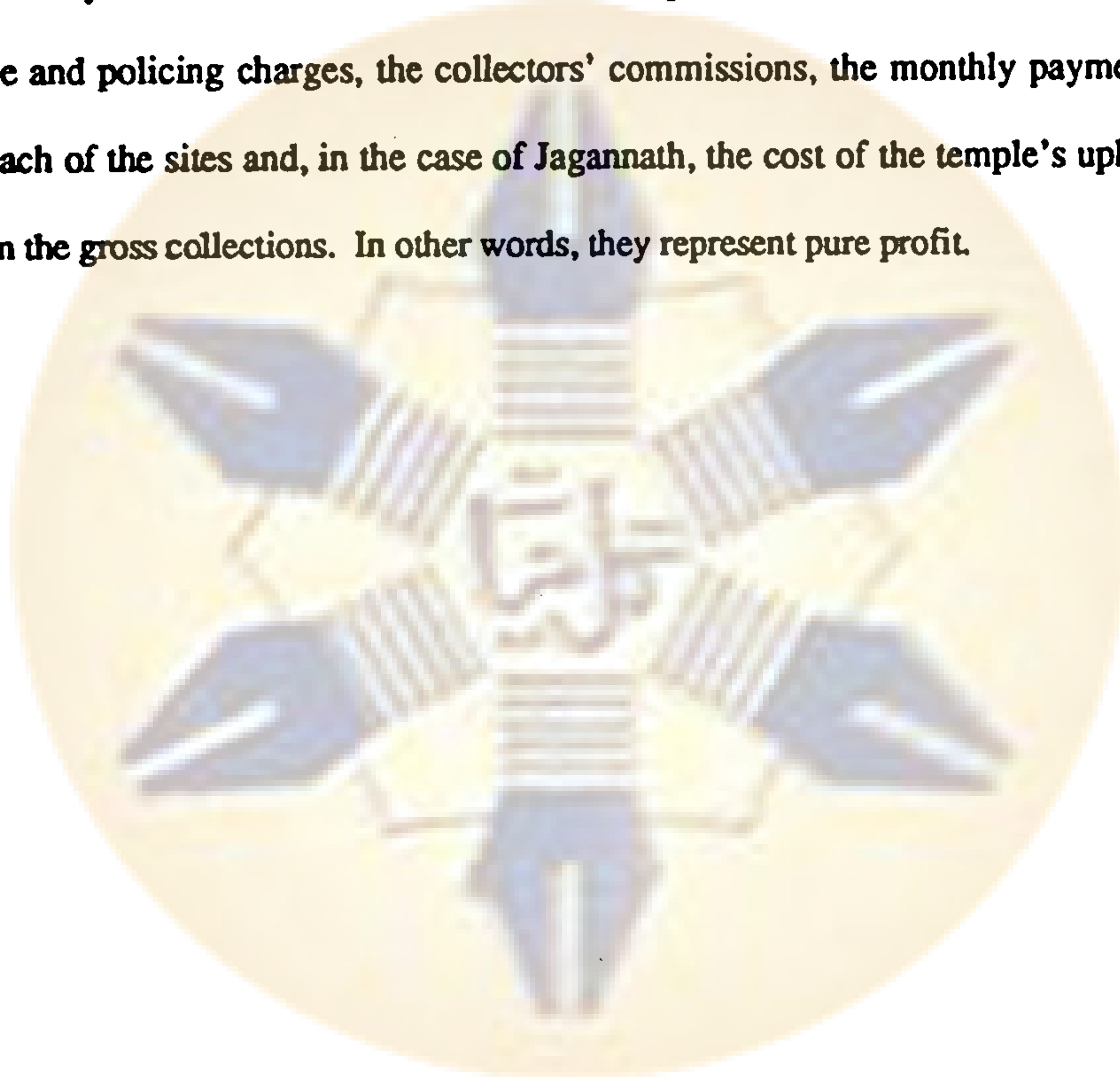
²²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-7.

²²⁶ Patra, 'The management of Jagannath Temple', pp. 68-9.

²²⁷ Cassells, *Religion and pilgrim tax under the Company Raj*, pp. 67-8. Under Regulation IV of 1809 Lal Jatris were granted thirty days access to the temple. In the second category of pilgrimage, the Nim Lals, who paid either Rs.5 or Rs.3 depending upon their point of entry, were only able to stay for either ten days at the

service to the past both point to the increasing sureness that the British felt in their alien environment as legislators and administrators. With only a few changes, embodied in Regulation XI of 1810, the essence of the 1809 rules remained intact until 1840.

While the government continued to tax pilgrims it was open to the charge that it was profiting from idolatry and there were problems in finding suitable projects for the expenditure of the surplus. Table III shows the government's net receipts from the collections at Gaya, Allahabad and Jagannath for the years 1812-13 to 1827-28. Net receipts were the amounts left over after all the administrative and policing charges, the collectors' commissions, the monthly payments to pilgrim hospitals at each of the sites and, in the case of Jagannath, the cost of the temple's upkeep, had been deducted from the gross collections. In other words, they represent pure profit.



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time of the Rath Jatra or seven days at any other time of the year. If a Lal Jatri paid Rs.10 extra to the Collector he won admission to the temple for an unlimited amount of time.

Table III: Net receipts from pilgrim tax collection at Gaya, Allahabad and Jagannath, from 1812-13 to 1827-28*

Year	Gaya	Allahabad	Jagannath
1812-13	Rs.253,680	Rs.222,300	-Rs.18,454
1813-14	Rs.205,505	Rs. 43,136	Rs. 23,407
1814-15	Rs.184,167	Rs. 64,785	Rs.130,906
1815-16	Rs.208,955	Rs. 83,932	-Rs.90,970
1816-17	Rs.193,947	Rs. 46,702	Rs. 2,689
1817-18	Rs.170,004	Rs. 37,327	Rs. 26,173
1818-19	Rs.247,333	Rs. 88,581	Rs. 19,688
1819-20	Rs.196,663	Rs. 56,614	Rs.103,136
1820-21	Rs.292,502	Rs. 53,476	Rs. 6,596
1821-22	Rs.282,196	Rs. 63,277	Rs. 54,102
1822-23	Rs.238,945	Rs.103,179	Rs.166,206
1823-24	Rs.232,621	Rs. 72,224	Rs. 11,783
1824-25	Rs.229,005	Rs. 61,686	Rs. 16,491
1825-26	Rs.224,943	Rs.127,760	Rs.217,182
1826-27	Rs.265,946	Rs. 72,587	Rs. 30,388
1827-28	Rs.217,636	Rs. 79,871	Rs. 48,654

* Statement of the Receipts and Charges of the Temples under the Presidency of Bengal, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1306 (51857), 'Pilgrim Tax - Appendix'.

Even without considering per capita profit, it is clear that Gaya's tax was the most productive for the government. This had always been so and, during the early years of tax collection at Allahabad and Jagannath, the government was occasionally heard to regret the absence of a revenue like Gaya's. A good case could have been made out against the government for profiteering in Gaya - one officer estimated that the government took an average of Rs.6/8/- off each pilgrim²²⁸ - and yet it was not

²²⁸ A. Trotter, Collr Benares, to Capt. Benson, 16 May 1829, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1306 (51856), 'Pilgrim Tax'.

Gaya that raised the evangelicals' ire. The height of the government's calumny continued to be its relationship with the Jagannath temple which, given the haphazard and relatively modest surpluses from its tax collection, suggests that the 'wages of idolatry' were not the most central of the anti-pilgrim tax lobby's concerns. The charge that was most frequently levelled at the government by Hinduism's detractors was that its careful regulation and policing of the pilgrimage sites was actually bolstering Hinduism, when, in the wake of the waves of civilization sweeping across the land, the religion ought to have been in chaos and decline. To these people a growth in pilgrimage activity was proof of the tragic consequences of the government's misguided defence of native religious institutions. It was this argument that won most support from people within the government and it was probably the more influential in eventually forcing the government to abolish the collections. Many officers who were prepared to collect pilgrim tax if it provided a revenue to police and protect the pilgrims at the site, were not prepared to countenance a system whereby the government seemed to be approving of the worship.²²⁹

Changes in pilgrimage in the nineteenth century

It is clear that pilgrimage activity at the northern sites increased in the early nineteenth century, but there is considerable difficulty in quantifying the changes. The imperfect statistics amassed by the British in their sixty-odd years of pilgrim tax collection do at least provide some indication of the trends in the changes in the pilgrim population. The statistics for Gaya that Francis Buchanan obtained from Francis Gillanders, the pilgrim tax farmer there since before the turn of the century, are perhaps the most complete and clear. These are reproduced below in Table IV. Some of the pilgrim tax receipts for Gaya, Allahabad and Jagannath are reproduced, in the form of an average annual collection over five years, in Table V. These statistics need to be interpreted with more care.

²²⁹ See, for example, P.D. Mangles, Actg Secy to Sudder Board of Revenue, to Depy Secy to Govt, Rev. Dept, no. 264, 27 July 1832, IOR, Bengal Sudder Board of Revenue P/81/45, 27 July 1832, no. 2A.

Table IV: 'Statement of the number of pilgrims who have received licenses to worship at Gaya from 1st May 1797 to 30th April 1811'*

Year	Licences Issued	Exemptions Granted	Total of Pilgrims
1797-98	17,577	93	17,670
1798-99	21,583	76	21,659
1799-1800	14,371	189	14,560
1800-01	22,276	456	22,732
1801-02	18,581	383	18,964
1802-03	23,003	331	23,334
1803-04	13,975	215	14,190
1804-05	22,119	199	22,318
1805-06	19,646	3,645	23,291
1806-07	32,010	1,821	33,831
1807-08	21,994	10,429	32,423
1808-09	26,632	1,320	27,952
1809-10	26,663	791	27,454
1810-11	30,355	759	31,114

* From the Buchanan Papers, IOL, Mss.Eur.G.18, Statistical Tables of Behar and Patna, Table no. 3.

From this we can see that Gillanders had observed a big increase in the visitors to Gaya in his fourteen years there before Buchanan's visit and he believed that the higher collection figures represented more than just an improvement in the detection of tax evasion. In 1797-98, when he began collecting the taxes he counted 17,670 pilgrims. Thirteen years later he put the annual number of pilgrims at about 30,000 with another 70,000 in attendants, but noted that this 100,000 could be doubled with the addition of several large Maratha camps.²³⁰ In another fifteen years, in 1827-28, the average was reported to have risen to 40,000 pilgrims a year.²³¹ By the end of the nineteenth century,

²³⁰ Hamilton-Buchanan, *A history of eastern India*, I, pp. 55-6.

²³¹ A. Trotter, Collr Benares, to Capt. Benson, 16 May 1829, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1306 (51856), 'Pilgrim Tax'.

the compiler of *Gaya's Gazetteer* estimated that 300,000 visitors (whether they were all pilgrims, or some were attendants, he does not say) were entering Gaya each year.²³² In support of this we have some early collection statistics from Jonathan Duncan. In the late 1770s he found that the average annual collection, based on the four years 1777-1780, was Rs.77,700.²³³ This, when the rates were considerably higher than under British administration, is much below what the British were collecting by 1812-13, as shown in Table V. Exemptions, at their height when Law took over in 1784, amounted to Rs. 75,818 in 1783-84, but these were included in the collection figures and did not represent extra pilgrims²³⁴.



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²³² O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Gaya*, p. 66.

²³³ D. Anderson and Members of Revenue Committee to Warren Hastings, Governor-General, 29 Nov. 1784, IOR, Bengal Revenue Consultations P/50/57, 3 Mar. 1784, letter recd no. 6. Duncan had the collection figures for 1781, Rs.55,652, but he did not include them in his calculation because he recognized that Chait Singh's rebellion of that year had hampered the pilgrim traffic between Benares and Gaya.

²³⁴ 'Statement of duties exempted the Pilgrims by Order of Government, from the first of Assun to the 23rd of Sawun 1191 Fussily, signed by the Canongoes and sealed by the Cawzy', enclosure in Members of Revenue Committee to Warren Hastings, Governor-General, 6 Sept. 1784, IOR, Bengal Revenue Consultations P/50/54, 15 Oct. 1784, letter recd no. 349.

Table V: Five-yearly average annual gross receipts at Allahabad, Jagannath and Gaya, from 1812-13 to 1831-32*

Year	Allahabad	Jagannath	Gaya
1812-13/1816-17	**Rs.56,665	Rs. 92,148	Rs.231,146
1817-18/1821-22	Rs.65,364	Rs.104,509	Rs.259,070
1822-23/1826-27	Rs.95,542	Rs.145,000	Rs.258,639
1827-28/1831-32	Rs.82,170	Rs.135,726	Rs.241,317

* Calculated from: Statement of the Receipts and Charges of the Temples under the Presidency of Bengal, IOR, F/4/1306 (51857), 'Pilgrim Tax - Appendix'; Comparative Statement of the Gross & Net Receipts & Disbursements of Gyah duties for the year 1828/29, IOR, Bengal Sudder Board of Revenue P/81/6, 1 Sept. 1829, no. 41; Abstract Acct of Receipts & Charges on Meerbehr Duties at Illahabad in 1828/29, IOR, Bengal Sudder Board of Revenue W.P. Separate P/96/36, 16 Oct. 1829, no. 72; Abstract of Collections, Expenses & Net Collections on acct of pilgrim tax at Gaya, Allahabad, Moradabad & Jagannath, 1828/30, IOR, Bengal Sudder Board of Revenue P/81/23, 8 July 1831, no. 15; Abstract of Gross Collections, Expenses and Net Collections on acct of Taxes levied on Pilgrims at Gyah, Allahabad, various places in the dt of Moradabad and Juggernaut in Cuttack for 1830/31, IOR, Bengal Sudder Board of Revenue P/81/45, 27 July 1832, no. 2; Abstract of Taxes levied on Pilgrims at Gaya and Juggernaut for 1831/32, IOR, Bengal Sudder Board of Revenue P/81/54, 19 Mar. 1833, no. 14.

** Calculated from the four years 1813-14/1816-17 because the 1812-13 Magh Mela was an exceptionally large one, reputedly the largest for 28 years, attended by an estimated half a million people. The government took Rs.221,066 in pilgrim taxes. Account of Meer Behur duties May 1812-April 1813, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/451 (10858), 'Receipts & Disbursements on account of the Duties levied from Pilgrims resorting to Allahabad in 1811/12 & 1812/13', p. 4.

The gross collections were increasing, although there is a dropping off in takings at all three sites in the early 1830s. However, it only for Allahabad where there was a basic flat rate of tax that an increase in collections can be assumed to mean an increase in pilgrims. Some comment is needed on the Allahabad figures. The early receipts, when the Nawab of Awadh's old rates were still in place, were abnormally low, probably because of the initial problems with collection fraud and tax avoidance: Rs.29,925 for 1803-04 and Rs.18,418 for 1804-05.²³⁵ In the 1780s Asaf-ud-Daula was said to have been collecting Rs.50,000 a year in addition to the exemptions he granted to the Marathas.²³⁶ But

²³⁵ Thomas Graham and Members of Board of Revenue, to George Barlow, Vice-President in Council, 8 Oct. 1805, IOR, Bengal Revenue Council P/54/47, 24 Oct. 1805, no. 19. Admittedly remissions granted to the Company's sepoys, many of whom succeeded in getting their families and friends passed the collection barriers with them, did depress the collections for several years after the 1802-04 Maratha war. In 1807, the Collector estimated that 25,000 pilgrims a year were obtaining tax exemptions in this way. E.A. Cuthbert, Collr Allahabad, to Revenue Board, 15 Dec. 1807, IOR, Bengal Revenue Board of Comrs C&CP P/91/18, 8 Jan. 1808, letter recd no. 42.

²³⁶ George Forster, a Company servant from Madras, passed through Awadh in 1782, observing that the Nawab Vizier raised Rs.50,000 annually from his pilgrim tax farm at Allahabad. Forster, *A journey from*

collection methods had improved by the second decade of the new century and it is likely that, apart from Kumbh and Ardh-Kumbh years, the collections were sufficiently standardized to enable us to read into them a steady increase in pilgrim numbers. Even so, there was still likely to have been considerable under reportage. The Collector of Benares, using pilgrim licence statistics, put the average number of bathers at Allahabad in the 1820s at 83,000.²³⁷

The Jagannath and Gaya figures are more problematic. As there were different rates of taxation in force at each site one needs to know something of the class of pilgrims attending before one can argue that an increase in revenue equals an increase in pilgrims. The Gaya statistics are particularly interesting; they, out of the three, show the least evidence of an improvement in collections, but we know that pilgrim numbers were increasing around this time. This suggests that there were less pilgrims registering for the costly Kauper round of *tirths* and more registering for the cheaper categories of pilgrimage. In other words there may have been a relative shift away from the most elite forms of pilgrimage at Gaya.²³⁸ This suggestion is supported by other evidence. There is no doubt that the large parties of tens of thousands of the late eighteenth century were a rarity in the nineteenth. Peshwa Bajirao II's 1807 pilgrimage to Kartikswami seems to have been one of the last grand ones. Other royal pilgrimage parties tended to number only a few thousand or even hundreds of followers after about 1810. By the 1830s groups of five thousand were deemed excessive by the British and every effort was made to discourage them.²³⁹ But British discouragement was probably only a minor factor in the decline of the big state-sponsored parties. The gradual suppression of internal warfare reduced the need

Bengal to England, through the northern part of India, Kashmire, Afghanistan, and Persia, and into Russia, by the Caspian Sea (2 vols, London, 1798), I, p. 68.

²³⁷ A. Trotter, Colr Benares, to Capt. Benson, 16 May 1829, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1306 (51856), 'Pilgrim Tax'.

²³⁸ Buchanan's description of a Kauper's duties and responsibilities at Gaya suggests that the pilgrims who undertook this grade of pilgrimage had plenty of time and money at their disposal. Buchanan says it took at least fifteen days to get through all the sites and that persons of rank commonly took one to three months to complete the round. In an average year there would be several Maratha pilgrims who would spend Rs.5,000 in gifts to the priests and mendicants, while the 'great chiefs' could spend Rs.40,000, perhaps even Rs.50,000. Buchanan did not think that the Kauper pilgrimage could be performed for less than Rs.40 and that, for the Bengalis at least, Rs.200 would have been considered a reasonable sum. Hamilton-Buchanan, *A history of eastern India*, I, p. 54.

²³⁹ The British were perhaps more than unusually successful in this in 1836 when they agreed to grant exemptions totalling only one thousand to the Raja of Rewa who was on his way to Allahabad with five thousand followers. Insulted at the limit thus imposed on his largesse, the Raja returned to his capital without even entering Allahabad. Extract from the Narrative of the Proceedings of the Hon'ble the Lieutenant Governor of the North Western Provinces in the Political Department for the months of October, November and December 1836, IOR, Board's Collections F/4/1691 (68147), 'Proceedings connected with the Rajah of Rewah', p. 3. As we have seen above, they were less successful in their attempts to limit the size of the Rao Raja of Bundi's entourage in 1842.

for parties of massive defensive proportions; 'armies' of pilgrims became obsolete, as well as unpopular with the British. With lower taxation rates and less chance of obtaining an exemption there was a limit to the advantages of travelling under state patronage. From the sponsor's point of view, mounting large parties had always been a costly exercise and the loss of its traditional attractions and the scope for diplomatic initiative made it something of a white elephant, particularly in the days of declining royal fortunes. The shrinking of state-sponsored pilgrimage was an unsurprising consequence of the erosion of the independence of the Hindu states, especially that of the Marathas. I do not wish to imply that Hindus of rank became in any way 'less religious', rather that the territorial expansion of the British steadily eliminated the need and the potential for former heads of state to worship in the grand public style that was intended to benefit all of their subjects.

In this context it is interesting to note that Bithur, a Vaishnavite *tirth* on the Ganga in Cawnpore district, flourished during the residence there of Bajirao II from 1818 until his death in 1853. Bajirao was unable to repeat any of his earlier, state-rallying pilgrimages, but he was able to lavish attention on his holy place of exile. After the rebellion of 1857 and the flight of Nana Sahib, Bajirao's adopted successor, Bithur declined precipitously. It had lost its main source of patronage and the local Marathi community was tainted in the eyes of the British by the Nana's treachery.²⁴⁰

If state-sponsored parties were declining, is it possible to say anything about the pilgrims and patrons who took their places? I have argued that elite pilgrims established links with pilgrimage sites that were then latched onto by humbler pilgrims. Peter van der Veer has found in Ajudhia that only from the beginning of the nineteenth century do the Gangaputras have ledgers which register the visits of common people, such as land-tilling castes, to their *tirth*.²⁴¹ Moreover these humble newcomers

²⁴⁰ In 1873 the Sanitary Commissioner of the NWP wrote of the town: 'In regard to Bithoor, however, there is no doubt that it flourished exceedingly during Bajee Rao's time, and afterwards during the time of his adopted son, Nana Sahib. Since that causer of murder and misery was driven away, the town of Bithoor has fallen on evil days. In the year 1868, 465 ruined houses were levelled there, and even to-day very many houses in ruins, or much wanting repairs, may be seen in the town; and its people generally appear to form a poor, straggling community, who well remember their state of greater prosperity in former times'. *Sixth annual report of the Sanitary Commissioner of the North-Western Provinces, 1873* (Allahabad, 1874), pp. 32-3.

It is interesting to note, however, that one group in the town remained wealthy: the Gangaputras, many of them of Deccani descent whose ancestors had been settled in Bithur by Bajirao. In the 1870s the principal royal patronage was a Rs.2 allowance per month to each Maratha Gangaputra from the Maharaja of Gwalior, but considerable additional wealth accrued to them from the 'thousands upon thousands' of pilgrims coming to Bithur each year. Here, as elsewhere, the decline in royal patronage was made up for by a much bigger turnout of smaller religious patrons. *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ Van der Veer, *Gods on earth*, p. 214.

were often listed by locality according to some 'little kingdom' of a *raja*; that is, many of the pilgrims who came for the first time did go to the priests who had earlier established *jajmani* relations with the elites from their region. On this van der Veer writes:

When the old status ritual of pilgrimage thus spread from the higher to the lower classes of the population, its legitimating function for the rulers was not yet lost. The new *jajmani* bonds made by the commoners were only a derivation of the primal bond made by the ruler, while his power and glory were also emphasized by the magnificent buildings he had raised in the centres, reflecting the wealth of his dynasty and also that of his realm.²⁴²

In this sense the spirit and ideals of state-sponsored pilgrimage long outlived its demise. The subsequent boom in pilgrimage, fed by Pax Britannica and, later still, by the railways, resulted in a proliferation of religious specialists. L.P. Vidyarthi's Gayawal informants, interviewed in the 1950s, speak without exception of the glorious days of the nineteenth century when Gayawals were respected and wealthy and *jajmans* numerous,²⁴³ although in many cases the income of the priests, both old and new, must have been more fragmented than in the days of a few grand royal patrons. Much of van der Veer's work is on the struggle between two rival groups of *pandas* in Ajudhia to control an expanding and profitable market; so plentiful were the new pilgrims that newcomers to the priestly profession were able to interpose themselves between the pilgrims and the established priests to whom they ought to have gone as representatives of an older royal *jajman*.²⁴⁴ This, as we have seen, was also happening in Benares and vigorous competition seemed to be a feature of the priesthood in Allahabad and Gaya as well.

Where princes and their courtiers and military men had been the patrons *par excellence* in the eighteenth century, in the nineteenth century this role seems to have been taken up, especially after 1857, by the rising commercial classes and the courtiers of the new era, Bengali civil servants.²⁴⁵ As

²⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 214-15.

²⁴³ Vidyarthi, *The sacred complex of Hindu Gaya*, Appendix V, 'Seven life-histories of the Gayawal', pp. 146-203. One Gayawal, born in the 1932, wrote of his family: 'About 25 years before my birth, my family was proud having persons like Sri B.L. (my great grandfather's brother) who was honoured with the title of Rai Bahadur. During that time we had a large property like motor, horses, sky-kissing buildings, hundreds of servants and maidservants (which are owned by none of the present Gayawal families). But there were many others who had much more than we had. At the time of my birth and after, the property was divided into four to five divisions and our economic condition [sic] was not good. Anyway, we were happy. But the communal riots and political upheavals [sic] completely destroyed us.' *Ibid.*, p. 199.

²⁴⁴ Van der Veer, *Gods on earth*, pp. 217-37.

²⁴⁵ At the 1843 Hardwar *mela*, one of the most heavily attended for several years, the largest party of some 3250 people was headed not by a royal, but by a member of the Jain commercial community of Jaipur, Hurdatt Roy Seth. The third largest party, one of 1500, was also that of a Seth of Jaipur, Premsook Seth. A party of 1850 with Rani Chand Kumar of Tehroo was the largest 'royal' party. The parties of most of the other

we shall see in the next chapter, throughout the nineteenth century increasing amounts of money were spent on religious display, not just on pilgrimage, but on festivals such as the Ramlila and Ramnaumi in the patron's home town or city.



'Gentlemen Visitants' contained only a few hundred retainers. G.F. Harvey, Magte Saharanpur, to G.F. Franco, Comr Meerut, 19 Apr. 1843, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/20, 19 May 1843, no. 65.

At Gaya, the most famous patron after Ahilya Bai is Madan Mohan Dutta of Calcutta, a manager for the Board of Trade in the early-nineteenth century. He built the flights of stairs up to the Ramshila and Pretashila hills, repaired the old temples on these hills and constructed several new ones. His name is inscribed in several places around the Pretashila hill. Vidyarthi, *The sacred complex in Hindu Gaya*, p. 27. He is also said to have metalled the road from the Pretashila cluster of sites to Gaya township.

One of the clearest examples of the change in religious patronage comes from Benares, home to *katha*, oral exegesis of Tulsidas's *Ramacaritmanas*. Philip Lutgendorf has written of the development of 'circuits' among the expounders in the late-nineteenth century when they were no longer maintained by an individual patron and instead could travel around to different functions receiving a set fee for each performance. Lutgendorf continues: 'The patrons of this kind of *katha* were drawn less from the landed aristocracy than from urban commercial classes; indeed one observer has termed the new style "Baniya (mercantile) *katha*."' The underlying causes of this shift in patronage were the economic and political developments of the latter half of the nineteenth century, which precipitated the decline of the rajas and zamindars and the rise of urban mercantile communities such as the Marwaris. Like the petty Rajputs and Bhumihars of the preceding century, the "new men" of the urban corporations found themselves in possession of wealth but in need of status, a dilemma they resolved, in part, through conspicuous patronage of religious traditions.' Lutgendorf, 'Ram's story in Shiva's city', pp. 53-4.

CHAPTER 2

COMMUNAL DISPUTES AND DISPUTE-SOLVING

**Festival coincidence and cow-killing disputes
in the North-Western Provinces
in the nineteenth century**



Gul Hayat Institute

INTRODUCTION

Religious identity and 'localized community' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

In the previous chapter we have seen how during the late-eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century there was an increasingly broad-based patronage of 'big' Hindu pilgrimage sites and their religious specialists. The money and prestige invested by individual patrons may have decreased, but in overall terms patronage increased, with more, smaller patrons establishing links with these sites. In this chapter we shall see a similar development in the mid- to late-nineteenth century in the patronage of Hindu institutions in the patron's own locality. For the most part the focus will be on urban centres in the NWP.

Throughout the nineteenth century there was increasing support for and participation in Hindu public festivity in towns in the NWP, along with a boom in the construction of temples and growing exploitation of the cow as a symbol of Hindu piety. Once again, the patronage was not so much on a grander scale than in the eighteenth century, but on a broader scale, in terms of the number and size of the patrons. Where Hindus needed to pool their resources to effect a desired goal - to build a temple, for example - this involved a new degree of cooperation and organization between the would-be patrons. Autonomous patrons, such as the Rajas of Benares, did not disappear, but they did share an increasingly-crowded stage with these smaller, joint patrons.

Just as a pilgrimage to Benares was not an anti-Muslim activity, sponsoring new Hindu festivity and re-invigorating Hindu symbols did not begin with anti-Muslim sentiment. However, it often led to ill-will between Hindus and Muslims, especially in the towns where Islamic festivity and symbols had previously set the tone for the public life of their inhabitants. This is the main focus of this chapter: the existence of ill-will and occasional outbreaks of violence between urban Hindus and Muslims, in the light of the nineteenth-century increase in sponsorship of Hindu festivity and the promotion of the cow as a sacred symbol. I also want to consider the effect on such patronage of the colonial administration, a powerful but ill-informed force, which was able either to suppress or to champion these expressions of Hindu identity. And, although it is not my main aim, I want to suggest how these long-term developments may have fitted into the more formal manifestations of Hindu revivalism at the end of the century, such as the cow-protection movement of the 1880s and '90s

and the growth of traditionalist organizations, such as the Sanatan Dharm Sabhas. In this way we can perhaps go some way to closing the gap that Gyan Pandey has identified between academic analyses of communalism which focus on organized political behaviour of the elites, and what he calls the 'layman's' understanding of communalism: 'the atmosphere of suspicion, fear and ill-will that has come to characterize relations on the ground between different religious communities and especially between Hindus and Muslims.'¹

In recent years it has become unfashionable to refer to Hindu and Muslim 'communities' if speaking of the pre-twentieth century era. References to 'communalism' and 'communal disputes' are even more unfashionable, and understandably so, given the teleological historiography spawned by Partition and the older colonial insistence on the essential religious divisions between Indians.² Nevertheless in this chapter I have chosen to speak of communities and communal disputes, indicating with each event what modifications I think need to be made to the term's sphere of reference in that particular context. My terms are chosen largely with an eye to convenience, but not only so. It is a crucial part of my argument that Hindus and Muslims were always conscious of themselves as Hindus and Muslims, and not just as small groupings of profession, caste and locality, and that they used these labels voluntarily in dealing with the British. There is no other way of explaining why, even if a dispute was primarily between Ahirs and butchers, say, the rival petitions which went to the government would purport to come from 'the Hindus' and 'the Muslims'.³ Even when identifiably different interest groups within one religious community petitioned the authorities on an intercommunal matter, each group would claim to speak for the whole community. For the researcher,

¹ Gyanendra Pandey, 'Rallying round the cow: sectarian strife in the Bhojpuri region, c.1888-1917', in *Subaltern Studies II*, Ranajit Guha (ed.) (Delhi, 1983), pp. 61-4.

² Even so, I do not see how Pandey's substitute term of 'sectarian strife' gets around these problems in the long term. Initially, of course, 'sectarian' is not such a loaded adjective as 'communal', but this is not a permanent solution to the problem of finding a generic label for disputes with a religious colouring. *Ibid.* As I discuss below, I have even more reservations about Sandria Freitag's innovative 'putative "Hindu" and "Muslim" communities' to describe people who have chosen to identify themselves as Hindus and Muslims in their dealings with the colonial governments. Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective action and community: public arenas and the emergence of communalism in north India* (Berkeley, 1989), p. 38. On the subject of labelling and 'colonialist historiography' see Pandey's recent article 'The colonial construction of "communalism": British writings on Banaras in the nineteenth century' in *Subaltern Studies VI*, Ranajit Guha (ed.) (Delhi, 1989), pp. 132-68.

³ From this it will be seen that I am out of sympathy with those historians who have argued that the labelling of Hindus and Muslims as 'Hindus' and 'Muslims' was a product of British rule and that the British applied these labels before they had any meaning in the practical sense, thus materially abetting the adoption of these identities by the people themselves. This argument runs through Freitag's work, *ibid.*, and is also found in Narayani Gupta's *Delhi between two empires* (Delhi, 1980).

this poses problems of labelling; it is difficult to come up with more convenient labels than 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' if that is the definition chosen by the protagonists themselves.

From this it should be clear that I disagree with Sandria Freitag's recent analysis of community in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century north India, in which she posits a shift in the definition of community from a relational, localized form of collective activity to an abstract, ideological form of collective activity. Only in the latter manifestation is there room, according to Freitag's thesis, for 'communal identity' of the type that marked the riots of Partition.⁴ I wish to modify this argument to say that there was room for an abstract notion of communal identity long before the arrival of the British, but that this jostled in the locality with other competing identities based on profession, caste, neighbourhood, landlord-tenant relations, etc. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, and largely as a result of the colonial administration of religious disputes, communal identity was increasingly highlighted, at the cost of the other localized notions of identity. In the attempt to break free of the colonial categorisation of all Indians as religious fanatics, Freitag runs the risk of denying her subjects a sense of abstract religious consciousness altogether. In this context it may be worth noting Nita Kumar's recent encounters with the Muslim weavers of Benares. Former Julahas, and famed as such by the British for bigotry and fanaticism, they dismiss not the substance of this labelling, but its pejorative overtones. As Ansaris they are still proud of the fact that they are '*dharm ke pakke*', i.e., 'strong in their faith'.⁵ It seems patronizing to deny to ordinary urban residents in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries a similar pride in and consciousness of their religiosity at the general level of their 'big' faith of Hinduism or Islam.

If it were not for this sense of religious identity it would be difficult to explain the number of religious disputes that are known to have occurred in the eighteenth century alone.⁶ In many cases where these revolved around cow-slaughter and competing processions, the disputes reflected a challenge to the prevailing public character or tone of the town, as expressed in its public activity. Disputes of this kind generally occurred because of some shift in the equation of power between the Muslim and

⁴ Freitag, *Collective action and community*, pp. 85-97.

⁵ Nita Kumar, *The artisans of Banaras: popular culture and identity, 1880-1986* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 49-57.

⁶ See C.A. Bayly, 'The pre-history of "Communalism"? Religious conflict in India, 1700-1860', *Modern Asian Studies*, 19 (1985), pp. 177-203.

Hindu communities in the same town. In pre-British times such disputes tended to be settled quickly although often not without bloodshed, thus enabling the residents to return to their ordinary lives in the shared urban setting. In other words, the localized identities of the Hindus and Muslims reasserted themselves to enable people professing incompatible religious ideologies to live and work in the same environment.

One of the clearest examples of this process comes from Mubarakhpur, a weaving town in Azamgarh district, in 1813. The town was then under British control, but it was relatively cut off from obvious colonial influence.⁷ It had been refounded in the mid-eighteenth century by Sheikh *zamindars*, who were remembered with pride by their descendants for having attracted Muslim weavers and Hindu traders to settle in the town. By the early-nineteenth century, the *zamindars* were under pressure. Most were in debt to Hindu moneylenders, the men who also controlled capital advances to the weavers and marketed their fine quality silks. The moneylenders and one in particular, Rikhi Sahu, were investing money in very public assertions of Hindu identity: several temples had been built in the previous ten or fifteen years, of which Rikhi Sahu's was the most ostentatious, adorned with gold and silver and populated by marble images.⁸ In April 1813, an attempt by the agent of one of the lesser temples to extend its grounds within the vicinity of a disused *chabutra* (a stand on which *taziyas* are rested during Muharram) sparked a violent and bloody riot. The weavers, who made up about a quarter of the town's 12,000 people, killed a cow on the *chabutra*. Hindu Rajputs from a neighbouring village came to Mubarakhpur, seized and killed several pigs and threw their carcasses about the *chabutra* and a nearby *imambarah* (a place where congregational prayers are offered during Muharram). At this a great mass of the town's Muslims armed themselves and attacked and burnt the offending temple, Rikhi Sahu's temple and his very grand house. Rikhi Sahu was horribly murdered and his body mutilated. After this, Hindus from all the villages about began pouring in and for four more days the town was given over to rioting and plunder, until the Magistrate of Gorakhpur, R. Martin, arrived with a party of troops in tow. He found fifty to sixty bodies and suspected that many more had been burnt before his

⁷ Gyan Pandey discusses Mubarakhpur's history in detail in '*Encounters and calamities: the history of a north Indian qasbah in the nineteenth century*' (Calcutta, 1983). I have borrowed some of the background information about Mubarakhpur from this monograph.

⁸ R. Martin, Magte Gorakhpur, to G. Dowdeswell, Chief Secy to Govt, Judl, 17 Dec. 1813, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial P/131/31, 22 Jan. 1814, no. 40.

arrival.⁹ Martin geared himself to inflict the full force of European justice on the people who had offered such awful insults to each other's religion and he set about trying to find the Muslims' looted property in the surrounding Rajput villages.¹⁰ But to his surprise the people of Mubarakhpur preferred to forgo his judicial assistance. Seven months later Martin had still not opened any trials because the parties had mutually agreed to adjust their grievances and 'no one on either side will come forward with a complaint, or give in the names of Witnesses'. The accounts of loans and advances between the Hindus and Muslims that had been destroyed in the fires were also adjusted and new bonds and agreements had been drawn up. The property that had been looted, including the doors and thatch of houses, had been returned or compensated for on the quiet: Martin was mystified at the lack of calls from Mubarakhpur's Muslims to search the Rajput villages for missing goods.¹¹ In effect what had happened was that the members of the contending religions could not afford to maintain a communal stand-off. Their identities as weavers and traders had come to the fore to enable them to take up commercial relations again and, additionally, they had co-operated as residents of Mubarakhpur in the light of the intervention by the new European rulers. As we shall see below, the ability to effect this sort of quick compromise after a dispute declined as the century progressed and the intervention of the state was less easily deflected.¹²

⁹ R. Martin, Magte Gorakhpur, to G. Dowdeswell, Secy to Govt, Judl, 25 Apr. 1813, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial P/131/16, 8 May 1813, no. 31.

¹⁰ R. Martin, Magte Gorakhpur, to G. Dowdeswell, Secy to Govt, Judl, 30 Apr. 1813, *ibid.*, no. 32.

¹¹ R. Martin, Magte Gorakhpur, to G. Dowdeswell, Chief Secy to Govt, Judl, 17 Dec. 1813, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial P/131/31, 22 Jan. 1814, no. 40.

¹² Two other examples of the resurgence of localized identities after a religious dispute come from Benares in 1809-11 and Bareilly in 1814-16.

In Benares severe Hindu-Muslim rioting broke out in October 1809, after Hindus had attempted to turn a *kachcha* shrine near an *imambarah* into a *pakka* one and after Muslims had retaliated by demolishing the Lath Bhairav, a famous pillar sacred to the Hindus. Sandria Freitag, in her recent analysis of these riots, is undoubtedly correct to point out that a lot of the impetus for the tension came from different elements within the Hindu community jostling for the right to defend and promote Hinduism, rather than from innate Hindu-Muslim antagonism. Freitag, *Collective action and community*, pp. 36-43. Nevertheless, this does not make the consciousness of religious community between the constituent groups a 'putative' one. In presenting their case to the British the Hindus spoke with one voice; if there were dissenters, they did not publicly express disagreement. Likewise the Muslims, although variously identified by the British and the Hindus as weavers, butchers, or members of the 'influential' classes, petitioned the Magistrate as one body with a uniformly-applicable grievance. See the 'Memorial of the Hindoos of the City of Benares', presented to the Magistrate on 20 Nov. 1809, signed by 5675 people, of whom the British recognized 362 persons of rank; and the 'Memorial of the Mussulmauns of the City of Benares', presented to the Magistrate on 27 Nov. 1809 by Meer Tooraul Allee, signed by 724 people, of whom the British recognized 105 persons of rank, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial P/130/9, 22 Dec. 1809, nos. 26-7. However, within a few months of this rupture Benares's Hindus and Muslims had joined together to confront the *chaprasis* who patrolled their desecrated sites and kept them from re-establishing their worship there. W.W. Bird, Actg Magte Benares, to G. Dowdeswell, Chief Secy to Govt, 12 Mar. 1810, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial P/130/13, 23 Mar. 1810, no. 3. And only fourteen months after the rioting the Hindus and Muslims united together as residents of Benares to oppose the imposition of a house tax in the city. The local officers, who had concentrated so much on the Hindu-Muslim cleavage and on seeing themselves as healers of the breach, were quite taken

The pursuit of established usage and the creation of local histories

As we saw in the previous chapter, by the early nineteenth century the Company's initial enthusiasm for exploiting indigenous religious sentiment had waned and the responsibility for satisfying Indians' expectations of the state as a religious patron had become something of a burden. By the time the British had acquired the Ceded and Conquered Provinces overt intervention in matters of alien religion was frowned upon as an unnecessary and inflammatory interference with established cultural traditions. As, however, any eruption of conflict reflected badly on an officer's ability to control his district, the ideal officer was one who could smooth out isolated knots of religious tension without having been seen to have done so. His guide at all times was to be the usage of the locality as it had existed under the previous government. Establishing this would have been a difficult task for able administrators working within their own culture; it was a Herculean one for men whose mere presence as foreigners advertised their ignorance of the society. And although the first officers in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces were not unaware of their ignorance, they seem to have hoped that respect for their authority and patronage would inspire in their informants a truthful representation of the history of their locality.¹³ All over the Ceded and Conquered Provinces this resulted in the creation

aback by this combined assault on the state. The convenience of religious labelling had blinded them to the existence of other identities, here the commonality of residence in Benares, that may have transcended the religious divisions within the city. For the famous house tax *hartal* of 1810-11, see the correspondence of the Acting Magistrate of Benares, W.W. Bird, with the government, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial P/130/27, 5 Jan. 1811, nos. 20-8, and 11 Jan. 1811, nos. 41-6, and P/130/28, 8 Feb. 1881, nos. 1-7.

In Bareilly city in 1814-16 a similar shift between religious identity and urban identity occurred. In September 1814 Bareilly's tranquillity was disrupted when hundreds of Hindus filled the streets to protest against the sacrifice of a cow in a *muhalla* chiefly inhabited by Hindus. The Magistrate, Mr Dumbleton, considered prosecuting some of the protesters for unlawful assembly but he refrained in view of the Hindus' numbers, their great sense of irritation and their very effective suspension of Bareilly's commercial life. He did, however, call in fifty soldiers to quieten the city and he fined the Muslim sacrificer for his insensitivity. H. Dumbleton, Magte Bareilly, to G. Dowdeswell, Secy to Govt, Judl, 11 Oct. 1814, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial P/131/49, 4 Nov. 1814, no. 32. Eighteen months later Dumbleton's surprise could not have been greater when the Hindus and the Muslims welded a ferocious opposition to the government's *chaukidari* tax, which had been greeted with the same hostility in Bareilly as in Benares. The first serious resistance came from the Hindus. On 16 April 1816 many *baniyas* in the bazaar refused to pay their dues when Dumbleton called personally to collect them. But Muslims soon joined the protest, with angry crowds rallying round the green flag at one of the principal Muslim sites in the city. Within 24 hours the rebellion had both Muslims and Hindus at its head. The different religious identities were not subsumed; instead, much as in Benares, there was an attempt to rally support to the joint cause through separate appeals to Muslims and Hindus. The rebellion was soon crushed. The troops stationed at Bareilly remained loyal to the local authorities and in the one battle on 21 April they shot several hundred of the rebels and arrested their leaders. H. Dumbleton, Magte Bareilly, to W.B. Bayley, Secy to Govt, Judl, 18 Apr. 1816 and 27 Apr. 1816, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/132/41, 10 May 1816, nos. 7 and 9. See also C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars: north Indian society in the age of British expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 323-6, for a more extensive discussion of this challenge to British authority.

¹³ E.I. Brodtkin, in his work on the pre-1857 revenue settlements of Rohilkhand, points to the widespread fabrication of proprietary rights by the native staff of the early collectors while these latter hoped that they

of an officially-sanctioned version of the social history of each locality which was to plague officers in the second half of the nineteenth century as British policies began to change and later administrators saw how falsely their predecessors had been led.

An 1806 dispute about cow-killing in Mau, a large town then under the jurisdiction of the Gorakhpur Magistrate, shows how these several factors - the policy of non-interference, the desire to head off conflict, and the ignorance of local history - could produce official solutions that perpetuated the conflict. Late in October 1806 a dozen or so Hindus were arrested in Mau for attacking a group of Muslims who had shared in the sacrifice of a cow. Several people had been killed in the affray. In sentencing the Hindus the court allowed the plea of provocation, accepting the Magistrate's opinion that, under the Nawab of Awadh's government, the sacrifice of cows, calves and bullocks had not been permitted in Mau.¹⁴ The Magistrate had no evidence of this apart from that which he had gleaned from the townspeople; there was no documentation of the custom in the locality. The violence of the Hindu reaction was itself taken as proof of the novelty of the Muslims' act. He advised that in future any magistrate, on an application from Muslims to kill a cow, ought to ascertain by local enquiry whether such sacrifice had been customary within the locality before its cession to the Company, only granting permission if such was proved to be so. The Benares Court of Circuit and the Nizamat Adalat agreed, although the gentlemen of the latter did point out that there was an alternative: on 'general principles of toleration' Muslims and Hindus would be equally entitled to perform their respective ceremonies without molestation from each other. In this case however they preferred to follow precedent as it had been divined by the Magistrate and to confirm his ban on cow-killing in Mau.¹⁵

The government also backed this decision. It seems that no-one considered the implications of the Gorakhpur Magistrate's procedure. As far as local inhabitants were concerned a magistrate was to have the power to fix in perpetuity local custom as they could best represent it to him at a particular time. No account was taken of the fact that a town's social memory, i.e., that which its inhabitants

were overseeing the accurate documentation of the region's fiscal history. They had no means of independently checking the records put before them and only a belief in the awe-inspiring nature of their position can have led them to accept as correct the history thus compiled. Brodtkin, 'Rohilkhand from conquest to revolt, 1774-1858: a study in the origins of the Indian Mutiny uprising' (unpublished Phd, Cambridge, 1968), pp. 71-5.

¹⁴ J.H. Harrington and J. Fombelle, Nizamat Adalat, to Lord Minto, Governor General in Council, 17 May 1808, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial P/129/46, 10 June 1808, nos. 13-14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

represented as its history, might be very different from the British concept of history. In other words, what the locals held to be past practice on any matter would depend very much upon the composition and politics of the town's population at the time of its representation, and not necessarily the time to which the events related.¹⁶

The British attempt here to establish past practice and to stick to it, apparently for ever, threatened to remove all the leeway for compromise between groups which might otherwise have competed only sporadically over certain issues and in others not at all. Now there was the danger of being cast eternally on the 'losing side' by the magistrate's interpretation of the past, the fate of the Muslims of Mau in 1806. Inevitably this would encourage the most one-sided and belligerent representations to the government, thus making it even less likely that a magistrate would be able to construct any version of past events that approximated to his appreciation of historical reportage.

This was not an isolated incident. Until the 1850s in all matters of indigenous religious conflict the government advised its district officers to define and then pursue precedent and custom. Admittedly for many years it was a poorly-articulated policy, but it was inherently so. As each locality could be assumed to have specific customs only the man on the spot could arrive at an informed solution and no number of appeals to the provincial administration would elicit more specific guidance.¹⁷

The emphasis on precedent was firmly rooted in nineteenth-century British perceptions. It was a search by a new generation of Company servants for the key, as they saw it, to societal stability and

¹⁶ Gyan Pandey provides a very full analysis of Mau's Hindu-Muslim disputes in the nineteenth century in 'Rallying round the cow', pp. 118-22. My only disagreement with him is that he does not recognize that the 1806-08 rulings banning cow-killing in Mau were not upholding past practice but breaking with it. Under indigenous governments this indicator of the relations between Hindus and Muslims - like the question of festival precedence - was not quantified; there was no ban as such on cow-killing, merely a local tradition of observance. Without quantification, the observance was open to change, sometimes gradual and sometimes rapid and bloody, according to shifts in the balance of the communities. To set it down in law, as the British did here, gave the Hindus every advantage later in the century to oppose an increase in cow-slaughter when the Muslims of Mau agitated the issue again.

¹⁷ The best definition of a good officer's abilities was handed down from Calcutta in 1841, after the overlap of Holi and Muharram. The Moradabad Commissioner had requested that more precise guidelines be made available to officers responsible for festival management, but on putting this to Calcutta the NWP Government was informed that the Governor General declined to lay down formal rules: 'He can scarcely doubt but that a good Magistrate, by previous consultation with chief persons of the several sects or religions concerned, may obtain their full mutual agreement, and through them the agreement of the rest of the people to such reasonable and impartial arrangements, as, without interfering with the necessary observances of either party, may effectually hinder the turbulence of both.' Secy to Govt India, to J. Thomason, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 126, 30 Aug. 1841, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/1, 30 Aug. 1841, no. 212.

tranquillity. Whereas the Orientalists who had gone before them had found inspiration and profundity in the achievements of the ancient Indians, many of the administrators who came in the wake of Wellesley's conquests confined their exploration of Indian life to their own experiences. Men of pragmatism and energy, rather than vision, they tended to see innovation in all areas of Indian life as a consequence of their rule, a view which followed from their perception of India as a stagnant and unchanging country, with people so bound down by tradition as to be unable to promote change without the aid of external agency. But why they should have attempted to freeze in time religious practice whilst acknowledging and even advancing changes in economic and political behaviour points to the peculiarity of their position as Christian rulers in a non-Christian land. The Company had always sought to conciliate its new subjects with promises of respect for their religious beliefs and laws. But the Company servants themselves were in no position to interpret a multiplicity of traditions, both textual and customary, to their subjects' satisfaction and so they were forced into a position of dependence upon native informants, an unenviable bifurcation of executive power and moral authority. The alternative of imposing a different form of religious tolerance - equal rights of observance for all - was unthinkable in the early nineteenth-century context of newly-acquired and loosely-held territories. Thus the British, already imbued with the Western intellectual traditions that assumed the separate existence of the secular and the divine, were doubly encouraged to view religious consciousness as remote from all the conditions of material existence. Unless one believed that religious experience could continue unimpaired under an alien government then one had to accept that the imposition of such government was automatically destructive of religious freedom.

FESTIVAL COINCIDENCE IN A NORTH INDIAN CITY

The growth in public Hindu festivity in the nineteenth century

The periodical overlapping of Hindu and Muslim festivals always raised difficulties for British administrators. The predictability of festival concurrence when combined with the British preoccupation with reconstructing history marked out in advance certain times that hummed with tension and the possibility of conflict.

The Muslim calendar is a lunar one. As such it delineates a shorter year than that of the Hindu calendar which, whilst containing lunar elements, nevertheless stays in step with the longer solar year. Thus particular Hindu festivals, whether solar or lunar in origin, always fall at approximately the same time in the seasonal year. Festivals on the full moon of Kartik for example will always occur towards the end of autumn. Muslim festivals on the other hand retrogress through the seasonal year over the course of a cycle of 33 solar years.¹⁸ The month of fasting, Ramazan, may fall at the hottest time of the year or the coolest depending upon the current alignment of lunar and solar years.

In India this means that every three decades or so Muharram, the Muslim festival of mourning for Imam Husain, the Prophet's martyred grandson, overlaps with one particular Hindu festival. As the display connected with Muharram continues for ten days (it takes up the first ten days of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic year) the overlap at any given time is likely to persist for two to three years. In British times there were three important Hindu festivals in north India that could compete with Muharram for the use of public space, two of which were Ramaite: Ramnaumi, Holi and Ramlila.¹⁹ The biggest Krishnaite and Shaivite festivals, Janam Ashtmi and Shivratri respectively, can never clash with Muharram because they do not fall within the first ten days of a new moon.²⁰ It is because of this that so much of the tension associated with overlapping festivals comes from the north-western

¹⁸ The lunar year is about eleven days shorter than a solar year. Over 33 solar years the lunar calendar will 'fall behind' by approximately 363 days, hence the cycle of 33 solar years for the repetition of the overlap of particular solar and lunar dates.

¹⁹ Usually, Holi was not expected to cause trouble. In the 1800s Holi was an informal festival, with groups of Hindus enjoying their merrymaking on a family or neighbourhood basis. There was no single, grand exhibition representing the Hindu community as a whole, and so Holi did not engender the same sort of two-party competition for public space and administrative sympathy that an overlap of Ramnaumi or Ramlila with Muharram did. Any tensions were likely to be the result of an accidental conjunction of community symbols, such as the spillage of holi colour on a *taziya*.

²⁰ Krishna's birthday, Janam Ashtmi, falls on the eighth day of the dark half of Bhadon (August-September). Krishna is the only manifestation of Vishnu to be worshipped in the dark half of a lunar month. Shivratri falls on the fourteenth night of the dark half of Phalgun (February-March).

districts of the NWP where there were both large Muslim populations and enthusiastic Ram devotees. As Ramnaumi and Ramlila fall approximately six months apart (with Holi only just preceding Ramnaumi) this means that there is a major festival coincidence for two to three years every fifteen years or so.

One other calendrical factor heightened the potential for dispute. Bakr Id, the Muslim festival commemorating Abraham's offer of Ishmael in sacrifice, falls in the last month of the Islamic year, i.e., it immediately precedes Muharram at the beginning of the following year. It is one of the most joyous festivals of the Islamic calendar and is nearly always accompanied by the sacrifice of animals by those families which can afford it. The type of animal is not specified in the texts; it may be a goat, sheep, cow, or camel. In India in the nineteenth century it was often a cow, much cheaper than the seven goats with which its sacrifice was said to equate. The right to sacrifice a cow in one's own compound was jealously guarded and Bakr Id was frequently the occasion of cow-protection agitation by Hindus who sought to prove to the authorities that certain Muslims were fraudulently claiming an established right of sacrifice. Occasions of festival overlap therefore were nearly always preceded by cow-killing disputes in towns that had sizable Muslim populations.²¹

The calendrical pre-conditions did not always produce direct competition between Hindus and Muslims for public thoroughfares and arenas; where they did the competition was not always unfriendly nor, in that event, necessarily long-running. The existence of Hindu-Muslim ill-will during a festival overlap depended upon the scale and type of celebration of each festival in a given locality and that locality's current politics. Obviously these secondary conditions, unlike that of the calendrical disposition to concurrence, were not fixed. We should not expect to find that the same town flared into communal mayhem decade after decade, or that a peaceable town was always thus. Having said that, however, there is no doubt that by the end of the nineteenth century Hindu-Muslim tension at festival overlaps was a much more common phenomenon than it had been at the beginning of British rule, and to a certain extent both the build up of the tension and its resolution - either with or without violence - had acquired elements of ritual behaviour. It suggests that even with all the local variants changes were

²¹ It was possible to simulate the effect of festival coincidence by orchestrating a clash of Hindu and Muslim symbols where ordinarily there would have been no competition. A classic act of Muslim aggression was to build a *taziya* (a representation of the tomb of Husain) so big that it would hit Hindu property, e.g., *chappars* (verandahs) or *pipal* trees, unless that property was removed. Hindus could achieve the same effect by sounding conch shells and gongs, etc., as their processions passed by mosques.

occurring on a provincial, possibly grander, scale. There are several explanations, some more accessible than others.

The nineteenth century witnessed a large increase in the popularity and viability of urban religious spectacle, especially in Hindu Ramaite festivity. In part this was a continuation of the development of popular Ram *bhakti*, or devotionism, among north Indian Hindus. Since the sixteenth-century saint Tulsidas had produced an epic life of Ram in the vernacular (the eastern Hindi dialect of Awadhi) as the *Ramacaritmanas*, veneration of Ram among people of low social status had been increasing. This was fuelled and extended by two main things: the taking up of Ram as a symbol of Hindu kingship by the Benares Rajas and many other petty 'kings' in the north, and the vitality of the Ramanandi sect which had settled at Ajudhia in the sixteenth century. Because of the patronage of the Benares Rajas elites came under the spell of popular Ram worship and championed Tulsī's *Manas* with all the vigour that the Brahman orthodoxy were once said to have urged against it.²² Meanwhile the Ramanandis enhanced the spread of devotionism amongst non-Brahman and non-twice-born castes.²³ By the mid-nineteenth century the Ramanandis were the most numerous class of ascetics in Hindustan; east of Allahabad they yielded in influence and wealth to the Shaivite ascetics, especially the Atits or Gosains. But to the west of Allahabad they predominated, especially in the Doab.²⁴

At the beginning of the century Ramnaumi (Ram's birth anniversary) was largely a festival celebrated within temples and private compounds, unmarked by the showy processions and *tamasha* of Ramlila. By 1900 however Ramnaumi had come to be celebrated with Ramlila-like splendour in many towns in the NWP and Oudh, making it a more vigorous competitor with Muharram for space and time when the two overlapped. Ramlila celebrations also increased in number, size and regularity. For example, Ramlila processions were introduced to Phaphund in Etawah in 1815,²⁵ to Koil in Aligarh in

²² Philip Lutgendorf, 'Ram's story in Shiva's city: public arenas and private patronage' in *Culture and power in Banaras*, Sandria B. Freitag (ed.) (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 34-61.

²³ The Ramanandis count among the disciples of Ramanand: Kabir the weaver saint, Raidas the Chamar saint, and Tulsidas, a Brahman, himself. The Ramanandis were said to be particularly popular with the poor, Rajputs, and military Brahmans. As an ascetic order it accepted disciples of all castes and taught that in the eyes of God there were no distinctions between worshippers. Anyone was to be given the means to approach Ram through simple devotion. H.H. Wilson, *Essays and lectures chiefly on the religion of the Hindus*, ed. by Reinhold Rost (2 vols, London, 1862), I, pp. 46-68.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8. At the end of the nineteenth century only one in fifty of the estimated two million ascetics in the NWP were thought to be Shaivite; all the rest were Vaishnavite. W. Crooke, *The North-Western Provinces of India: their history, ethnology and administration* (London, 1897), p. 254.

²⁵ T.A. Brown, Deputy Magte Etawah, to E.H.C. Monckton, Magte Etawah, 2 Dec. 1852, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/233/43, 17 Jan. 1853, no. 165.

1820,²⁶ to Bareilly city in the late 1820s,²⁷ to Jahanabad in Pilibhit in 1831,²⁸ to Najibabad in Bijour in the late 1830s,²⁹ and to Hapur in Meerut in 1886.³⁰ In Ajmere in 1884 Ramlila celebrations were renewed after a ten-year lapse and in Soron in Etah in 1894 after a fifteen to twenty-year lapse.³¹ Agitation for a new, larger Ramlila at Amroha in Moradabad persisted from 1899 to 1902, and at Hardwar demands for a Ramlila *tamasha* were heard throughout the latter half of the century.³² In contrast, attempts to step up Muharram display were much rarer.³³ As we shall see in the next section, Muslims seemed to favour establishing a right to cow-slaughter or cow-sacrifice as a way of confirming or asserting their status in a shared public setting.

Increased Hindu festivity had several causes. In many towns, and especially in the former Pathan strongholds of Rohilkhand, the decline of Muslim political power offered new opportunities to Hindus celebrate their festivals in a grander style. In 1799 William Tennant observed that the urban landscape of Rohilkhand was an overwhelmingly Muslim one: there were few noteworthy Hindu temples, and mosques were 'by far the most splendid buildings in every town.'³⁴ In the same way public religious display in Rohilkhand had a strong Muslim flavour. Hindu festivals were often celebrated indoors and Hindus were required to adopt a sober and muted demeanour during Muharram. Elsewhere, as in Kasipur in the Tarai (see below) or in Mau in Gorakhpur, it was the Muslims who gave way to the prejudices of dominant Hindu populations against cow-killing. Such lop-sidedness of religious display rarely amounted to the conscious 'oppression' of one community by another; it was simply a reflection of the distribution of power in the setting. When the balance of power changed the scope for altering existing public religious display increased. The changes brought by the British,

²⁶ G. Stockwell, Magte Aligarh, to W.B. Bayley, Chief Secy to Govt, 18 Oct. 1820, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/134/44, 17 Nov. 1820, no. 1.

²⁷ T.J. Turner, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, to J. Thomason, Offg Secy to Lt Govr NWP, no. 77A, 22 Sept. 1837, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/40, 3 Nov. 1837, no. 42, para. 256.

²⁸ W.R. Timins, Actg Jt Magte Pilibhit, to A. Campbell, Comr Bareilly, 16 Nov. 1832, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/58, 5 May 1834, no. 34.

²⁹ R.K. Dirk, Comr Rohilkhand, to W. Muir, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 28, 28 Feb. 1854, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/233/59, 22 Mar. 1854, no. 336.

³⁰ List of Hindu Religious Festivals which may synchronize with the Muharram, UPSA, NWP&O General, 'Notes and Orders', file 540A, box 33, p. 2.

³¹ Inquiry by H.K. Gracey, Magte Etah, into complaints lodged per telegram by Ganga Rae of Soron on 16 Oct. 1896 against Sub-Inspector Salawat Ullah Khan of Soron, UPSA, NWP&O General, B progs Nov. 1896, no. 27, file 213c, box 22.

³² E.B. Alexander, Comr Meerut, to Magte Saharanpur, 16 Sept. 1902, UPSA, UP General, B progs June 1902, no. 40, file 557C, box 67.

³³ See below fn. 87 for one example of this at Chandausi in Moradabad in 1839.

³⁴ Tennant, William, *Indian recreations; consisting chiefly of strictures on the domestic and rural economy of the Mahomedans & Hindoos* (2nd edn, 2 vols, London, 1804), II, p. 395.

however, were novel, because in attempting to preserve the status quo they set about defining and enshrining rights of display.

At a more specific level, government employees played an important part in increasing religious display in the nineteenth century. As Bayly has noted, the antecedents of this lay in the eighteenth century when, in the wake of declining Mughal authority, the pillars of Mughal urban government, the *kazi* and the *korwal*, were weakened by corruption and ignorance.³⁵ Under British rule many subordinate officers used their position to promote the festivals of their co-religionists, undermining the government's attempts at impartiality and denuding it of moral authority. When district officers brought in local *rajas* and *nawabs* or tried to harness the residual authority of the *kazi* to resolve disputes over religious display it was a recognition of the government's own lack of influence.

The Rebellion of 1857 also played its part in promoting civilian religious display. Before then it was customary in garrison towns for the Muslim troops to bring out their *taziyas* (representations of Imam Husain's tomb) with the civilian *taziya* parade and to bury them at the same *karbala*. The local Hindus joined the Hindu soldiers in their Ramlila *tamasha*, usually on the parade ground and often enacted by soldiers.³⁶ After 1857 the British determined to keep the military and civilian populations separate. In many garrison towns this made the Ramlila in particular a much more civilian affair, necessitating new sponsorship and new arenas for the *tamasha*, parade grounds now being out of bounds. In Shahjahanpur this meant selecting a site that was unavoidably close to one of the city's three *karbalas*, a proximity the local officers regretted on each occasion of a festival overlap.³⁷

³⁵ Bayly, *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars*, pp. 308-11.

³⁶ In particular soldiers seem to have had a right to claim the role of Hanuman and his army of monkeys; Ram and Sita were usually played by Brahman children.

In 1824 Bishop Heber saw the Ramlila performance at Allahabad played out in the main street of the *sipahi* lines, with Brahman *sipahis* taking the parts of Hanuman and his army. Ram, Lakshman and Sita were played by children of about twelve years' age. Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-1825* (2 vols, London, 1828), I, pp. 336-8.

In 1829 Fanny Parks saw the Ramlila enacted on the parade ground at Allahabad. Hanuman's army was again composed of *sipahis*. She noted that as part of the whole festival each native regiment made *puja* to its standard as if to a god. She observed a similar practice at a Cawnpore Ramlila. Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in search of the Picturesque* (2 vols, London, 1850), I, pp. 108-9.

At Ramnagar in the 1830s Reverend Leupolt met *sipahis* who wanted to employ contemporary firepower - cannon, mines and matchlocks - rather than the traditional bows and arrows to destroy Ravan's castle. C.B. Leupolt, *Recollections of an Indian Missionary* (London, 1846), pp. 78-9.

³⁷ In 1892 Commissioner Cadell commented on the situation: '[T]he rejoicings of the Hindus are audible at the *karbala* close by, and until the Hindus are reasonable enough to agree to the selection of a grove situated at a greater distance, the likelihood of differences between them and the Muhammadans is of course greater than it need be.' A. Cadell, Comr Rohilkhand, to Secy to Govt NWP&O, no.1159, 29 Feb. 1892, UPSC, Govt NWP&O General, A progs Apr. 1892, no. 22, file 352B, box 44.

However it was the changes in festival sponsorship in the nineteenth which were crucial to the increase in Hindu religious display. In the early part of the century it was common for a town's Ramnaumi and Ramlila processions to be sponsored by just one or two families. Local musicians, wrestlers and 'actors' made up the processions, but the money, the props and the costumes were provided by the sponsors. Such families were wealthy and of considerable social standing; often they were *zamindars*.³⁸ They did not exert total control over the celebrations because the cooperation of priests and the townspeople was essential to any festival's success, but they had the single biggest role, which brought them respect and status accordingly. As the century progressed, however, and the new celebrations got older and bigger, this form of sponsorship gave way to joint sponsorship by occupational and professional groups and traders and manufacturers. At Allahabad in the 1840s the Bharat Milap illuminations were radically extended with the proceeds of a subscription scheme amongst the merchants of Mirzapur and Benares who had dealings in the city. The Hindu *vakils* in Allahabad's Civil Court also used to put a percentage of their fees towards the lighting.³⁹ At Cawnpore, a trading city from the very first, the costs of the Ramlila *tamasha* were shared between the native infantry and merchant corporations.⁴⁰ The change suggests a loss of authority by the old, landed sponsors and a more active role for the participants, something which the government deplored as a destabilizing element in urban relations. Cause and effect are difficult to determine, but underlying the shift was a difference of opinion between upper-class Hindus and lower-class Hindus about the purposes and goals of the celebrations. The belligerence of Hindu artisans and petty traders in demanding full processional rights when a festival overlapped with Muharram was often an assault on the Hindu *raises* who, with

³⁸ A good example comes from Phaphund in Etawah district where the Ramlila celebrations were started up in about 1815 by Chaudhari Bahadur Singh, a landholder and the *kanungo* of the *pargana*. Bahadur Singh's position as a government agent seems to have caused some embarrassment when Muharram and Ramlila overlapped in 1820-21, so he 'apparently withdrew' from the Ramlila arrangements, but continued to sponsor their performance through two Brahman families in his *muhalla* for the next 22 years. He stopped his sponsorship after the death of his only son. In 1851 two of his agents or *karindas* combined with Ram Golam and Ram Lal, Kayasths, to revive the ceremony. In the meantime, since the late 1820s, a rival Ramlila *tamasha* had been sponsored by Mohan Lal Dube and, after his death, by his family. By the late 1840s and early '50s, with several more people sporadically taking out processions and exploding Ravans, there was no obvious single sponsor of the Ramlila *tamasha*. This caused problems at the 1852 overlap of Ramlila and Muharram when the Deputy Magistrate was unable to get all the potential Ramlila sponsors to come to one agreement with the Muslims. T.A. Brown, Depy Magte Etawah, to E.H.C. Monckton, Magte Etawah, 2 Dec. 1852, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/233/43, 17 Jan. 1853, no. 165.

³⁹ R. Lowther, Comr Allahabad, to C. Allen, Offg Secy to Govt NWP, no. 108, 5 Dec. 1848, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/73, 14 Dec. 1848, no. 200.

⁴⁰ Harriette Ashmore witnessed several Ramlila celebrations at Cawnpore in the 1830s. The enactments of the different parts of the epic continued for a fortnight entailing great expense on staging, fireworks and ammunition. These costs were met by subscriptions raised by the native corps and 'the different castes of merchants'. Harriette Ashmore, *Narrative of a three months' march in India and a residence in the Dooab by the wife of an officer in the 16th foot* (London, 1841), pp. 256-9.

an eye to the government's favour and the security of their property and their relations with the Muslim *raises*, counselled moderation. In some cases, as at Nagina and Dhampur in Bijnour district in the 1850s, the *raises* withdrew their sponsorship of the Ramlila *tamasha* to avoid being dragged into expressions of violence and hostility that they did not support.⁴¹ In other cases, as we shall see below, new would-be sponsors attempted to push the *raises* from their position as chief festival patrons, often implying that they were not solely concerned to defend the interests of Hinduism.

In an attempt to study these changes in detail I have put together the history of four successive occasions of festival coincidence in one town, Bareilly, starting with the overlap of Ramnaumi and Muharram in 1837 and ending with the overlap of Ramlila and Muharram in 1887. Bareilly has a satisfyingly well-documented history of its periods of communal tension and tranquillity under British rule and it lends itself well to the purposes of this study. What follows is not meant to be a history of communalism in Bareilly; for that one would need to look at something other than a run of expected flashpoints. Instead it is a history of the politics and administration present in these flashpoints and an attempt to see how, over time, what is essentially the same event with the same pre-conditions could change.⁴²

Bareilly: 'a city of graveyards and ruinous mosques'⁴³

Although Bareilly had declined under the rule of Awadh, it was still a large and important town when the British moved in in 1801. It probably had 70-80,000 residents.⁴⁴ Beneath the decay signs of the city's former eminence were clearly discernible. Bareilly had flourished in the time of Hafiz Rahmat Khan. The aristocratic military culture of the Rohilla Pathans encouraged trade in luxury items, such as shawls and ornamental weaponry, and in high quality horses, for both warfare and ceremonial purposes and Bareilly became a supplier of swords and muskets to the Rohilla soldiery. Agriculture thrived; indigo and sugar were particularly well cultivated and brought wealth and improvement to Bareilly and her sister Rohilla towns.⁴⁵

⁴¹ C.J. Wingfield, Magte Bijnour, to R. Alexander, Comr Rohilkhand, no. 69, 8 Nov. 1855, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/234/11, 10 Dec. 1855, no. 131.

⁴² Where it has seemed helpful I have included information about events in other towns and cities that have occurred during the relevant festival overlap.

⁴³ H.R. Nevill, *Bareilly: A Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1911), p. 210.

⁴⁴ C.A. Bayly, 'Town building in north India, 1790-1830', *Modern Asian Studies*, 9 (1975), p. 490.

⁴⁵ Bayly, *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars*, pp. 67, 120-2.

The sponsors of Bareilly's growth were not all Muslims; several *muhallas*, tanks and gardens were the work of Rahmat Khan's Hindu ministers and their families.⁴⁶ Many of the city's traders, sugar merchants and bankers were Hindus and generally relations between them and the Rohillas were good; the traders do not seem to have suffered from discriminatory customs rates as Hindus often did in regions under Muslim rule.⁴⁷ But the city's flavour was overwhelmingly Islamic. Hafiz Rahmat Khan and other Pathan notables embellished it with mosques and palaces and gracious mausoleums. At the turn of the century one of Bareilly's most elegant buildings was the tomb of the Hafiz himself.⁴⁸ There were no distinguished Hindu temples and the Hindus, as elsewhere in Rohilkhand, had to accept a marked degree of inferiority in their religious display. All their festivals gave way to Muharram, during which season they were prohibited from wearing brightly coloured clothing and exhibiting signs of merriment.⁴⁹

At the time of Cession the British looked to restore Rohilkhand to its former prosperity as quickly as possible. The Company's role in bringing down Hafiz Rahmat Khan's government discomforted many officers, and although much of the decay they inherited could be attributed to famine and the repeated incursions of the Marathas, there was no hiding the initial waste of the 1774 war.⁵⁰ European observers repeatedly singled out as the most striking aspect of Bareilly's life the idleness and dissatisfaction of the Rohillas. Rohilla cavalry men had insufficient employment; they never stooped to cultivation and they often disdained service in the Company's army. Many resorted to informal warfare and, as 'gentlemen robbers', hindered the new administration's attempts to re-establish trading and communication routes.⁵¹ The trade and manufacture that had thrived upon their luxurious consumption slumped. And to the north, the prosperity of independent Rampur, the one pocket of

⁴⁶ Nevill, *Bareilly: A Gazetteer*, pp. 207, 214.

⁴⁷ Bayly, *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars*, p. 327.

⁴⁸ In 1799 Tennant said of the tomb that it was a 'distinguishing ornament of Bareilly'. *Indian recreations*, II, p. 384. Hafiz Rahmat Khan also invested heavily in Pilibhit, his own 'lineage centre'. During his rule the fortifications and most of the masonry buildings were erected. He himself built Pilibhit's copy of the famous Jama Masjid in Delhi, 'a handsome relic of the Pathan rule'. *Report on the settlement of Pillibheet, N.-W. Provinces* (Allahabad, 1873), pp. 3, 10.

⁴⁹ W.H. Benson, Magte Bareilly, to T.J. Turner, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, no. 37, 24 Apr. 1837, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/35, 9 May 1837, no. 80. The ban on merriment would have probably meant that weddings could not be celebrated during Muharram. Certainly no processions could have been taken out.

⁵⁰ In the 1780s Charles Hamilton had observed of the unhappy state of Rohilkhand's cities: 'Some part of this apparent decay, indeed, must be attributed to the sudden and total overthrow of two opulent and powerful families, the circulation of whose wealth gave life to the cities they inhabited, and whose ostentatious magnificence appeared in the erection of *baths*, mosques and palaces, which are now falling to ruin.' Hamilton, *An historical relation of the origin, progress, and final dissolution of the government of the Rohilla Afghans in the northern provinces of Hindostan* (London, 1787), pp. 279-80.

⁵¹ Bayly cites a government estimate of 100,000 mercenaries and 'banditti' in Rohilkhand in 1802. *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars*, p. 219.

Rohilla power allowed to survive, rankled. In the mid-1820s Bishop Heber was struck by the want of sympathy between the Rohillas and the British and he warned that the Rohillas had neither forgotten nor forgiven the British for their injury of 1774.⁵²

In the early decades of British rule not all of the Rohilla gentry families perished. Some did well out of the early sugar boom and many more profited from the fluidity of land-rights under the early settlement disorders. But despite this, Rohilla resentment at their loss of political authority remained one of the defining characteristics of Bareilly's temperament.

Muharram and Ramnaumi, 1837-39: Bareilly's first prolonged communal stand-off

In 1837 Bareilly was the city in the NWP most disrupted by the overlap of Muharram and Ramnaumi. There was no major fighting, as there was in Shahjahanpur, but the hostilities simmered long after the festivals were over. In the previous decade the divisions of Rohilkhand and Moradabad had seen much Hindu-Muslim ill-will, with disputes in Bareilly, Jahanabad, Kasipur, Nagina and Najibabad. Bareilly in particular was dogged by arguments about cow-slaughter and the routes and dimensions of religious processions. All these tensions, however, need to be seen in their broadest context.

Throughout the north the 1830s were tumultuous years, racked by agricultural depression, currency shortages, famine, and high unemployment amongst service groups.⁵³ At one end of the social scale the participants in public celebrations - artisans, labourers and small traders - were squeezed by the depression and food shortages. In 1837-38 severe grain riots and dacoities flared up across Rohilkhand. At the other end of the social scale the traditional patrons of public celebrations - the landed aristocracy - were under siege from a hostile revenue authority. In the 1830s the government took to 'reform' - a by-word all over British India for cuts in military and civil spending, so that the decline in aristocratic consumption was not counterbalanced by an increase in government largesse. In

⁵² Heber, *Narrative of a journey*, I, pp. 427, 439-41. Earlier, in 1799, Tennant had observed that a good deal of Bareilly's population seemed to be idle, that manufactures were few and employment scarce. Wasteland lay all around the city. *Indian recreations*, II, pp. 380-5.

⁵³ Bayly has argued that it was only in the third decade of British rule in the north that the effects of that rule really began to be felt, and that until then the successor states surviving on the fringes of the new empire had been able to preserve some of the consumption and employment traditions of a military aristocracy, thereby slowing the pace of change. See his chapter, 'The crisis of the north Indian political economy, 1825-45', from which much of the material in the above paragraph is drawn, in *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars*, pp. 263-302. On aspects of the economic crisis, in particular the crash of the indigo boom, see also Asiya Siddiqi, 'Agrarian depression in Uttar Pradesh in 1828-33', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 6 (1969), pp. 165-78.

the NWP R.M. Bird's appointment as chief settlement officer heralded a sustained attack on the aristocracy, as he set about breaking up their large estates and settling land-rights on small peasant cultivators. Thomas Metcalf identifies as one of the most brutal and socially-disrupting aspects of the 1830s' settlement proceedings the resumption of huge amounts of revenue-free land, originally granted for religious or charitable purposes or in reward for an individual's services to a ruler. In Rohilkhand alone over 280,000 acres were resumed by the government, with the former holders, the *mafidars* and *lakhirajdars*, receiving small life pensions in return.⁵⁴ In Bareilly there was a foolhardy attempt to 'rationalize' the estates and pensions held by Hafiz Rahmat Khan's descendants; it, at least, had to be abandoned because of the hostility it generated. Bayly has suggested that, together, all of these changes and economic reverses produced a general unease in the north, a sense that the natural order of society was somehow askew and that the old, reciprocal relations between king and subject, landlord and tenant, secular patron and religious client, were breaking down.⁵⁵ The rising incidence of communal tension in the 1830s provides further evidence of a society in flux and of a disquiet induced by rapid change.

In Bareilly itself there had been a weakening of some of the certainties of religious observance and also of the traditional mode of intercommunal compromise. A cow-slaughter dispute in 1814 had revealed that even in this Muslim-dominated city there had always been areas where cows ought not to be killed.⁵⁶ But the early 1830s bristled with cow-slaughter disputes, the Muslims attempting to extend the permissible slaughter sites and the Hindus challenging every incident that came to their attention as a breach of precedent. Most cases were not settled privately but were agitated before the Magistrate, and several officers recorded their exasperation at the number of these cases in their courts.⁵⁷

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⁵⁴ Thomas R. Metcalf, *Land, landlords, and the British Raj: northern India in the nineteenth century* (Berkeley, 1979), pp. 68-71.

⁵⁵ Bayly, *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars*, pp. 299-302.

⁵⁶ H. Dumbleton, Magte Bareilly, to G. Dowdeswell, Secy to Govt, Judicial Dept, 11 Oct. 1814, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial P/131/49, 4 Nov. 1814, no. 32. See above fn. 12.

⁵⁷ See the Commissioner's report on the case of Neamat Ullah Khan, a descendant of Hafiz Rahmat Khan, who had slaughtered a cow in an only partially-enclosed compound adjoining that of a Brahman and had been fined Rs.50 for objectionable behaviour. A. Campbell, Comr Bareilly, to J.R. Colvin, Depy Secy to Govt, Judl, no. 129, 16 Apr. 1834, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/58, 5 May 1834, no. 33. See also Campbell's charge that Muslims were being innovative in their slaughter sites in his subsequent report on a similar case in which four men were fined for killing a buffalo in the vicinity of the houses of respectable Hindus. A. Campbell, Comr Bareilly, to C. Macsween, Secy to Govt, Judl, no. 193, 12 July 1834, and N.J. Conolly, Magte Bareilly, to A. Campbell, Comr Bareilly, 11 July 1834, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/59, 28 July 1834, nos. 36-7.

On the other hand, the Hindus had introduced new public festivities to the city. In about 1827 a Bengali *sharishtadar* in the Magistrate's office celebrated Kali *puja* with a procession of Kali through the main streets of the city.⁵⁸ This was never repeated, but even its one-off occurrence was said to have greatly enraged the Muslims. The man's position as a government official cast a slur on the supposed impartiality of the administration, which was still being questioned ten years later.⁵⁹ Shortly after this Chaudhari Basant Ram, a Kanaujia Brahman, introduced first a Ramlila celebration and then a Ramnaumi procession to the city. These became regular features of Bareilly's Hindu calendar, always sponsored by the same man.⁶⁰

Basant Ram's history is an interesting one. He lived in the city and had substantial property interests there. Although he paid revenue on a large number of villages in the district the British insisted that he was only a *malguzar*, a revenue farmer, and not a *zamindar*.⁶¹ It appears that his father, Basti Ram, had engaged for the revenue in the chaos of the early British settlements in Rohilkhand, but that his claim to be a surviving member of Rohilkhand's Hindu aristocracy was not then accepted. Not long after he initiated the Ramlila and Ramnaumi celebrations in Bareilly, Basant Ram took to the courts to try to establish his right to the proprietary title of several villages.⁶² In the anti-landlord environment of the 1830s and '40s it is perhaps unsurprising that he lost all his cases. But several things cast doubt on the British insistence that he was only a *malguzar*. When his son Naubat Ram went to court in the 1850s to pursue the same claim to *zamindar* status, although the

⁵⁸ Kali is a fearsome, bloodthirsty goddess, the consort of Shiva in his destructive mode. Even now her chief seat of worship is in Bengal; her appearance in the main streets of Bareilly in the 1820s would have been extraordinary. Bengalis in the government's employ often introduced their festivals to towns in the upper provinces, presumably damaging the government's reputation for impartiality in the process. In the 1850s Bengali clerks in the Board of Revenue office in Agra started up a Durga Puja celebration and procession. Thirty years later Bengali railway clerks tried to revive it shortly after Muharram, but the Magistrate of Agra ordered that the procession be confined to the cantonment, in which event they surrendered their objective. List of Hindu Religious Festivals which may synchronize with the Muharram, UPSA, NWP&O General, 'Notes and Orders, file 540, box 33, p. 5.

⁵⁹ T.J. Turner, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, to J. Thomason, Offg Secy to Lt Govr NWP, no. 77A, 22 Sept. 1837, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/40, 3 Nov. 1837, no. 42, para. 256.

⁶⁰ In 1837 the Commissioner reported that these two festivals were considered less obnoxious by the Muslims than Kali *puja*, but nevertheless their novelty naturally 'increased aversion' between the Muslims and Hindus. *Ibid.*, para. 257.

⁶¹ Basant Ram appears to fit Asiya Siddiqi's description of a Bareilly *zamindar*. *Zamindari* tenure was predominant in Bareilly district but many of the *zamindars* were absentees, living in Bareilly city and managing their property through agents. From Siddiqi comes this extract of a letter from the Collector of Bareilly to the Revenue Board in 1825: 'Some of the largest landholders and [sic] who have been bred in the town of Bareilly have never even seen from the time of their childhood a great portion of the villages they possess, nor have they in any direct manner taken the management of them into their own hands...' Asiya Siddiqi, *Agrarian change in a north Indian state: Uttar Pradesh 1819-1833* (Oxford, 1973), p. 25, n. 2.

⁶² Basant Ram, and later his son, Naubat Ram, pursued the same course as that described in Metcalf's *Land, landlords, and the British Raj*, pp. 86-94, i.e., rather than challenge the revenue authority directly, he sued the *muqaddams* of the villages concerned for the possession of the *zamindari* right.

courts again rejected his claim, nine of the twelve defendants, all Rajput village proprietors, admitted Naubat Ram's case.⁶³ This suggests that all along people in Bareilly had regarded and treated the family as *zamindars*. Moreover, later in the century, when the local officers looked back upon Basant Ram as a responsible community leader and not as a fomenter of communal strife, several authorities readily accepted his descendants' assertion that the family had been in Bareilly since the time of the Mughals and had held the farm of Pilibhit and Jahanabad from Aurangzeb.⁶⁴

At the same time as Basant Ram was starting up his celebrations, Rohilkhand played host to many itinerant preachers, among them some followers of Sayyid Ahmad, an Islamic reformer then fighting a war with the Sikhs in the Punjab. Pathans in Rohilkhand and Moradabad were reported to be sending large sums of money through these men to Sayyid Ahmad's fighters. Given the frequent appearance of itinerant preachers in religious disputes in the nineteenth century, it is worth pausing to consider how an imported ideology might have influenced the course of a localized dispute.

Sayyid Ahmad (1786-1831), a former fighter with Amir Khan, was a man of action. He urged upon all Muslims immediate and practical reform of Islam, a faith cleansed of false Shia doctrine and Hindu accretions.⁶⁵ The printing press was used to spread his message and his disciples wrote in Urdu, rather than the aristocratic Persian.⁶⁶ Itinerant preaching was the hallmark of his movement; the first tour in 1818-19 took in the Upper Doab and Rohilkhand and at each stop he attracted disciples and controversy.⁶⁷

Sayyid Ahmad argued that India's Muslims had fallen from their state of grace because they were not sufficiently good Muslims. Only if they purified the observance of their faith would they be deserving of a return to power. In this sense, as Barbara Metcalf has been careful to argue, he focussed on Muslims' consciousness of themselves as Muslims, and not on the error of Christian or Hindu

⁶³ *Civil decisions of the Zillah Court Bareilly, 1855* (Agra, 1856), pp. 114-17.

⁶⁴ *Report on the settlement of Pilibheet, N.-W. Provinces* (Allahabad, 1873), p. 16; Nevill, *Bareilly: A Gazetteer*, p. 102.

⁶⁵ Amongst other things, Sayyid Ahmad condemned prostration at shrines, circumambulation, pilgrimages necessitating special dress, animal sacrifice, the burning of candles at shrines, and the propitiation of saints and martyrs and disease goddesses. *Taziyas* and the elaborate observance of Muharram he abhorred. Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 57-9.

⁶⁶ 'Notice of the peculiar tenets held by the followers of Syed Ahmed, taken chiefly from the "Sirat-ul-Mustaqim", a principal treatise of that sect, written by Moulavi Mahommed Ismail', compiled by J.R.C., *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, I (1832), p. 494.

⁶⁷ Metcalf, *Islamic revival in British India*, p. 59. From his home in Rae Bareilly in Awadh, he travelled overland to Calcutta gathering still more supporters. When he left on the Haj in the early 1820s, six hundred disciples went with him.

ways.⁶⁸ But Metcalf's neat distinction probably did not hold good in the field, especially once the *jihad* against the Sikhs was underway.⁶⁹ Metcalf herself notes that Sayyid Ahmad's chief disciple, Muhammad Ismail, was a fearless propagandist who thrived on combative public debates and was ready to preach at Hindu sites as well as Muslim ones.⁷⁰ An Urdu pamphlet circulated during the *jihad* thundered against the Sikhs as enemies of Islam. In the 1820s its attack on cow-protection cannot have seemed a million miles away from the disputes flourishing in Rohilkhand:

The tribe of Sikhs have long held sway in Lahore and other places. Their oppressions have exceeded all limits. Thousands of Mahommedans they have unjustly killed, and on thousands have they heaped disgrace. The 'Azan', or summons to prayer, and the killing of cows, they have entirely prohibited.⁷¹

In the 1820s officers in the NWP reported their unease at the presence of Sayyid Ahmad's followers in their towns, but complained that they lacked sufficient grounds for ordering their confinement or expulsion.⁷² This suggests that the reformers wisely avoided saying anything that could have been construed as seditious, but nevertheless aroused sufficient excitement amongst their host populations to warrant official concern. Spokesmen of an avowedly populist movement must have encouraged their audiences to reconsider their position in a community as members of one religion or another.

Although Sayyid Ahmad's followers were the most prominent 'missionaries' of the 1820s and '30s, the phenomenon was not confined to Muslims. Bareilly was on the route to Hardwar from the south east; Hindu pilgrims and ascetics regularly passed through the town so that its Hindu population

⁶⁸ Metcalf writes: 'The treatment of widows aside, the reformers rarely attributed deviations to Hindu influence, but rather blamed Muslims themselves. Only later did Muslim movements explicitly seek to create boundaries between themselves and their fellow countrymen.' *Ibid.*, p. 59. Metcalf's identification of a sense of Muslim consciousness among these reformers and their attempts to popularize it is important in the light of Sandria Freitag's recent work which seeks to show that broad-based, ideologically-conscious expressions of religious community, as opposed to localized, relational expressions of community, did not exist at a popular level until the early twentieth century. See Freitag, *Collective action and community*, pp. 85-96.

⁶⁹ Sayyid Ahmad was only prepared to wage true *jihad* - i.e., war launched from an area in which Muslim rule was undisputed - hence his selection of an area under Muslim control on the North West Frontier as his military base. He explained his choice thus: 'There were many who advised me to carry on jihad in India, promising to provide me with whatever was necessary by way of material, treasure and weapons. But I could not agree to this, for jihad must be in accordance with the *sunnah*. Mere rebellion was not intended.' *Ibid.*, p. 61. His five year war against the Sikhs, which included the short-lived capture of Peshawar in 1830, ended in 1831 when Sayyid Ahmad and some six hundred of his fighters were killed at Balakot, at the entrance to the Kaghan Valley. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁷¹ 'Notice of the peculiar tenets', p. 482. The author of the pamphlet was a *maulvi* from Kanauj.

⁷² A. Mackenzie, 3rd Judge Bareilly Court of Circuit, to H. Shakespear, Secy to Govt, 24 Mar. 1827, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/138/41, 12 Apr. 1827, no. 5; R.M.C. Hamilton, Actg Magte Benares, to George Swinton, Secy to Govt, Secret & Political Dept, 2 Apr. 1827, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/138/42, 27 Apr. 1827, no. 1.

was also well served by lines of communication beyond the locality. Many of the ascetics would have been 'bairagis', i.e., Ram devotees. In 1837 the Commissioner of Rohilkhand noted that both communities had been frequently visited by 'itinerant enthusiasts' whose fiery, public protestations had fuelled the existing rivalries.⁷³

Senior government men had little sympathy for the magistrates and the commissioners of Rohilkhand. They blamed the communal unrest on 'some injudicious act of partiality on the part of European or subordinate officers' which, by interfering with the local custom and balance of power, had led the Hindus and Muslims to 'mutual recrimination under intrigues for the purpose of [one community] gaining an advantage over the other.'⁷⁴ With this suspicion of government disapproval hanging over them the local officers were well advised to approach the coming festivals with caution.

Early in February 1837 the Officiating Magistrate, H. Rose, noted that the festivals, still two months away, were already a source of public speculation. Another cow-slaughter dispute was in court with all the usual petitions and ill-feeling, and there were complaints that Hindu wells had been polluted with cow's blood and rumours of retaliatory mosque defilement. Rose understood that Ramnaumi, which the Hindus wanted to observe with a procession through the bazaar, would fall on 8 Muharram (14 April), the day of the Muslims' *alam* parade. As the Hindu procession had only come into being since the last Ramnaumi-Muharram overlap, its cancellation seemed to Rose the best way of implementing the government's advice on precedent. To his mind its newness disqualified it from being accorded equality with the much older Muharram ceremonies.⁷⁵ The Commissioner, R.H. Scott, vetoed this suggestion. His solution, which the government supported, was to arrange the routes and times of the two processions so as to remove all possibility of collision.⁷⁶ This came close to breaching the government's guidelines on precedent insofar as it meant tampering with recognized features of each celebration, but this sort of looseness in the policy's implementation was symptomatic of its poor articulation.

⁷³ T.J. Turner, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, to J. Thomason, Offg Secy to Lt Govr NWP, no. 77A, 22 Sept. 1837, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/40, 3 Nov. 1837, no. 42, para. 258.

⁷⁴ C. Macsween, Secy to Govt, to Comr Bareilly, no. 1416, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/58, 30 June 1834, no. 25.

⁷⁵ H. Rose, Actg Magt Bareilly, to R.H. Scott, Comr Bareilly, 4 Feb. 1837, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/34, 9 Mar. 1837, no. 62.

⁷⁶ R.H. Scott, Comr Bareilly, to G.A. Bushby, Offg Secy to Lt Govr NWP, 2 Mar. 1837, *ibid.*, no. 61.

Rose's successor, W.H. Benson, was dismayed to find Chaudhari Basant Ram in no mood for concessions. Basant Ram pointed to the British emphasis on precedent, and argued that any surrender of their rights by the Hindus this year would inevitably be paraded before them at every subsequent festival coincidence, forcing them into a position of eternal submission and concession.⁷⁷ Benson tried in vain to persuade the Chaudhari to confine the Ramnaumi worship to his private garden at the Rambagh, the procession travelling there from his house by the shortest, least conspicuous route.

But the Chaudhari was not an entirely free agent. Although he was organizer, sponsor and host of the Ramnaumi celebration, he needed the support of other Hindus to make the festival a success. When some of the leading Muslims proposed that a joint committee negotiate a settlement, Basant Ram refused to co-operate. However he was overruled by his co-religionists who insisted that he attend as the foremost of the Hindus' three delegates. Basant Ram reasserted his independence both to his fellow Hindus and the rest of Bareilly's population by delaying his arrival at the meeting for some hours, during which time the Muslim delegates were kept waiting. The meeting ended in disagreement and Benson prepared to impose a solution.

Under Benson's orders the old restrictions on the Hindus' wearing of bright-coloured clothing during Muharram were lifted and their procession was allotted part of the bazaar. They were not to pass near any mosques or *taziyas*, but nor were the Muslims to pass by any temples or other points of sensitivity to the Hindus. All of this broke with precedent and heralded a style of religious administration quite different to that of the pre-British era. For the time being however the government did not perceive any contradiction between Benson's implementation of principles of religious toleration and equality and its own advocacy of established usage.

Ironically, the festivals themselves were something of an anti-climax. Insulted that the Hindu procession had won official sanction, the majority of Bareilly's Muslims picked up their *taziyas* before time and retired to the *karbala* on the city's outskirts, so that on Ramnaumi the Hindus had the town to themselves and Benson was untroubled by difficult policing duties. No *alams* were brought out.⁷⁸ On

⁷⁷ W.H. Benson, Magte Bareilly, to T.J. Turner, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, no. 37, 24 Apr. 1837, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/35, 9 May 1837, no. 80.

⁷⁸ There were several minor affrays, two people being killed and several wounded seriously. There were also numerous complaints lodged with Benson, none of which he was able to unravel satisfactorily. On the whole, however, there was not the huge confrontation that Benson had feared.

10 Muharram (16 April), the Ramnaumi celebrations completed, the *taziyas* had to be buried. As most of these were already out at the burial ground, this caused few difficulties.⁷⁹

Under the conditional leadership of Chaudhari Basant Ram, the Hindus had pushed matters towards conflict in an attempt to upgrade their status as participants in Bareilly's public life. In this they had been well supported by the British who, despite their claims to be upholding tradition, broke it with every new order. As the Commissioner reported, without the British guarantee of safety the Hindus could not have proceeded with their plans for the festival. They would have been routed by the Muslims.⁸⁰

After Ramnaumi it proved impossible to prevent the Hindus from exhibiting signs of triumph,⁸¹ and, as the communal stand-off stretched from days into weeks, the traditional impetus towards compromise was found wanting. Shops remained closed and intercommunal dealings were non-existent. This state of affairs continued for some months, bringing hardship to the consumers and small traders who had insufficient resources to stockpile supplies, and causing financial embarrassment to some of the monied class.⁸² Both the Commissioner and the Magistrate held Basant Ram responsible for the ill-feeling in the town and they refused to accept his visits. Financially and politically he was paying dearly for his belligerence. He would have paid with his life as well had an assassination attempt not failed.⁸³ Only after this, in July, did the Chaudhari begin to retreat, informing the Commissioner that he desired a reconciliation with the Muslims and that he was prepared to promise not to celebrate Ramnaumi publicly during any future Muharram. This concession, followed by a Muslim statement on cow-slaughter, immediately opened the way to the restoration of

⁷⁹ There was a problem with one *taziya* from the army lines, a provocatively-sized one, built so big so as to collide with a *pipal* tree, sacred to the Hindus. Here Benson headed off conflict by warning the Muslim *kotwal* of Bareilly that his job depended upon the *pipal* tree surviving the *taziya's* passage intact. This was the only active provocation offered by Bareilly's Muslims throughout Muharram, and even then the people behind it were not part of the local civilian population.

⁸⁰ T.J. Turner, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, to J. Thomason, Offg Secy to Lt Govr NWP, no. 77A, 22 Sept. 1837, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/40, 3 Nov. 1837, no. 42, para. 259.

⁸¹ The Comr, T.J. Turner, complained that 'leading members' of the Hindu community, amongst whom he counted the Chaudhari, had assembled large numbers of Hindu boys for the 'apparently petty purpose of flying paper kites, but at times and in places so contrived as to interfere with stated visits to certain Mahomedans' shrines.' *Ibid.*, para. 261.

⁸² W.H. Benson, Magte Bareilly, to T.J. Turner, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, 4 Aug. 1837, *ibid.*, no. 43. This was a bad time for an economic stand-off. A run of bad seasons, agricultural depression and currency shortages had combined to produce low prices for the producers and high prices in the bazaar for the consumers. The revenue assessment pressed heavily on the *zamindars* and many assesseees were paying high rates of exchange to convert their local coin into the scarce legal currency in which the revenue had to be paid. Moneylenders too were squeezed because agriculturalists were unable to pay back their loans. Siddiqi, *Agrarian change in a northern Indian state*, pp. 168-78; Nevill, *Bareilly: A Gazetteer*, pp. 54, 59.

⁸³ His would-be assassin killed himself instead, thus providing a martyr for the injured Muslim community.

Bareilly's normal economic and social relations.⁸⁴ It suggests that the Hindus were not yet sufficiently powerful, either economically or politically, to be able to sustain the gains in status that they had wrested from the Muslims.

The reconciliation was unusual in several things. First, there was the length of time it took. By early July Bareilly's normal existence had been severely disrupted for at least four months. Second, the manner of the reconciliation was very public and its terms fixed. It was a humiliating climb down by the Chaudhari who had to surrender that which he had won and who signed a document creating the very sort of precedent that he had refused to be a party to before the festivals. Third, the reconciliation was effected through the agency of the British administration; neither party initiated an independent approach to the other. The Hindus prepared their document and presented it to the Magistrate. The Muslims drew up their statement on cow-slaughter at the suggestion of the Magistrate who wanted to create the impression of a reciprocity of concessions; the Hindus did not even acknowledge it. None of this resembled the kind of discreet, unwritten and speedy compromise that characterized dispute-solving before the British era. And although in 1837 it appeared a satisfactory solution, it is not surprising that in the future this settlement would be the cause of more bitterness and antipathy.

In the two subsequent years of Muharram and Ramnaumi coincidence Basant Ram kept to his undertaking, celebrating Ramnaumi only within his compound and without any procession through the bazaar. Gradually his status rose with the British from that of trouble-maker to community leader of influence. According to one magistrate he exerted all his influence on the Hindus to observe the rules laid down by him: '[T]hough I do not think that his feelings towards the Mahomedans is [sic]

⁸⁴ The Muslims proffered a declaration that they would restrict cow-slaughter during Bakr Id so as to make that festival less offensive to the Hindus. As both the Magistrate and the Commissioner pointed out, this was no great concession. The Muslims were not under any circumstances allowed to slaughter cattle in any place open to public view anyway, which was all that their document promised. For the agreements see Appendix E - 'Translate copy of a deed of agreement entered into by Chowdry Bussunt Ram and other Hindoo Inhabitants of the Town of Bareilly', 8 July 1837; 'Translate copy of a deed of agreement executed by certain Mahomedan Inhabitants of the Town of Bareilly', 11 July 1837, signed and sealed by 37 of the 'principal Mahomedans of Bareilly', IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/40, 3 Nov. 1837, no. 43.

Freitag, in her discussion of the 1837 tension, relies upon a report written in 1871, after a much more serious Ramnaumi-Muharram disturbance in Bareilly. I hope that it is not pedantic to point out where the 1871 report differs from the original, on-the-spot reportage of 1837, particularly as it provides some idea of how people in the 1870s looked back on the events of an earlier generation. In 1837 the Muslims did not make any concessions to the Hindus, although in 1871 the government believed that their 1837 statement must have promised the Hindus something of value. Nor is there any evidence in the 1837 documents that the leaders of the Muslims locked up the weapons of their co-religionists before chaperoning them out to the *karbala*. That this 'fact' appears in the later report suggests that the Muslim notables providing the government with information in 1871 - in the midst of an official inquiry into recent violent Muslim aggression against the Hindus - were attempting to enhance their reputation as responsible community leaders by fictionalizing the past. See Freitag, *Collective action and community*, pp. 107-8. For the 1871 coverage of 1837 see: Report of F.O. Mayne, Officer on Special Duty, to Offg Secy to Govt NWP, 27 Apr. 1871, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs 5 Aug. 1871, no. 146.

altogether such as could be wished, I believe, that he sees and feels the necessity of peace and conciliation'.⁸⁵ The policing for the 1838 and 1839 festivals was high, and the authorities opposed any suggestion that the participants themselves manage the celebrations. 1839 in particular worried the Magistrate, R.H. Clarke, with the familiar build-up of cow-sacrifice incidents at Bakr Id in the month prior to Muharram. Commercial relations once again became strained and Clarke imagined the air heavy with veiled insults and threatened scuffles between Hindus and Muslims.⁸⁶ 'Known trouble-makers' were kept under police surveillance and urban landlords were instructed to keep their parts of the town quiet. There was no trouble. The Ramnaumi procession was enormously attended with some 12,000 people - double that of 1838 - and some 50-60,000 came out to watch the *taziya* parade, many Hindus amongst them. At the conclusion of the festivities Clarke thanked the men whom he thought instrumental in the preservation of the peace: for the Muslims, the *kazi*, Ghulam Khan, and for the Hindus, Chaudhari Basant Ram and a *tahsildar*, Kishore Parshad. Clarke observed that they had helped to bring about 'a return of social intercourse which has been almost completely interrupted between Hindoos and Mussulmans at their public meetings and festivals for the last 3 years.'⁸⁷

⁸⁵ G.T. Lushington, Offg Magte Bareilly, to J. Davidson, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, no. 26, 6 Apr. 1838, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/48, 23 Apr. 1838, no. 51. The same Magistrate deplored the attitude of some of the Muslim spokesmen who attempted to restore the old ban on Hindu merriment during Muharram with a campaign to have the shouting of 'Jai, jai' ('Victory, victory' - usually for Ram Chandra) prohibited.

⁸⁶ Magistrate Clarke had a list of activities he recognized as provocative, almost comic in its detail: no abusive language, no cutting of *pipal* or *imli* trees, no throwing bricks at images or *taziyas*, no flying of kites near *imambarahs*, no knocking off the red turbans of the Hindus, no wearing of red turbans to insult the Muslims, no blowing of shells at mosques...R.H. Clarke, Magte Bareilly, to J. Davidson, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, no. 25, 3 Apr. 1839, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/59, 30 Apr. 1839, no. 127.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* A disturbance in Chandausi, in Moradabad, in 1839 is relevant to Bareilly's experiences. Chandausi's residents were almost entirely Hindu traders and moneylenders. The few Muslims depended upon the Hindus for capital to finance their weaving and other industries. Traditionally there were *taziya* parades in Chandausi but they were very modest and the butchers who lived outside the town had never been allowed to bring their *taziyas* or *alams* inside the town's walls. In 1839 the Muharram processions suddenly became very much grander and with the connivance of Muslim subordinate officers and police *burkandazis* the butchers were permitted to join in the parade of the *alams*, which culminated in a prolonged verbal assault on a Mahadeo *mandir* in the centre of the town. Despite the attempts of the town's *chaudharis* to ward off conflict, fighting broke out during the *taziya* parade. Several people were killed, many more were wounded, the *taziyas* were smashed and several houses were burnt. The two sides were not as unevenly matched as might have been expected; Muslims from neighbouring villages had gathered in sufficient numbers to pillage the town and might have succeeded in doing so were it not for the timely intervention of the Muslim *thanadar* and *tahsildar*. G. Blunt, Offg Magte Moradabad, to James Davidson, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, no. 17, 9 Apr. 1839, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/ 231/59, 29 June 1839, no. 100.

It is unclear why the Muslims chose 1839 to grandify their celebrations, with camels and elephants joining the processions for the first time. The butcher community, confined to life outside the town walls, had been becoming increasingly wealthy and it seems that they combined their money with the more privileged position of the Muslims inside the town to try to fight off both the personal slight to themselves and the image of the Muslims of Chandausi generally as downtrodden by the Hindus. Economically they were strong enough to do this, but they had not yet proved their political clout. As in Bareilly in 1837 where the Hindus had needed the support of government officers and guards to take out their controversial procession, here too in 1839 the Muslims had had to call on government assistance. It was given unofficially, in the form of the *thanadar's* subscription to a *taziya* being built in the *tahsil*, and in the unauthorized accompanying of the processions by Muslim *burkandazis*, but the effect must have been similar: to show representatives of the administration backing the increasing display of one community's festivities to the obvious cost of another's prestige. That the display was not repeated in the years immediately following

Bareilly's good relations survived even the murder of Chaudhari Basant Ram by a Muslim carpet-weaver in February 1842.⁸⁸ The Chaudhari's deathbed behaviour, witnessed by a huge crowd of Hindus, won him the full approval of the British as a responsible community leader. Whilst dying he entreated his co-religionists not to seek revenge for his murder and he publicly placed the care of his son, Naubat Ram, into the hands of the Assistant Magistrate.⁸⁹ The local officers held their breath and Bareilly stayed calm. The Chaudhari had allied himself with the administration and had pledged the loyalty of his co-religionists to the British forces of law and order. His ability to offer this sort of community cohesion to the British was probably never greater than at the time of his death. That, after 1857, his descendants would not be able to wield the same degree of control over Bareilly's Hindus points to the changing role of the *raises*, the economic and political elites, as sponsors and spokesmen of public religious celebration.

Muharram and Ramlila, 1852-54: the development of explicit compromise

Occasional incidents of communal ill-will cropped up in the years before the next festival overlap, that of Muharram and Ramlila in 1852-4. In 1844 some Hindus attempted to build a temple near the chief mosque of the city. Petitions of protest from Bareilly's Muslims show that they would have regarded the *shivala's* completion as an insult to themselves and a triumph to the Hindus involved in its promotion.⁹⁰ Cases like this - common in the nineteenth century - were different versions of the same politics played out in the arguments over procession rights during festival overlaps. Each party argued for its rights to public display; religious buildings were more permanent indicators of the group's status in the shared space.⁹¹ In the Bareilly incident the Magistrate prohibited the erection of

also echoes the experience of Bareilly's Hindus. The first experiment marked a step towards a higher public status, and implied increasing economic power, although in Chandausi this appears to have been confined to one section of the Muslim population which had a particular grievance to overcome. But the gain could not be confirmed all at once; greater, lasting power was necessary to consolidate the first advances.

⁸⁸ R. N. Clarke, Magte Bareilly, to W.J. Conolly, Comr Rohilkhand, no. 16, 23 Feb. 1842, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/9, 12 Mar. 1842, no. 161.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Magistrate Clarke described the Chaudhari as 'the acknowledged representative of the Hindoos in all questions regarding their religious differences with the Mahomedans'. Commissioner Conolly described him as 'the chief of the Hindoo party' in Bareilly; W.J. Conolly, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, to R.A.C. Hamilton, Secy to Govt NWP, 23 Feb. 1842, *ibid.*, 1 Mar. 1842, no. 102.

⁹⁰ H. Clarke, Magte Bareilly, to C. W. Fagan, Offg Additional Sessions Judge Bareilly, no. 133, 11 Sept. 1844, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/35, 16 Nov. 1844, no. 96.

⁹¹ The mid-nineteenth century has many similar disputes. In Almora in 1831 the Hindus attempted to have a mosque removed, the only one in Kumaon and which had been built only a couple of years earlier under British patronage. G.W. Traill, Comr Kumaon, to H. Pidcock, Offg Jt Magte Moradabad ND, 28 Dec. 1831, UPSA, Kumaon Comr's Office, Pre-Mutiny Records, Judicial Letters Issued, vol. 27, pp. 239-40.

In the early 1830s Kasipur in Moradabad district was polarized by a dispute over claims to a small building in ruins, the Muslims claiming it as a mosque, the Hindus as a temple. This fed into the long-running

the temple. Although the Hindus owned the land in question, the temple was considered an innovation in the neighbourhood and hence a threat to the peace.⁹²

During the 1852-54 concurrence of Muharram and Ramlila many district officers concentrated on prodding local notables into arranging amongst themselves the timetables and procession routes for the two festivals. Agreements were drawn up, setting out the rights and responsibilities of religious display for each community, although, inevitably, many were repudiated if they had not been inspired by a genuine desire to observe the festivals peacefully. Some enthusiastic officers even attempted to impose compromise mechanisms on a town's *raises*, which suggests that they did not understand that spontaneity and independence were elemental to the true spirit of compromise.⁹³

The overlap passed off peacefully in both Bareilly and Shahjahanpur, the two cities most troubled in 1837-39,⁹⁴ but tensions were more widespread in other parts of the NWP than ever before. As in the 1830s, there is a sense of a society 'using' the festivals, classic indicators of status and power

controversy over the sale of beef in the town. R. Lowther, Offg Comr Moradabad, to Welby Jackson, Regr to Nizamat Adalat, 5 Oct. 1833, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/56, 10 Feb. 1834, no. 18.

In 1834 at Mubarakhpur, in Azamgarh district, once again as merely a component in long-running Hindu-Muslim hostility, Muslims attempted overnight to establish a mosque within the boundary of a Hindu well and to consecrate it in time for worship at Bakr Id. 'Note on the Mobaruckpoor Case' by J. Thomason, Magte Azamgarh, 23 Apr. 1834, IOR, Agra Criminal Judicial P/231/16, 18 Sept. 1835, no. 105.

In 1839 in Ambetta, in Saharanpur district, fighting erupted between Hindus and Muslims when the Hindus added *shikharas* onto a temple thus making it taller than the neighbouring mosque, for years the town's landmark. G.U. Bacon, Sessions Judge Saharanpur, to Regr to Nizamat Adalat, no. 252, 15 Aug. 1839; M.J. Conolly, Magte Saharanpur, to G.U. Bacon, no. 215, 15 Aug. 1839, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/61, 21 Oct. 1839, no. 122.

In the early 1850s in Allahabad there were two cases of Jains attempting to erect Parusnath *mandirs* against the wishes of neighbouring Hindus, identified as Vaishnavites]. In one case the Jains were successful; in the other the Hindus, led by a Maratha princess, won their protest. R. Lowther, Comr Allahabad, to W. Muir, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 29, 17 Apr. 1852, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/233/34, 4 May 1852, no. 30.

In 1855 in Saharanpur Muslims had attacked and driven away workers erecting a *thakurdwara*, complaining that it would be too close to neighbouring mosques and that Muslim worshippers would be disturbed by the noise of the Hindu *sankh*. The temple was allowed to be built on the grounds that Saharanpur had many mosques and temples in much closer proximity. A. Ross, Magte Saharanpur, to Secy to Govt NWP, no. 44, 24 Feb. 1855, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/234/1, 15 Mar. 1855, no. 273.

⁹² J. Thornton, Secy to Govt NWP, to Offg Civil and Sessions Judge Rohilkhand, no. 5040, 16 Nov. 1844, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/35, 16 Nov. 1844, no. 97.

⁹³ The behaviour of the Magistrate of Etawah, E.H.C. Monckton, at Jaswantnagar in 1852 provides the best illustration. Having failed to convince the community leaders in Etawah city to come to an agreement, Monckton ordered the Muslims and Hindus of Jaswantnagar to set up a *panchayat* to work out the times and routes for the competing processions. Not only did he insist that the members of the *panchayat* sign agreements drawn up by himself, but he instructed them all to sign bonds to the value of Rs.500 to the effect that none of their co-religionists would cause any disturbances. Eventually Monckton worked out an 'agreement' of extraordinary complexity, but it collapsed because the men who had put their names to it, especially on behalf of the Muslims, had no real control over their 'followers'. On the day of the Bharat Milap procession the Hindus were attacked by a group of Muslims who had wanted it postponed until after the *taziya* burial. Nowhere in Jaswantnagar was there any evidence of the spirit of compromise that Monckton had laboured to implant in the people. E.H.C. Monckton, Offg Magte Etawah, to W.H. Tyler, Comr Agra, 18 Oct. 1852, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/233/38, 9 Nov. 1852, no. 79; Same to same, no. 42, 26 Oct. 1852, *ibid.*, no. 85.

⁹⁴ Of Shahjahanpur we know only that a *panchayat* in the city, under the guidance of the Magistrate, drew up an agreement for the routes and timings of the various processions. The agreement was expected to hold good for the next two years of festival coincidence. M.H. Court, Offg Magte Shahjahanpur, to R. Kerr-Dick, Comr Rohilkhand, no. 43, 28 Oct. 1852, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/233/38, 8 Dec. 1852, no. 47.

in an urban setting, to register change. Koil, in Aligarh district, reported troubles with cow-sacrifice at Bakr Id and the *taziya* and Ramlila processions in 1851, 1852, and 1853. In 1852 Ghazipur witnessed a near disastrous head-on clash of Hindu and Muslim processions in its main bazaar. In the same year in Banda, Muslims attacked Hindus whilst in procession, throwing the timing and policing of all the subsequent processions and *tamasha* into confusion. In 1852 Etawah district saw disturbances in Etawah city, Jaswantnagar and Phaphund, a network of unrest that stretched the local administrative resources to breaking point. In Kanpur there were difficulties in finding an arena for the Ramlila *tamasha*, in which case the celebrations were not held at all. The Hindus, aggrieved at their loss, attacked the *taziya* parade of the Muslims. In 1852 in Najibabad, in Bijnour district, Hindu-Muslim riots were narrowly averted. The following year the Hindus delayed the explosion of their Ravan so that it fell on the day of the *taziya* burial. There was an affray at the height of the ceremonies, leaving several men dead and others wounded. In 1853 Moradabad city was the scene of a Shia-Sunni clash at Muharram. However, in 1854, following cow-sacrifice disputes during Bakr Id, the Muharram and Ramlila celebrations were the occasion for Hindu-Muslim tension. Kasipur, also in Moradabad district, witnessed serious Hindu-Muslim rioting in 1854 when Muslims cut back a *pipal* tree during the *taziya* parade.

In Bareilly, Chaudhari Naubat Ram, son of the assassinated Basant Ram, had inherited, along with his father's property, the mantle of spokesman for the Hindus in the matter of religious celebration. On behalf of them he arranged with the Muslims that the Ramlila processions should continue as usual until the beginning of Muharram, from which time all Hindu celebrations would be confined to his garden outside the city. The procession of the royal throne of Ram - the *rajgaddi* - through Bareilly's main streets would be delayed until after the burial of the *taziyas*. An agreement was signed to this effect, Nawab Khan Bahadur Khan, a grandson of the famous Hafiz Rahmat Khan, pleading with his co-religionists that they demand no more from the Hindus in restrictions on the noise and showiness of their celebrations.⁹⁵ The document was posted and proclaimed all over the city, asking people to follow the good example of their community leaders. Throughout the district similar schemes were followed, with the Magistrate reporting triumphantly that:

⁹⁵ F. Williams, Magte Bareilly, to R. Kerr-Dick, Comr Rohilkhand, no. 54, 1 Nov. 1852, *ibid.*, no. 48.

Even in the Villages where often in the Mohurram misunderstandings arise and broken heads result quite a new spirit of accommodations and mutual forbearance generally prevailed and the people encouraged to adjust all matters amongst themselves did so with very little interference of the the Police.⁹⁶

It is clear from the Magistrate's brief report that Naubat Ram and his Muslim counterparts wanted no trouble during the festivals and were prepared to commit themselves to paper to prove this to the authorities. Their readiness to do this suggests that they wished to disassociate themselves from any violence that might break out independently of their efforts to prevent it. This precision in the delineation of the rights of religious display was novel, introduced to Bareilly by the British. Such paper compromises seem to have had little to do with avoiding trouble and everything to do with being seen to avoid trouble.⁹⁷

The Rebellion of 1857-58

In 1857-58 Bareilly was at the centre of the rebels' achievements. A rebel administration survived there longer than anywhere else and the city was not retaken until May 1858. The conventional understanding of the causes of the rebellion in Rohilkhand emphasizes the steady loss of land by established landholders, Rohilla Pathans, to urban-based Hindu moneylenders. According to this thesis, after the accumulated insults of losing political power to the British and status and prestige to the Hindus, this slow loss of economic power to the Hindus as well made Rohilkhand, and Bareilly in particular, the seat of much resentment. Rebellion there was almost inevitable.

Brodkin turns this theory on its head, arguing that most of those losing land were Hindus, chiefly Rajputs, who had engaged for it at cripplingly-high rates during the first chaotic settlements when the British had found few people who could present an unquestionable claim to hereditary landholding. They were surrendering it, in Brodkin's analysis, to Rohilla moneylenders, professionals with a history of competent agricultural management in the region. The Rebellion in Rohilkhand was still a Rohilla rebellion and Bareilly, as home to the descendants of Hafiz Rahmat Khan, was a natural

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* Freitag, *Collective action and community*, p. 108, reports that Naubat Ram 'had great difficulty extending the agreement of 1837.' I can find no reference to this in the reports of the 1850s and it seems that, with the benefit of hindsight, officers in the troubled 1870s presumed this to be so because it fitted in with their picture of the increasing unruliness of the Hindus.

⁹⁷ The role Naubat Ram played here in initiating this compromise and in the subsequent years of the overlap earned him warm praise and respect from the British for his religious temperance.

centre for it, but it was a rebellion of aggrandizement, an attempt to recapture the political power to match the gains in wealth.⁹⁸

Although Brodtkin reverses the roles of the aggrieved and the aggressor his thesis does not change the communal nature of the Rebellion in Bareilly, as noted by contemporary observers. Muslims were prominent in the rebel administration, while, for the most part, the Hindu *raises* of Bareilly kept their heads down. Only two Hindus stand out: a commissariat officer, Sobha Ram, sided with the rebel administration as its treasurer, and a leading banker, Baijnath Misra, remained outspokenly loyal to the British at repeated cost to his liberty and property.

After the Rebellion Bareilly's social relations were rapidly reordered. There were very public rewards for those who had remained loyal; death or imprisonment and loss of property for those who had not. Nawab Khan Bahadur Khan, the Viceroy of Rohilkhand under the rebel administration and leader of the Muslims in Bareilly, was hanged outside the *kotwali* in 1860. Land confiscated from the Nawab and other disloyal descendants of Hafiz Rahmat Khan was handed over or sold to loyal subjects, most of whom were Hindu. The Gazetteer of Bareilly could name only one Muslim who was rewarded for loyalty, the *kotwal* who had fled with the British to Nainital at the outbreak of the insurrection in the city.⁹⁹ Some Rajputs who had at first joined with the Nawab but had later turned to the British were also rewarded for their perspicacity with land grants.¹⁰⁰ Baijnath Misra was most handsomely rewarded with the title of 'Rao' and land to the value of Rs.28,000 per annum. In 1860 this was converted to a revenue-free grant and the title was upgraded to the hereditary one of 'Raja'. Lala Narayan, the former treasurer of Bareilly, and Chaudhari Naubat Ram were also rewarded for loyalty.¹⁰¹ The latter received confiscated land assessed at Rs.2,000 and the life title of 'Rana', an ironic return to the 'aristocratic' status previously denied his family by the British. Hindu-Muslim relations

⁹⁸ E.I. Brodtkin, 'Rohilkhand from conquest to revolt', pp. 139-68.

⁹⁹ The *kotwal*, Sheikh Badr-ud-din, was described as 'almost the only loyal Musalman of any note'. He was rewarded with a grant of land assessed at Rs.1,200. Nevill, *Bareilly: A Gazetteer*, p. 179.

¹⁰⁰ For example, Thakur Raghunath Singh of Faridpur. *Ibid.*, pp. 172-3, 178.

¹⁰¹ Naubat Ram was constant in his support of the British throughout the rebels' control of Bareilly. On 29 May 1857, two days before the outbreak, Naubat Ram sent a message to the Magistrate warning him that there would be a rising in the town by the Muslims after the Friday prayers. 'Daily Narrative of Events of Badaun, Bareilly, and Shahjahanpur from 12th May 1857 to 19th July 1858', in S.A.A. Rizvi (ed.), *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh* (6 vols, Lucknow, 1957-61), V, p. 173. He also provided *sowars* and footmen to help pacify outlying villages after Bareilly's recapture by the British and gave evidence against Khan Bahadur Khan at the latter's trial. *Ibid.*, pp. 498, 607. At the trial Naubat Ram testified that he had been writing secretly to Commissioner Alexander at Naini Tal from about a week after the outbreak. In one of these communications in September 1857 he sent word that the Thakurs of Bareilly were ready to rise in support of the British as soon as they put a force in Rohilkhand. W. Muir, *Records of the Intelligence Department of the Government of the North-West Provinces of India during the Mutiny of 1857* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1902), I, p. 249.

reverberated with the aftershocks of the Rebellion. There was a sense in which the Hindus, or at least some very prominent Hindus, had aligned themselves with the British to their great benefit, whereas the Muslims of Bareilly had gambled and lost.

After the Rebellion the government attempted to turn the clock back on its earlier anti-landlordism. The assault on large estates was now seen to have brutalized the organization of society. The new village proprietors had not shown much gratitude to the British for their change in fortune, and generally, where areas had been held for the British, it was because a large landlord had had the resources and the authority to command obedience and respect from the local population.¹⁰² Therefore in Oudh the government set about restoring the former *taluqdars* to their estates and recreating a 'native aristocracy'. In the NWP it was too late to reassemble the old estates, but in the redistribution of confiscated land care was taken not to break up any surviving estates and some of the smaller amounts of land were lumped together to produce a bigger holding.¹⁰³ At a more general level the government concentrated on promoting large landlords as their ideal leaders of society, men of influence who retained some of the responsibilities of a *raja* or *nawab*, but none of his independence. The 1861 decision to award magisterial powers to selected members of the NWP's 'native aristocracy' symbolizes the government's ideal. Metcalf has argued that the system of honorary magistrates, although launched enthusiastically, 'never achieved much success'; district officers found few candidates to the government's liking.¹⁰⁴ But the scheme's practical failure does not seem to be very important in the light of the runaway success of the concept of a class of 'respectable native gentlemen' which could discipline the 'unruly masses'. In particular, district officers looked to this select group of men - including the few honorary magistrates, but also any large landholder who was educated and of proven loyalty - to forestall ill-will between lower-class Hindus and Muslims before it erupted into

¹⁰² Metcalf, *Land, landlords, and the British Raj*, pp. 157-9. Metcalf argues that the presence of an influential estate-holder was a prerequisite if an area was to be held for the British: 'Much of the pattern of rebellion was...determined by the presence or absence of a thriving magnate element heavily committed by interest to British rule. Where such a class existed, whether comprised of Jats or Rajputs, new men or old, they were able almost invariably to smother the sparks of revolt in the countryside as far as their influence reached. Absentee bania landlords could not of course fulfil this role. They were invariably swept away, and the districts in which they predominated, such as Kanpur and Banda, carried into the rebel camp. Nor could the holders of tiny estates, with limited resources and influence, do much to stem the tide of disaffection around them.' *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-60. Initially 57 men, including thirteen European planters, were given powers to try petty criminal cases in their *pargana*.

destabilizing violence. As we shall see below, disillusionment awaited the government, and many of its chosen 'respectable native gentlemen' took fright at its awesome faith in their abilities.

Muharram and Ramnaumi, 1870-71: new challenges to elite sponsorship of Hindu festivity¹⁰⁵

In the seventeen years since the last festival coincidence Bareilly had changed a lot. Nawab Khan Bahadur Khan had been hanged and Naubat Ram had since died, leaving the Hindus and Muslims to find new spokesmen for the organization of their festivities. Naubat Ram's widow, Rani Ganesh Koer, intended to preserve - through her agent Manuji - the family's tradition of sponsoring the Ramnaumi and Ramlila celebrations. Accordingly, Manuji led the negotiations for the Hindus on the timing and routes of the processions, but it is clear that he lacked their whole-hearted support. There were signs that the era of elite control of religious festivals had passed in Bareilly; under Manuji the Hindus barely managed to speak as if with one voice.

Initially the Magistrate, Elliot Colvin, issued orders for the celebration of the festivals. In accordance with the new era of equal rights of observance for all there was no reference to precedent and the Hindus were granted routes and timings that were not obviously inferior to those allocated to the Muslims. The Muslims protested at this, abstaining from their ceremonies for the first three days of Muharram.¹⁰⁶ On 2 Muharram (4 April) the *raises* of each community met and proposed a reconciliation. At Manuji's suggestion an agreement was drawn up whereby the Hindus would forgo the bazaar for Ramnaumi and the Muslims would make certain concessions on cow-slaughter on certain days. This was a near copy of the 1837 settlement, right down to the vagueness of the Muslim part of the bargain, although reference to the 1837 circumstances seems to have been avoided. But Manuji had acted without sounding out the support amongst the Hindus and later the same day, much to Colvin's

¹⁰⁵ In 1860 the method of keeping records at the provincial level changed. The information coming in under various departmental headings was divided up into matters of importance (A) and routine matters (B), the former proceedings being printed in full, the latter only in *precis*, in the volumes which were distributed at the various levels of government. The full text of the routine proceedings was kept separately and most of these have now been destroyed. Under this division of material only major communal confrontations were deemed 'important'; lesser incidents, such as the temple-building disputes in the 1840s and '50s, would not rate a mention in the A proceedings. Thus from 1860 onwards there is much less district-level information available to the researcher, and we are left with an impression of long periods of uneventful calm punctuated only by sporadic outbursts of communal frenzy. It is unlikely however that the smaller, niggly incidents of communal tension were on the decrease in the post-1860 period.

¹⁰⁶ Elliot Colvin, Offg Magte Bareilly, to Comr Rohilkhand, no. 96, 15 Apr. 1870, UPRAA, Rohilkhand Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XIII, file 52.

astonishment, he repudiated his own scheme. Presumably he had encountered staunch opposition to his proposal.

As Ramnaumi neared with no agreement in sight Colvin resorted again to an imposed settlement. On the eve of Ramnaumi, 9 April, the tension in the city ran so high that he doubted his ability to conduct safely any procession through the *chauk*. With the Commissioner's approval he issued an order stating that from 10 April 1870 no procession, either Muslim or Hindu, could ever again pass through the bazaar unless some special agreement had been reached and approved by the government.¹⁰⁷

On Ramnaumi, the day also for the parade of the Muslim *alams*, the Hindus shut their shops and took out no procession. Colvin sent Colonel Earle and a guard to Manuji's house to offer protection to the procession but none issued forth.¹⁰⁸ The *alams* and the *taziyas* did go out, however, according to the new ruling on routes. By 12 April Muharram was over, but for another two days the Hindu traders kept their shops shut and Hindu boys stayed away from their schools. Bareilly had survived without any serious breach of the peace and yet the issue was far from settled. Immediately the agitation began again as Hindus and Muslims prepared to influence the ruling on the 1871 festivals. Colvin was deluged with petitions and he set about his own enquiry to establish what could have been done to make 1870 a less unsatisfactory affair.

Colvin was very unhappy with the role of 'the leading Hindu gentlemen': 'After Monday the 4th [they] withdrew in toto from the whole affair leaving the people to be influenced by Mohunts, and persons of no character or social position.'¹⁰⁹ Colvin did not make explicit his definition of a community leader, but the men that he named as being at fault were all honorary magistrates or municipal commissioners, men of such social standing that he expected them to be able to control their co-religionists - hence his disappointment that such men only 'kept to their homes and did nothing till

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* Colvin received full backing for this from the NWP Government. Government Order no. 581A, 2 June 1870, para. 7 reads: 'His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor is accordingly pleased to lay it down, as a rule to be observed for the future, that no public processions, either Hindoo or Mahomedan, shall henceforth be allowed to pass through the chowk and main city road, but that the processions of each mohulla shall pass outward by the nearest way to the exterior road, and so complete whatever ceremonies require to be observed without approaching the chowk or centre road.' NAI, India Home (Public), B progs 3 Sept. 1870, nos. 24-5.

¹⁰⁸ In subsequent summaries of these events it was reported that the Hindus refused to take out their procession because the Commissioner had declined to offer them protection. From Colvin's reportage above and also Manuji's own testimony (see below) this does not seem to have been correct. Report of F.O. Mayne, Officer on Special Duty, to Offg Secy to Govt NWP, 27 Apr. 1871, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs 5 Aug. 1871, no. 146, para. 9. Hereafter 'Mayne Report'.

¹⁰⁹ Elliot Colvin, Offg Magte Bareilly, to Comr Rohilkhand, no. 96, 15 Apr. 1870, UPRAA, Rohilkhand Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XIII, file 52.

all was over.¹¹⁰ He acknowledged that their inactivity was motivated by fear, but fear of what? Whatever the tensions amongst the Hindus, lower-class Hindus were unlikely to turn on their better-off fellows at a time when conflict with the Muslims was uppermost. Nor would it seem probable that men who had attempted to come to a settlement more palatable to the Muslims would be specifically targeted for attack by members of that community. Rather, the fear that Colvin identified in Bareilly's 'leading Hindu gentlemen' was that of being shown up to the authorities as being incapable of controlling all of their co-religionists, the ability that the British most wanted them to wield effectively.

This type of withdrawal was repeated in many places in subsequent years. Men to whom the government looked as sources of local power and influence absented themselves from scenes of possible communal conflict rather than risk public humiliation at the hands of their self-willed co-religionists.¹¹¹

In Bareilly the timing at which these men bowed out of the negotiations was also significant, viz., after Manuji's attempts to conciliate the Muslims had been rejected by other Hindus and he had reneged on his assurances to the Magistrate and the Muslims. In a statement made after the festivals Manuji showed how well he had learnt not to inflate his ability to act independently. He denied all knowledge of the agreements of 1837 and 1852. He professed to have never heard of any Hindu-Muslim settlement on the subject of overlapping festivals. He denied ever having raised the subject in the municipal committee, of which he had been a member since Naubat Ram's death. And he pleaded that fear had prevented him from taking out the Ramnaumi procession in 1870, although he left it conveniently unclear as to whether it was the wrath of the Hindus or the Muslims that he dreaded most.¹¹² In other words, Manuji took part in a boycott of festivity that was universal amongst

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* Colvin identified Munshi Dwarka Das and Lala Lakshmi Narain (the treasurer renowned for his loyalty in 1857-58) as the only two Hindus who tried to help him reach a settlement on the matter of processions. He named three others as being particularly unhelpful: Ganga Parshad, Baldeo Singh and Chait Ram, all honorary magistrates. His greatest contempt was reserved for Manuji, Naubat Ram's widow's agent and also a municipal commissioner.

¹¹¹ In this context it is interesting to note the article in a Moradabad newspaper, *The Rohilkhand Akhbar*, of 9 April 1870 in which 'Rani Sahiba', Naubat Ram's widow, was reported to have gone on a pilgrimage to Hardwar even though the newspaper understood that in reality she had gone to wait on the Lieutenant Governor to solicit his interference in the matter of Bareilly's celebrations. SVN 1870, pp. 150-1. As there was no subsequent report of the Rani appearing before the Lieutenant Governor nor any reference to her presence in Bareilly, it appears that she had indeed gone to Hardwar and simply opted out of a situation in which she could not possibly have pleased both the Hindus, who wanted a belligerent celebration of Ramnaumi, and the British, to whom she owed her present position and who wanted the festivities to be as muted as possible.

¹¹² Statement of Munnoo Jee, 21 Apr. 1870, UPRAA, Rohilkhand Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XIII, file 52.

Hindus in Bareilly, whilst protesting to the British that his behaviour was not inspired by that spirit of boycott, a spirit which Colvin had identified as dangerous. In this sense the other 'leading Hindus' of Bareilly were also not out of step with their co-religionists.

There is more evidence of differences between Bareilly's Hindus in the numerous petitions that were sent to the government after the festivals. Several petitions were submitted by people styling themselves as 'the poor, oppressed Hindoos of Bareilly'. They are striking for their attacks on the Hindu *raises* of their city, the same class that had irritated Colvin. Most revealing is the charge that these men, tied as they were by the possession of property, honours and titles that might be confiscated by the government, were not free agents; that they would sell out the Hindu cause and come to agreement with the Muslims in an attempt to stay in the government's favour:

It may be observed by your honor that Ram Nomeen does not belong to some particular Hindoo Raeeses of Bareilly; it is a festival kept by all Hindoos, both the rich as well as the poor.

Our Hindoo Raeeses cannot be our leaders in religious affairs. With regard to religion, our leaders are Birehmins, Pundits, preachers, priests of temples, and the people of other casts always engaged in religious ceremonies; no matter whether they are rich or poor. Here, no such Hindoo, as we meant, is desirous to make agreement with the Mahomidans.¹¹³

In another petition of like tone the petitioners complained that the 'Hindoo gentlemen', being 'coward & timid', had allowed themselves to be hoodwinked by the 'cunning' Muslim *raises*:

The consequence is the poor helpless and guideless Hindus have lost their Ramnowmi-day, their bathing day & probably all their festivals, have been proved offensive, disobedient and seditious to the authorities...¹¹⁴

Both of these petitions complained about the behaviour of the Muslims, but each targeted as the gravest danger the potential of the Hindu *raises* to reach an agreement with the Muslims, especially a 'compromise' set up by the government, without taking into account the wishes of their more humble fellows.

A very different set of petitions underlines this conflict amongst the Hindus. These appear to have originated from a group of Hindus who were wealthier than the previous petitioners, but still did

¹¹³ The petition informed the Lieutenant Governor that 'the Magistrate of Bareilly, taking the partiality towards the Mohomedans on account of their dread, is now-a-days obliging the Hindoo Raeeses of Bareilly to put down their signatures upon the agreement which he has made according to his own will, or rather according to that of the Mahomedans. He always threatens them by saying that if they won't sign the agreement, all their estates &c. must be confiscated by the Government.' Petition to Lt Govr from 'the poor, oppressed Hindoos of Bareilly', 19 Apr. 1870, *ibid*.

¹¹⁴ Petition to Lt Govr from 'the Hindoos of Bareilly', 15 April. 1870, *ibid*.

not rank in British eyes as 'leading Hindu gentlemen'. The petitions were submitted in English, drafted by Mr R.A. Fuller, an Anglo-Indian or perhaps English lawyer. There were miscellaneous charges against the Muslims and the local officials, but the core of the complaints lay in the closing of the *chauk* to all processions. The refusal to take out the Ramnaumi procession in 1870 was said to be a consequence of this ban and, in support of this, sacred texts were quoted to show that in an accurate representation of the gods' lives the *chauk* had to be used. A less-exalted route would be an insult to the gods.¹¹⁵ Moreover, there were practical considerations, as one petition explained:

It is a part of their religion for all Hindoos on the day of the Ramnaumee' to fast and remain in their houses until the procession proceeds down, when the inhabitants pay their adorations to it by saluting it and throwing wreaths of flowers on it from the roofs of the houses on each side in honor of their God 'Ramchundra'; and it is not until the procession has thus passed that they are privileged to leave their houses and break their fast, sending the procession therefore out into the jungles where no-one would see or follow it, particularly the aged, infirm and the women in purdah was virtually interdicting its appearance altogether.¹¹⁶

Clearly these petitioners were of some property and wealth. They were the people whose houses lined the *chauk*, who did not normally join in with the crowds in the streets at religious festivals, but partook of the auspiciousness of the event from a distance: from the rooftops of their houses. For this class of people - the merchants, the bankers, the commercial heart of the town - there was absolutely no question of the women leaving their houses to join in with the procession at street level. A ban on processions in the *chauk* seriously reduced the merit to be derived from a festival. The presence of *mahants* and *pandits* among their signatories suggests that these men could mount a sophisticated challenge to the older *rais* tradition of festival sponsorship.

Thus we have at least three identifiable interest groups amongst Bareilly's Hindus. First, there were the 'leading Hindu gentlemen', landed and monied *raises*, some with titles, who were seen to - and in some cases did - depend upon the government's favour. This group of Hindus, according to the officer who reported on the disturbances at the 1871 festivals, wanted all grand religious processions in the city banned, thus removing the threat to the public peace. The same officer believed that many Muslim *raises* would have appreciated this move as well.¹¹⁷ Second, there were the commercial

¹¹⁵ Memorial from Mr R.A. Fuller, Attorney for Pundit Lughman Dass, Kesho Dass Mahant, Rugber Dass Mahant and approximately 1600 other individuals - priests, Brahmans, bankers and other Hindus resident at Bareilly, 17 Aug. 1870; also two earlier memorials, 7 June 1870 and date unknown, from the same source, NAI, India Home (Public), B progs 3 Sept. 1870, nos. 24-5.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Mayne Report, para. 13.

Hindus of Bareilly, monied but ill-appreciated by the government. They were ready to demand equal procession rights with the Muslims, but this was of limited value if the *chauk* was closed to them. And third, there were the poorer Hindus, artisans, labourers and perhaps some petty traders, who feared that the combined interests of property, money and government favour would effect a solution that ignored their claims to represent Hinduism. These were the people perhaps least inclined to compromise with anyone, who saw enemies not only in the Muslims who wanted to keep them from the full display of their festivals, but also in the wealthier Hindus who would betray the cause of the Hindus for their financial interest. Although the money for the celebrations had always come from the *raises*, and one *rais* in particular, lower-class Hindus looked to men of religion for their inspiration.

For all of these people Manuji was meant to be the sole representative in the matter of the Ramnaumi festival. It is not surprising that he should have first erred so disastrously and then retreated indoors. But it is important, in the light of later events, that a group of Hindus, potentially large, resented the fact that fellow Hindus who did not share their concerns had the ear of government. There was a consciousness that Hinduism could be undermined from within. Hindus to whom the government turned for advice were not necessarily deemed by other Hindus to be good Hindus or to have the interests of Hinduism uppermost.

In addition to all the petitions some Muslims brought a suit in Bareilly's Civil Court for the establishment of the covenants of 1837 and 1852. The Court ruled that the agreements were only binding on those who had signed them, and that they did not hold good for three generations, the traditional lifetime of a signed undertaking in Rohilkhand. The suit was dismissed on 20 September 1870.¹¹⁸ This decision fitted in well with the government's post-Rebellion commitment to equal rights of observance for all, but it infuriated Bareilly's Muslims who believed that the Hindus had been able to wriggle out of their ancestors' pledges with the connivance of the government.

In 1871 Ramnaumi fell on 8 Muharram (30 March). The government refused to lift the ban on processions in the *chauk* and Colvin mapped out the necessary routes. The Ramnaumi route was slightly altered from the abortive one of 1871; Naubat Ram's widow had requested a different return route for the idol from the outgoing one, so as to get around as many houses as possible and to minimise the loss of prestige inflicted by the ban on passing through the *chauk*. The same reason was

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 12.

given by group of Hindus who petitioned for the first time to take out separate Ramnaumi processions of their own.¹¹⁹ Colvin rejected their request as an unacceptable innovation, but it suggests that the Rani's position as the Ramnaumi sponsor was under threat.

In the run-up to Ramnaumi Colvin was unaware of any overt threats to the peace, and on 8 Muharram, as Manuji led the Ramnaumi procession out, all looked quiet. The 'whole of the Hindoo male population' and all their children were reported to have turned out for the procession.¹²⁰ But on the return of the idol in the late afternoon crowds of Muslims tumbled out from behind closed doors and attacked the unarmed Hindus. As soon as one group of assailants was dispersed and a few Hindus escorted to safety, others would regroup and attack the unguarded Hindus. In two separate incidents the priests who had officiated at that afternoon's ceremonies and the 1852 and '53 Ramlila celebrations respectively were sought out and murdered. Sporadic cases of assault and plunder continued into the night and the following day, easing only with the deployment of troops that afternoon. Four days later the soldiers returned to their barracks; by then the shops had been reopened and the *taziyas* buried. Local officers reported seven men dead, 158 people wounded and an indeterminate amount plundered.

In the subsequent investigation the charges that Colvin had levelled against the Hindu leaders in 1870 were now turned on their Muslim counterparts:

Not a single independent Mahomedan gentleman came to Mr. Colvin's assistance whilst the original disturbance was going on [reported F.O. Mayne]. Afterwards they apparently thought it better to show themselves, and many presented themselves at the Cotwallie after the troops were called out, and, it is not to be denied, did good service in restoring order.¹²¹

The investigating officer, F.O. Mayne, believed that these men had instigated the violence only to have kept out of sight whilst it ran its course, but again the more probable conclusion is that the men whom the government expected to be able to wield influence within their community exercised

¹¹⁹ Petition by Hindus (Jankee Dass, Narain Dass, Gundee Mull, Bunarsee Dass, Chedda Lall, Salik Ram, Buggun Lall, Buldeo Pershad) for permission to take out Ramnowmee processions from separate houses, 11 Mar. 1871, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/92, A progs 13 May 1871, no. 57. The petitioners' argument, that unless new processions go out all over the town no old or sick people and no *pardanashin* women will be able to have *darshan* of the idol, is so similar to the earlier petitions complaining about the loss of the *chauk* that it suggests that they came from the same class of people, i.e., monied, but not respectable in the eyes of the British. Freitag, *Collective action and community*, pp. 113-14, suggests that the petitioners were immigrants to Bareilly, new men of wealth who were not tied into the old order. Her evidence for this is slim but it is an attractive idea. Certainly there was scope for new wealth in Bareilly. Since the Rebellion land values had increased rapidly and the district had a tradition of speculative investment in land by non-agricultural castes. The boom in sugar-refining in Bareilly - it became the city's biggest industry - also created new money-making opportunities.

¹²⁰ Mayne Report, para. 18.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, para. 32.

only minimal control in matters of religion. The mass of their co-religionists looked to other figures for their inspiration.¹²²

Clearly many Muslims were angered by the nullification of the old covenants which at a blow had silenced the final echoes of Muslim sovereignty in the city. The murder of the priest who officiated at the 1852-53 Ramlila was an act of revenge calculated to recall to public consciousness the state of subjection under which the Hindus had once laboured. Mayne thought that the Muslims had 'a real and serious grievance' in the overturning of the covenants and that rightly they felt cheated.¹²³ He also complained that in the run-up to the festivals the Hindus, determined to celebrate Ramnaumi with as much vigour as the government regulations would allow, had championed their newly-secured equality at the expense of the Muslims. He accused them of refusing to hire Muslim servants, of boycotting Muslim butchers, tobacconists, wood-suppliers and musicians, and of denying Muslims legal and moneylending services. In short it was the Hindus 'who never, by a word or look, omit to annoy or insult a Mahomedan when they have opportunity.'¹²⁴ The activities that Mayne listed suggest that all sorts of Hindus - including financiers, lawyers, and presumably, given the reference to butchers, low-caste Hindus - joined the boycott. This further suggests that in 1871 the Hindus of Bareilly were collectively in a much stronger economic position than they had been in 1837 when they had been unable to sustain this sort of commercial boycott of the Muslims.

The government considered this aspect of Mayne's reportage too favourable to the Muslims, especially as elsewhere in his report he had identified several Pathans - the bane of the British in

¹²² Freitag, who has paid more attention to the politics of the Muslim community in this 1871 riot than I, concludes: 'Contrary to British expectations, then, leadership and popular influence in an Indian city could be exercised by other than prominent patrons with extensive networks of clients. Those in positions such as *taziadar* or *mir muhalla* that conveyed legitimate authority even to "the very lowest classes" exercised significant influence as well. Should persons in such positions feel aggrieved, a riot could ensue - even if "influential citizens" did not identify with, or support, these grievances.' *Collective action and community*, p. 65.

¹²³ Mayne Report, para. 38. With hindsight Mayne would be seen to have been right in pin-pointing this as inflammatory. In 1885 in Shahjahanpur the Hindus were for the first time since the 1830s allowed to celebrate a festival during Muharram, instead of postponing it for a few days. This was because an agreement signed in 1852 - much like the one in Bareilly - which had guaranteed for all time the sole right of Muslims to public display during Muharram had been ignored by the Magistrate. The Hindus held their celebrations as they would in a normal year, but the Muslims abstained from all of their ceremonies. In one of the many petitions sent afterwards to the Lieutenant Governor, Muslims, identifying themselves as the descendants of the Pathans who had populated Shahjahanpur in Shahjahan's time, complained bitterly about the British connivance with the Hindus in allowing the latter to get out of their agreement. 'The Humble Memorial of the Mahomedan Community of Shahjahanpur', n.d., NAI, India Home (Public), B progs May 1886, no. 244. The Magistrate also found the feeling on this to be very strong, even amongst the Muslims whom he thought to be relatively liberal: 'even amongst the leaders of the party, the idea is unhappily prevalent that in what they are pleased to consider a Muhammadan city, 'though in point of numbers the 2 parties are about equal, they ought to have been allowed their own way during the Muharram'. J.S. Porter, Magte Shahjahanpur, to Comr Rohilkhand, no. 96, n.d, *ibid*.

¹²⁴ Mayne Report, para. 38.

Bareilly - as instigators of the violence. Mayne's advice to ban forever all religious processions in Bareilly was not however taken up by the government. It was argued that this would generate hostility against the state when it was better that the people understand that their quarrels were with one another.¹²⁵

Muharram and Holi, 1872: the 'community leaders' take fright

In 1872 there were no open disturbances in Bareilly when Muharram overlapped with Holi, but the issue of the city's 'leading men' and their influence was a prominent one. In 1871 many of the large landlords of Bareilly's *muhallas* had been placed under bond to keep their neighbourhoods peaceful - a leaden attempt to force them to exert their elusive influence over their fellows. It was a measure of dubious legality and even when no money was forfeited the bonds were unpopular; it was a sore point with many that the city's *raises* should be called to account for the behaviour of their more lowly neighbours. In 1872 the renewed threat of this measure, coupled, perhaps, with the inability of the men concerned to guarantee the desired level of social control, prompted a mass evacuation of Bareilly by the very people that the government had labelled as influential.¹²⁶

As to the festivals themselves the Magistrate laid down the same routes for the *taziyas* as in the previous years and brought in a large supplementary police force. Apart from some initial reluctance by the *taziyadars* to build their *taziyas* there were no problems and the celebrations passed over peacefully.

Meanwhile, in neighbouring Moradabad, rioting at the overlap of Holi and Muharram in 1872 was giving the Commissioner some new insights into the problems of community leadership. For once a magistrate could have had no complaints about the quality of the cooperation that he received from each community's leading men. The new moon, upon which the Muharram schedule depended, was hidden by clouds on 10 March, but the Muslim leaders - *raises* and religious authorities together - decided to proceed as if it had been sighted. This prevented any further delay in the Holi celebrations.

¹²⁵ Resolution of Govt NWP, Judicial Criminal, no. 1778A, 5 Oct. 1871, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs 23 Dec. 1871, no. 136. Mayne identified as Muslim 'trouble-makers' Ameer Khan Bunder, who was supposed to control the *taziyas*; Sheikh Budur-ood-deen, Altaf Ali Khan, and Rehmat Hussain Khan, all, according to Mayne, vociferous opponents of the Ramnaumi celebrations. Mayne also doubted the trustworthiness of Inspector Nazeer Khan who was conspicuously absent during the greater part of the rioting. Mayne Report, paras. 19-31.

¹²⁶ W. A. Forbes, Comr Allahabad and late Offg Comr Rohilkhand, to Comr Rohilkhand, 5 Nov. 1872, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs Feb. 1873, no. 138, enclosure.

The Hindu gentlemen responded by setting up sherbet and sweets stalls on the day of the *alams*.¹²⁷ Muslims identified as heads of *muhallas* were instructed to take out the *taziya* parades from their respective neighbourhoods. It was reported afterwards that they had discharged their duty well.¹²⁸ But there were some *taziyas* that did not seem to belong under the care of particular neighbourhood leaders, and it was the bearers and followers of these who led an attack on a wealthy Hindu's house and then fanned out through the city committing sundry attacks on shops, temples, and passers-by. The trouble lasted no more than an hour. Several men were killed and others severely wounded; there were numerous minor casualties.

The Commissioner, with this experience coming hard on the recent disturbances in Bareilly, was adamant about the lessons to be learnt:

[I]t is absolutely useless to flatter ourselves that we are secure when those whom we are accustomed to look upon and treat as the leading and influential men of a town profess to have arranged matters satisfactorily. They have not the slightest power to influence or restrain the lower orders - the dangerous classes of a town population.¹²⁹

Muharram and Ramlila, 1885-87: Bareilly's *raises* try to regain the initiative

By the time of the overlap of Ramlila and Muharram in 1885-87 the government was beginning to look again at the influence of its gentleman allies. Some officers had at last begun to realize that there were more than just problems of will involved in their failure to effect perfect control over their co-religionists. However, in 1885-87 in Bareilly the government compounded the difficulties of their 'leading native gentlemen' by publicly questioning their ability to implement communal compromises independently of the official agencies of law enforcement.

In 1885 an extraordinary number of petitions about the festivals arrived on government desks from all over the NWP and Oudh.¹³⁰ At Bareilly the Magistrate, W.E. Neale, laid down the routes for the various processions in accordance with the resolution of 1870, but the Muslims insisted that the route for the Hindu processions was offensive to them and they threatened to forgo their festivities. On

¹²⁷ Major T. Dennehy, Dt Supt Police Moradabad, to Magte Moradabad, 5 Aug. 1872, *ibid*.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*.

¹²⁹ W.A. Forbes, Comr Allahabad and late Offg Comr Rohilkhand, to Comr Rohilkhand, 5 Nov. 1872, *ibid*., enclosure.

¹³⁰ A file in the UPSA contains no less than one hundred petitions and telegrams, in Urdu, Hindi and English, sent to either the NWP Lieutenant Governor or the Government of India. UPSA, NWP&O General, B progs Oct. 1885, file 784, box 80.

18 October the Ramlila *tamasha* was celebrated successfully and on the following day the *rajgaddi* procession took to the contentious route without any signs of disturbance. But the Muslims did not observe a single ceremony of Muharram; to all appearances the festival of mourning had not occurred. Neale kept his silence in public. In his report, however, he reiterated the well-worn complaint against community leaders:

The first refusal to proceed with the Musulman ceremonies came from the man charged with preparing and elevating the Fattah-i-Nishan - a huge staff with a crest bearing a red standard. This man is of low position, & was at one time a chaukidar on 4/ or 5/ p.m. It is to me quite clear that Mahomedan gentlemen...could if they had so wished, have easily made this humble hierophant do whatever they pleased.¹³¹

Neither community had ever been known to forfeit its celebrations for two years in succession and so it was to be expected that in 1886 the Muharram ceremonies would go ahead. In view of the government's distrust of religious celebrations in Bareilly and the ban on the *chauk* there would not have seemed to be much room for manoeuvre amongst the contending parties. But a month before the festivals several Muslim and Hindu *raises* met and proposed a compromise. The municipal secretary, Honorary Magistrate Mohammed Tajaumul Hossein, was the leading force in the Reconciliation Committee. With fellow Muslims Shafi Ali Khan, Nawab Abdul Aziz Khan and the *kazi*, Abdul Jamil, he persuaded some of the Hindus, under the leadership of Chaudhari Shif Lal (the current male representative of Naubat Ram's family), Pandit Badri Parshad and Pandit Sheo Dhar, to draw up an agreement whereby mutually inoffensive routes were specified for the occasions of festival coincidence, leaving both Muslims and Hindus free to parade about as they wished when their festivals clashed with no other. It was a solution minimizing government interference and it restored to both communities the use of the *chauk* for all but one or two years out of fifteen. Most importantly, it attempted to restore to recognition the right of the *raises* to make lasting agreements on matters of public worship. A final proviso in the agreement read: 'The parties and their descendants shall make no objections to the above agreement.'¹³² It appears that the *raises* were conscious of their loss of authority in

¹³¹ Memo. by Magte Bareilly, 22 Oct. 1885, UPSA, NWP&O General, B progs Feb. 1886, file 784, box 80. Neale continued: '[W]hatever outward appearances the leading Musulmans may have maintained, they were all either from timidity or from creed-prejudice one with the crowd.'

¹³² Translation of the *razinama* produced by the Reconciliation Committee, 27 Sept. 1886, sd. Pandit Badri Parshad, Pandit Sheodar Suhal, Jivan Sahai, Rai Durga Pershad Bahadur, M. Altaf Ali Khan, M. Azizuddin Ahmad, M. Asfaq Husen, M. Abdul Aziz Khan, and 'other Hindus and Mahomedans of Bareilly', UPSA, NWP&O General, B progs July 1887, file 988, no. 18. A later petition claims that the *razinama* was signed by over two thousand men of both parties. Petition from Hindus and Muslims of Bareilly, recd 6 Sept. 1887, *ibid.*, B progs Sept 1887, file 988. See also in the same file a letter from Irwin, Offg Magte Bareilly, to Comr Rohilkhand, no. 2182, 26 Oct. 1886. It is curious that although Irwin named the representative of Naubat

community religious matters and wanted now, just as the government had earlier, to turn the clock back.

The Reconciliation Committee was informed that it was too late for the orders for the 1886 festivals to be changed, but that the *razinama* (lit., 'agreement' or 'compromise') would be considered in due course for the 1887 festivals. With this the signatories seemed happy and the celebrations of 1886 passed off in an atmosphere of unusual good will.¹³³

After the festivals, however, the government eyed the *razinama* with caution. In public, officers praised the chief negotiators and awarded them certificates of appreciation, but in private they nursed their doubts. For a start an anonymous petition had been received which refuted the Reconciliation Committee's right to speak for all Hindus.¹³⁴ It seemed to be sent by the same sort of people who in the early 1870s had feared that the Hindu *raises* would combine with their Muslim counterparts in order to win government approbation and pre-empt the loss of property and status to themselves that violence might occasion. Whether this fear was uppermost in the minds of the members of the Reconciliation Committee remains open to question. It is clear however that the signatories to the *razinama* were desperate to win back the right to the *chauk*, and as we have seen in the Hindu case at least, the use of the *chauk* was vital to the value of the processions to those wealthy Hindus whose houses lined it.¹³⁵ This petition played upon the fears of the officers who had come to distrust the degree of control that the *raises* of either community could exercise over the masses. Neale was very wary:

[I]n Rohilkhand at least, all razinamas are dangerous - being often mere pitfalls for the unwary. The signatories not seldom pretend fraud and deception on the part of those who promulgate them, and thus by claiming this and that in fulfillment [sic] of imaginary inducements raise endless strife.¹³⁶

Neale was prepared to entertain the spirit of the agreement, but he warned against surrendering any real control. His receptivity, however, was warm compared to that of his Commissioner, George

Ram's family as taking a prominent part in the negotiations, his name does not appear in the list of signatories identified with the translation of the *razinama*. It is unlikely that the Magistrate would have left such an important personage off the list and it is tempting to conclude that Shif Lal, like his predecessor Manuji, was adept at hedging his bets and took part in the negotiations but did not commit himself wholeheartedly.

¹³³ ? Irwin, Offg Magte Bareilly, to Comr Rohilkhand, no. 2182, 26 Oct. 1886, *ibid*.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*.

¹³⁵ On this Neale had commented: 'All parties seem to consider that the closing of the bazar to public ceremonies is derogatory to the town at large.' 'Report on proposed alteration of Public Procession routes in Bareilly', W.E. Neale, Magte Bareilly, submitted 7 Dec. 1886, *ibid*.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*.

Lang, who was not all convinced of the Muslims' goodwill to the Hindus.¹³⁷ The government decided to test the depth of their goodwill by offering to open up the *chawk* first to non-religious processions only, in effect to Hindus and not to Muslims: Hindus tended to host larger and more extravagant weddings than Muslims and they more frequently took out a procession. Inevitably the Muslims rejected the offer. In doing so, Nawab Abdul Aziz Khan, a descendant of Hafiz Rahmat Khan, tried to turn to his advantage the implicit charge that the community's leaders were unable to control their co-religionists in religious matters:

[He] said [reported Neale] that the mass of uneducated Muslims were convinced that the Government fostered disunion between Muslims and Hindus for its own purpose; that educated men knew however this to be incorrect & that they supposed in this case that the Lt. Govr. was merely leaving a difficult question to be solved by his successor; that this opinion would never be shared by the Muslim masses who would not welcome the partial concession now proposed & that he, the speaker, therefore felt bound to decline it.¹³⁸

It was a fine answer to an uncharitable offer and not without an element of truth in its discussion of the limitations of the power of Abdul Aziz Khan and his fellow *raises*. But it confirmed the government's doubts about relations between the two communities and the agreement was henceforth ignored. Several petitions failed to persuade the government to take up the proffered compromise. The 1887 festivals were celebrated peacefully, but without any change of regulations.

The government offered no concessions on the use of the *chawk* in 1888, by which time Muharram and Ramlila no longer overlapped. More petitions recorded the irritation of people who had been officially praised for their public spirit but prevented from executing their initiatives. Given that the government had once shied away from banning religious processions altogether out of fear that intercommunal animosities would be redirected against the state, the continual rejection of this joint offer is puzzling. One petition complained of the ban on the use of the *chawk* as 'a sort of punishment' inflicted upon Bareilly's residents, a deprivation of their religious liberty and pride which would have been 'the kindness of Govt. to bestow upon them.'¹³⁹ Another complained that the rules of 1870 were intended to remain in force only until the people of Bareilly had made up their quarrel; now they had done this and the government still withheld from them their religious rights.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ George Lang, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, to Chief Secy to Govt NWP&O, n.d., *ibid*.

¹³⁸ W.E. Neale, Magte Bareilly, to Comr Rohilkhand, no. 422, 28 June 1887, *ibid*.

¹³⁹ Petition from Hindus and Muslims of Bareilly, recd 6 Sept. 1887, UPSA, NWP&O General, B progs Sept. 1887, file 988.

¹⁴⁰ Petition from Hindus and Mohammadans of Bareilly, 2 Feb. 1888, B progs Feb. 1888, *ibid*. See also Petition from Mohammadan and Hindu residents of Bareilly, 28 Aug. 1888, B progs Sept. 1888, no. 48, *ibid*.

In effect the *raises* to whom the government had traditionally looked for community control were losing ground from all angles. They were not able to deliver to local officers a convincing display of community leadership, and in turn when their initiatives were humiliatingly rejected by the government they were not able to return to their more sceptical fellows and claim any gains through the processes of peaceable negotiation. The government does not seem to have comprehended the full effects of this destabilizing of the city's secular leadership. Educated, landed, traditionally powerful, they were the only people with whom the British had any empathy. Whatever their untidy and tenuous hold over their fellows they did constitute a medium of communication between the British officers and the lower classes of Indians. Without this the British would be hard pressed to find any insights into mass behaviour, particularly that generated by religious ideology.

Conclusion

In the eighty years since the cession Bareilly's Hindus had won enormous gains in their rights to public festivity. From a position of acquiescent inferiority in the early part of the century they had advanced to the stage where, in 1870, they could afford *not* to take out a Ramnaumi procession. Paradoxically, a community's right to a celebration was more powerfully expressed in self-denying abstention than in observance. No community that was still trying to prove a right to a public celebration dared forfeit any occasion for the reiteration of that right. Abstention, therefore, marked a festival's coming of age and, by extension, that of the community sponsoring it. By the 1880s Hindu *raises* were able to treat with the Muslim *raises* on an equal footing, and if we look forward to the 1890s we see that by then the Hindus had become confident enough to assert that cow-sacrifice at Bakr Id had never existed in Bareilly, this most Muslim of towns.¹⁴¹ To varying degrees Bareilly's experiences were repeated all over Rohilkhand: in the cities of Shahjahanpur, Budaon and Moradabad Hindus gradually acquired a public religious identity that they had been denied under Rohilla rule.

Without exception, as noted by numerous district officers, these advances in Hindu rights of religious display were resented by a majority of the Muslim population in these cities. But the opposition was perhaps more discriminating than has previously been allowed. In all the cities and large towns in north India there seems to have been one annual festival, usually dating from the

¹⁴¹ H.D. Moule, Comr Rohilkhand, to Chief Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 1629/XIII-534, 4 Aug. 1894, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4551, A progs Nov. 1894, no. 210.

eighteenth century, which set the tone for the city's corporate existence. There would be numerous other festivals but they dared not rival the grand one. In Lucknow Muharram ruled supreme. In Benares it was the great festival of spring joy, the Burhwa Mangal, and, in the Raja's capital of Ramnagar across the river, the Ramlila. In Mathura, the celebrations of Krishna's birth and childhood on Janam Ashtmi took pride of place. And in the cities of Rohilkhand it was Muharram that had been the most prominent celebration. What the Muslims, and particularly the descendants of Rohilkhand's former rulers, resented about the advance of Hindu festivity in the nineteenth century was Muharram's loss of precedence to the Ramaite festivals. Although the district officers reported that Bareilly's Muslims were unhappy when Basant Ram started up his Ramlila and Ramnaumi processions, there is almost no evidence of Muslims opposing either one except on the occasions when they claimed to be on a par with Muharram.¹⁴² In effect, the battle over festivals was a battle for the town's public character.¹⁴³ The irritation that the loss of this caused to Muslims in Bareilly is suggested by the actions of Sheikh Badr-ud-din, a former city *kotwal*. In 1857, before Muharram had lost its precedence, he was singularly loyal to the British and was one of the few Muslim recipients of a reward. He appears in a Muharram dispute in 1867 as an archetypal 'native Muslim gentleman', helping the Magistrate to get a *taziya* procession around an awkwardly-placed *pipal* tree.¹⁴⁴ But in 1871, however, after the 1837 and 1852 covenants had been quashed and after the Ramnaumi procession had been accorded equal rights of celebration with the Muharram processions, Sheikh Badr-ud-din was one of the

¹⁴² There is one recorded incident of tension that occurred when the festivals were not overlapping. In 1867 there was a rash of problems with the Muharram processions in the cities of Bareilly, Budaon and Shahjahanpur. The simultaneous and unexpected agitation of grievances about *pipal* trees and Hindu wedding processions seemed to the local officers evidence of a division-wide conspiracy amongst the Muslims 'to extort from the District Authorities concessions at the expense of the Hindoos, to which they are not entitled; and to make these concessions, if granted, a pretext for demanding in future years that all Hindoo processions should be prohibited during the Mohurram.' J. Inglis, Comr Rohilkhand, to R. Simson, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 70, 5 June 1867, IOR, India Home (Public) P/464/6, A progs July 1867, no. 176, enclosure. Whatever the nature of the 'conspiracy' - officers serving in Rohilkhand were inclined to see Pathans conspiring everywhere they looked - it is clear that in the uncertain and unfamiliar post-Rebellion era Muslims in these cities were gearing up well in advance for the next festival overlap. They probably suspected that the Hindus were not very far away from repudiating the covenants their ancestors had made before the Rebellion.

¹⁴³ This is similar to the argument that Bayly has advanced about religious conflict in the eighteenth century at temples, shrines and sites of pilgrimage. He suggests that rising Hindu and Sikh rulers were not pursuing any general anti-Muslim policy in trying to win control of pilgrimage sites or to ban cow-slaughter, but rather that they were attempting to establish their sovereignty by association with those symbols most prominent in their own religion. Such a pursuit was not incompatible with 'eclectic religious practice in other spheres'. Bayly, 'The pre-history of "Communalism"', pp. 186-9.

¹⁴⁴ Elliot Colvin, Offg Magte Bareilly, to J. Inglis, Comr Rohilkhand, no. 82, 22 May 1867, *ibid.*, enclosure.

few *izatdars* (men of respectability) who was involved in the riots against the Hindus.¹⁴⁵ His resentment shows in the statement he made after the rioting:

There never was such a Ramnowmee as there was this year. Such crowds, such shouting, such music, such rites!...The Hindoos had petitioned the Collector to take out the Ramnowmee from different places all over the city, although never more than one has ever been taken out.¹⁴⁶

Several things contributed to the Hindus' success in Bareilly's public life, the most obvious of which is the introduction of British rule. Without the British, Basant Ram would not have had the chance to take out the new processions. In 1837 without police protection the Ramnaumi procession would have been routed and in 1870 without the aid of the courts the earlier covenants could not have been ignored. As late as 1870 a local officer observed that the Hindus of Bareilly were still 'no match for the Muhammadans in a fight'.¹⁴⁷

But, if the British created opportunities, the Hindus still had to provide the inspiration for the new celebrations. It is not safe to assume that amongst the Hindus there was a well-developed demand for public celebration of their own festivals which exploded into action as soon as the British eased Muslim 'oppression'. Initially, the Ramnaumi and the Ramlila celebrations, like the one-off Kali *puja* before them, were one-man shows in their inspiration. Indeed, it is probable that the Hindu artisans who took to participating in Basant Ram's celebrations already had a role in public festivity in Bareilly's Muharram parades. Basant Ram's motives for starting the celebrations remain unclear. He may have taken his cue from the Bengali *sharishtadar* who paraded Kali through Bareilly's streets in the 1820s. He may have thought it was time to assert his familial traditions; after all, his family predated the Rohillas. Whatever the reasons, his initiative increased his prominence in Bareilly's public life, and he died as 'the chief of the Hindoo party in Bareilly'.¹⁴⁸ His son, Naubat Ram, inherited that role.

In 1870 Judge Vansittart, in ruling on the disputed covenants of 1837 and 1852, decided that Naubat Ram had not been 'spiritual chief or lord that he should bind all Hindoos in matters of

¹⁴⁵ Mayne Report, paras. 20, 31.

¹⁴⁶ Statement of Sheikh Budr-ood-deen, 11 Apr. 1871, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/92, A progs 3 June 1871, no. 52, 13 May 1871.

¹⁴⁷ R. Drummond, Comr Rohilkhand, to Secy to Govt NWP, no. 79, 25 Apr. 1870, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4551, A progs Nov. 1894, no. 203.

¹⁴⁸ W.J. Conolly, Offg Comr Rohilkhand, to R.A.C. Hamilton, Secy to Govt NWP, 23 Feb. 1842, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/9, 12 Mar. 1842, no. 102.

Ramnowmee or other religious processions.¹⁴⁹ But this seems to have been a reading of the past influenced by the present, and influenced particularly by Hindus who, in 1870, did not want to have to observe an unpalatable agreement signed in 1852. Apart from the covenants themselves, Vansittart had no documentation to help him in his decision; all the local government records had been destroyed in the Rebellion. But the 1852 reports show no evidence that Naubat Ram had any difficulty renewing his father's covenant of 1837. He may not have been able to stop the Hindus from taking out a procession if they had wanted to, but it appears that this was not likely - that the majority of the community was happy to accept his leadership in this affair.

By 1870 this had changed, and changed dramatically. By now the processions were valued by more Hindus as an expression of their identity. The inspiration had broadened and more Hindus and different classes of Hindus wanted to be responsible for the observance of the festivals, rather than to have just a participatory role. This means that long before the import of professional agitators and the growth of modern agitational movements, such as the cow-protection organizations, lower-class Hindus, commercial Hindus, and *raises* were all competing for the right to express and defend Hinduism. It points to a political maturity far in advance of the government's expectations and it suggests that many of the professional agitators who came to the NWP from the more sophisticated east in the 1880s and 90s found the political ground well turned over. In the 1890s the cow-protection agitation would have a fertile area in which to operate because the consciousness of Hindu issues was already high.

Two principal developments seem to have inspired this broadening of the festivals' significance. First, in the aftermath of the Rebellion, Bareilly's *raises* seem to have allied themselves too closely with the government which, perhaps even more so after the Rebellion than before, was seen as an alien, unsympathetic power. Lower-class Hindus were in no doubt that their *raises* had

¹⁴⁹ Judgement of Mr H. Vansittart, Judge of Bareilly, 2 Sept. 1870, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/92, A progs 3 June 1871, no. 41, 13 May 1871. Vansittart cited as proof of this the existence of a lesser procession the *mahants* of a local *gurudwara* took out at during the Ramlila. There is almost no information about these *mahants* and their disciples, except that they were the same priests who officiated at the Ramlila and Ramnaumi celebrations run by the Chaudharis, Basant Ram and Naubat Ram. It does not seem to be sufficient proof therefore of the existence of competition between them for the role of leadership in the festivals. The Chaudharis provided secular leadership and money, but they always needed the assistance of priests to perform the *pujas*, etc., at the ceremonies.

surrendered their moral authority in return for government honours and rewards, and they correctly surmised that the government held this over them to curb their independence.¹⁵⁰

Second, after the Rebellion, Hindus took a much more prominent role in Bareilly's economic and political life. Sugar cultivation boomed in Rohilkhand and Meerut Divisions, aided by the new transport networks of the railways.¹⁵¹ Sugar-refining, chiefly in the hands of Hindus, became Bareilly's staple industry. The export of cotton rugs, *daris*, also increased and here too, although the weavers tended to be poor Muslims, the dealers were usually wealthy Hindus.¹⁵² The elective principle was introduced to Bareilly's municipal government in 1868, and, although the Hindu and Muslim populations were almost equal numerically, the wealth franchise for both candidates and electors gave the city's Hindus a head start. By as early as 1870, the Hindus had captured the majority of the elected municipal commissionerships. Their prominence was such that, in spite of the government's reservations about new wealth, they also outnumbered the Muslims as honorary magistrates.¹⁵³ Hindus who had succeeded in the commercial and political world of the city looked to establish their credentials in Bareilly's public social environment as well. It was almost certainly people of this class who petitioned to take out new Ramnaumi processions in 1871.

Increasingly in the late-nineteenth century the family of Chaudharis came under pressure as sponsors of public Hindu festivity. The presence of the family's representative in the 1885-87 festivals was muted, but the ultimate expression of the family's fall from grace came in 1894, when a huge number of Bareilly's Hindu traders, moneylenders and artisans accused Basant Ram of having compromised with the Muslims:

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¹⁵⁰ The government often was not very subtle in the pressures it placed on the 'leading natives'. In 1870 when the Commissioner of Rohilkhand was trying to get the Muslims and Hindus to come to some agreement about the Ramnaumi and Muharram processions two of the four men chosen to negotiate a compromise were Kanhaiya Lal and Mubarik Baz Khan, both *vakils* who were then competing for the government pleadership. Both must have known that their chance of promotion depended upon them towing the government's line. R. Drummond, Comr Rohilkhand, to Secy to Govt NWP, no. 79, 25 Apr. 1870, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4551, A progs Nov. 1894, no. 203.

¹⁵¹ It is this aspect of Bareilly's development, or rather that of the western NWP as a whole, that Robinson stressed as the cause of communal politics in the NWP in the second half of the nineteenth century. In spite of the modifications that have since been made to his thesis, many of his observations are still valid, particularly those emphasizing the economic advancement of the Hindus *vis-à-vis* the traditional, landed elite. Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, pp. 13-83.

¹⁵² Nevill, *Bareilly: A Gazetteer*, pp. 67, 207.

¹⁵³ R. Drummond, Comr Rohilkhand, to Secy to Govt NWP, no. 79, 25 Apr. 1870, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4551, A progs Nov. 1894, no. 203.

Raja Basant Rai, who had a large number of Muhammadan tenants thought fit to conciliate them entirely by undertaking not to take out the Ramnovomi procession under certain conditions.¹⁵⁴

This repudiation of the Hindu who, above all others, should have been revered as the founder of their festivals, the initial opponent to the Muslims' intransigence, and a martyr to his religion, shows how much independence from their *raises* Bareilly's Hindus had earned since the cession.



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¹⁵⁴ Memorial from Suraj Mal, Khattri, son of Lala Tanu Mal, and others, to Secy to Govt India, n.d. (1894), *ibid.*, no. 220.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S ROLE IN COW-SLAUGHTER DISPUTES

Introduction

In nearly all the major urban centres of the NWP British officers had to grapple with the intractable problem of cow-slaughter. Their attempts to appear impartial and to rule over their subject population without alienating large sections of it were regularly undermined by their predictable affinity with the beef-eating Muslims. There was always antipathy towards a ban on cow-slaughter at any level of government. But, at the same time, the early decades of British social administration in the NWP were shaped by the emphasis on precedent and established usage. There were occasions when it did seem adequately proved that a ban on cow-slaughter had been in place for many years in a certain town or neighbourhood. This spawned the difficulty of reconciling essentially contradictory principles of government. For many years the British did not confront the problem directly. Incidents were treated in isolation, always with an eye to discretion, if not in fact secrecy, and the hope that the fudge of principles and pragmatism would never be exposed to the public gaze. It was a forlorn hope. Already by the 1830s district officers were having to review their policies as mistrustful Hindus and Muslims resurrected years of conflicting pronouncements from their predecessors. The process continued into the 1840s and '50s, and long after the pursuit of established custom had slackened local officers went on disentangling the legacy of contradiction and confusion.

In the late 1880s and 90s cow-protectionism became one of the most vital political movements in north India. The success of an indigenous ideology in rallying masses of people across urban and rural divides, class boundaries and provincial borders frightened the British who, after the Rebellion, had comforted themselves with the satisfying thought that Indians would always be more divided than united. In the aftermath of the 1893 riots the various governments devoted enormous amounts of energy to discovering the specific causes of the movement's success.¹⁵⁵ In recent years historians have hardly paid any less attention to the cow-protection movement.¹⁵⁶ However what often seems to be missing from these accounts is the sense of how well the ground was prepared,

¹⁵⁵ One of the most lucid summaries of the Hindus' increasing belligerence on the status of the cow appears in the Government of India's report on the riots to the Secretary of State for India, no. 84, 27 Dec. 1893, in PP, 1893-94, vol. 63, paper 538.

¹⁵⁶ See for example: Freitag, *Collective action and community*, pp. 148-74; J.R. McLane, *Indian nationalism and the early Congress* (Princeton, 1977), pp. 271-31; Gyanendra Pandey, 'Rallying round the cow'; Anand Yang, 'Sacred symbol and sacred space' *Comparative studies in Society and History*, 22 (1980), pp. 576-96.

particularly in the urban environment, for a movement such as this to take hold amongst Hindus. Disputes over cow-slaughter were not in any way new in the nineteenth century but those that did crop up under British rule were worked through in an administrative framework which actively contributed to the preservation of the communal identities and extended the potential of each dispute to create bad feeling. Increasingly sophisticated means of communication, the advancement of Hindus in Western education, politics and commerce, and the debate between the reformist and traditionalist Hindus, were certainly all important factors in the cow-protection movement's achievements on a broad scale, but we ought not to underestimate the high consciousness of the cow as a political symbol that predated by many years the cow-protection movement in the NWP's urban centres. The following studies of cow-killing disputes in Kumaon, Kasipur, Shamli, Hardwar, Delhi and Bareilly attempt to show the input of the colonial administration into the long-term development of this consciousness.

Almora, Kumaon - 1814-37

One of the first cases to cause the provincial government anxiety surfaced in Kumaon in the 1830s. In 1814 the British had attempted to render their invasion of Kumaon more palatable to the Hindu population by curbing the beef consumption of their troops. Edward Gardner, the first Resident of Kumaon, was informed that the government 'particularly understood that the slaughtering of cattle is highly revolting to the notions of the people of Kumaon.' Furthermore, this 'prejudice should be respected and cattle should not be killed, if sheep and goats can be procured for the Troops.'¹⁵⁷

Over twenty years later Charles Metcalfe, as Lieutenant Governor of the NWP, qualified this instruction with the observation that:

[It] was probably deemed necessary on the invasion of Kumaon, because the Troops, which first entered, were Irregulars raised for the purpose...chiefly Mahomedans, who would have delighted in the Slaughter of Cattle, more for the purpose of triumphing over the Hindoos, than from any other motive.¹⁵⁸

Metcalfe thought it improbable that anyone in 1814 had intended to impose a permanent cow-slaughter ban in Kumaon. But this was precisely the interpretation that Gardner and all the subsequent officers in the region had placed on the 1814 statement. Officially cows were not to be killed in

¹⁵⁷ J.A. Adam, Secy to Govt, to E. Gardner, 14 Dec. 1814, UPSA, Kumaon Comr, Pre-Mutiny Records, Misc. Letters Recd, 1814, vol. 1, p. 143.

¹⁵⁸ Minute by C.T. Metcalfe, Lt Govr NWP, 2 Feb. 1837, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/34, 9 Mar. 1837, no. 66.

Kumaon, although privately all the officers knew of someone, usually a European, who had managed to slaughter cattle in secret.

It was in 1837 that the ambiguities in the government's behaviour were exposed. In January crowds of angry Hindus gathered at Almora to protest against the intended slaughter of eight bullocks purchased by Colonel Andree, the Commanding Officer in Kumaon, and his officers.¹⁵⁹ The Commissioner, G.E. Gowan, wanted the cattle released; once their intended fate had attracted so much attention it was foolhardy to allow the butchering to proceed. At the same time, he wanted the government to clarify the situation as to the legitimacy of surreptitious slaughter by Europeans.¹⁶⁰ Colonel Andree pointed out that a former Commissioner, Mr Traill, had, 'in more than one instance, prohibited the slaughter of *particular* Cattle, on the representation of the inhabitants, and the view of preventing disturbance', but that he and his assistants had slaughtered cattle in private.¹⁶¹ In other words, Traill had worked out his own system of tacit compromise with the Hindus. Andree thought that this had now run its course and, for whatever reasons, the Hindus were no longer willing to tolerate surreptitious slaughter.

Both the options facing the Lieutenant Governor were unattractive. Either he could prohibit cow-slaughter in Kumaon, an order which would be unprecedented in British India and would unleash agitation for similar bans all over the NWP, or else, in apparent contradiction of two decades' usage, he could declare that cow-slaughter was not illegal in Kumaon, and risk the awakening of mass Hindu outrage in the area.¹⁶² His solution was a perpetuation of the fudge, at the same time defending and undermining the policy based on established usage. The Commissioner was instructed 'to adhere to the practise which has hitherto prevailed, neither permitting nor preventing the Slaughter of Cattle more than has heretofore been customary.'¹⁶³ Metcalfe wanted Gowan to observe a custom which of itself was a denial of the existence of a custom; covert slaughter was to continue, thus allowing both the

¹⁵⁹ G.E. Gowan, Comr Kumaon, to G.A. Bushby, Secy to Lt Govr NWP, 23 Jan. 1837, *ibid.*, no. 64. The intensity of the locals' feelings on the matter can be gauged from the fact that, in addition to the petitioning of the civilian authorities about the fate of the bullocks, they were angry enough to warrant the sending of the butchers - foreigners to the district - into hiding. They eventually needed an escort from Almora to guarantee their safety. *Ibid.* The resistance to the sale of cattle for slaughter was also very strong; the eight bullocks had had to be imported from Bareilly with their butchers. Stuart Corbett, Asst Comr Kumaon, to Col. Andree, C.O. Kumaon, 13 Jan. 1837, UPSA, Kumaon Comr, Pre-Mutiny Records, Judl Letters Issued, vol. 33, pp. 258-61.

¹⁶⁰ G.E. Gowan, Comr Kumaon, to G.A. Bushby, Secy to Lt Govr NWP, 23 Jan. 1837, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/231/34, 9 Mar. 1837, no. 64.

¹⁶¹ Col. Andree, C.O. Kumaon, to Comr Kumaon, 23 Jan. 1837, *ibid.*, no. 65.

¹⁶² Minute by C.T. Metcalfe, Lt Govr NWP, 2 Feb. 1837, *ibid.*, no. 66.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

defenders of the cow and her would-be consumers to claim that their interpretation of the past was the correct one. Ironically, the government had stumbled upon its own form of implicit compromise.

On a longer time scale the government's respect for precedent was tempered by the fear that Hindus would begin to claim zones of exclusive privilege. Therefore Metcalfe also argued for a gradual increase in cow-slaughter in Kumaon so as to dull the sensitivity of the Hindus to the practice.¹⁶⁴

Kasipur, Moradabad - 1830s

In the 1830s the issue of cow-slaughter and beef sales at Kasipur, a moderately-sized town at the base of the Kumaon *tarai*, became so complicated with differing versions of the past and ineffectual, inconstant government orders that the government's faith in the determination of custom was severely tried.

Kasipur occupied a peculiar position in the geography of Hindu-Muslim relations in Rohilkhand. Founded in the mid-seventeenth century it was always governed by Hindus, despite determined efforts by the Rohillas in the eighteenth century to wrest it from the Kumaon Rajas. It was not a healthy place in comparison with the plains to the south, but its site was a marked improvement on the jungly *tarai* stretching out to the north of the town. In 1743-44 Kasipur had served as the last supply stop for Ali Muhammad's Pathan army *en route* to avenge Daud Khan's murder by Debi Chand of Kumaon in the 1720s.¹⁶⁵ But although spectacularly victorious in battle the Pathans sickened in the hill climate, forcing their return within months to the healthier climes of Rohilkhand. In this way Kasipur stood out as a sort of frontier post, demarcating the limits of both Rohilla penetration and Hindu resistance.¹⁶⁶

Throughout the eighteenth century Kasipur grew in importance and wealth as it sheltered increasing numbers of Hindu immigrants, refugees first from the wars between the Marathas and the

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Comr Gowan agreed with Metcalfe on this point. He expected Hindu hostility to subside once slaughter became commonplace, chiefly because of the relentless presence of the British: '[O]ur Hindoo subjects, bigoted as they here are, must yield to circumstances & eventually entrust to what they cannot but perceive is beyond their power to obviate.' G.E. Gowan, Comr Kumaon, to G.A. Bushby, Offg Secy to Lt Govr NWP, 27 Feb. 1837, UPSA, Kumaon Comr, Pre-Mutiny Records, Judl Letters Issued, vol. 33, pp. 284-6.

¹⁶⁵ Charles Hamilton, *An historical relation of the origin, progress, and final dissolution of the Government of the Rohilla Afgans in the northern provinces of Hindostan* (London, 1787), pp. 54-7.

¹⁶⁶ In the 1840s a British officer in Kumaon wrote of the Rohilla invasion of Kumaon thus: '[I]ts ill results to the province are well and bitterly remembered, and its mischievous, though religiously zealous character is still attested by the noseless idols and trunkless elephants of some of the Kumaon temples.' J.H. Batten, 'A few notes on the subject of the Kumaon and Rohilkund Turae', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XIII (1844), p. 898.

Rohillas to the south and then, later, from Kumaon proper as internecine warring destroyed the Chand dynasty and left the state easy prey to invasion from Nepal in 1790. When finally driven out of Almora the remnants of the Chand family made Kasipur their residence in exile. The locals always recognized the head of the family as the Raja of Kumaon, but the British accorded them no more than *zamindar* status until 1840 when they styled Shiuraj Singh, grandson of the first exile, Raja of Kasipur.¹⁶⁷

In the 1830s the Hindus in Kasipur outnumbered the Muslims by five to one. The wealth of Kasipur was concentrated in Hindu hands; one magistrate described them as men of 'the most respectable stock' in comparison with the town's Muslim population, chiefly weavers and cloth-printers of 'the lowest description'.¹⁶⁸ The weavers depended upon the local Hindu financiers and merchants for advances of raw materials and for the marketing of their finished products.

In the *pargana* of Kasipur the *zamindari* right was vested in the government and, of the *malguzars*, only two or three were Muslims. All of the *malguzars*, regardless of their religion, depended upon advances from the *mahajans* of Kasipur to be able to make regular instalments of the revenue. Without the cooperation of the Hindu financiers the whole revenue-collecting machinery in the *pargana* ground to a halt.¹⁶⁹ Thus the Hindu gentry of Kasipur were well positioned: in any negotiations with either the Muslims or the British their arguments were backed by a superior economic threat.

Amongst the Hindus Kasipur had a reputation as a sacred place, although the origins of its sanctity were uncertain.¹⁷⁰ In the 1820s and '30s this sanctity was used by the Hindus to justify the continuation of a ban on cow-slaughter within the *pargana*. Local officers puzzled over the historical legitimacy of such a ban, although with hindsight it seems clear that the sanctity of the town derived

¹⁶⁷ E.T. Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India* (3 vols, Allahabad, 1886), III, pp. 396-9.

¹⁶⁸ F.P. Buller, Actg Magte Moradabad ND, to R. Lowther, Comr Moradabad, 31 Oct. 1833, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/56, 10 Feb. 1834, no. 20.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ In 1834 some Hindu residents were happy to state that Kasipur's sanctity lay simply in the locality's ancient unpopularity with the Muslims: 'Cashipoor though unhealthy, was originally colonized by a Hindoo from whom it derives its name, merely for religious purposes with a view of avoiding the interference of Mahomedans.' Abstract trans. of petition from Chobi Jaulanath and other Hindu inhabitants of Kasipur, n.d., IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/58, 30 June 1834, no. 22.

Kasipur was said by locals to have been founded by one Kasinath Adhikari, a government official in the time of Baz Bahadur Chand, d.1678, on the site of four villages, in one of which the temple of Ujjain Devi marked an old place of Hindu pilgrimage. Batten, 'A few notes on the subject of the Kumaon and Rohilcund Turace', p. 896. The nineteenth century town was not thought to be on exactly the same site, having shifted to a less salubrious position away from the original Ujjain village. Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts*, III, p. 399.

from the ban on cow-slaughter, not *vice versa*, and that the ban, in turn, had derived from the economic, political and numerical strength of the Hindus. Essentially it was their power that enabled the Hindus to maintain that their version of history was the correct one, so that successive generations of district officers confirmed and extended the ban on cow-slaughter and beef sales.

Until British rule there was no documentation of the ban; no indigenous authority had ever invested this indicator of relations between the two communities with the permanence of a written instruction. The first British order, passed in March 1825 apparently after some sort of disturbance,¹⁷¹ forbade cow-slaughter in the *pargana* and prohibited beef sales within a *jarib* of Kasipur's suburbs.¹⁷² Several years later another Magistrate, Mr Okeden, revamped the order, this time putting the butchers' shops two *jaribs* from the suburbs. The only effect of either order was to confirm that cow-slaughter did not happen in Kasipur. In the face of Hindu opposition no butchers' shops were established beyond even the new limits.¹⁷³

By the 1830s the sense of injustice amongst some of Kasipur's Muslims was enough to steel them for open confrontation. In 1831 Muhammad Mhoseem, a vocal opponent of the ban on slaughter and beef sales, and Vazir Khan, a soldier returned from Sayyid Ahmad's *jihad* against the Sikhs in the Punjab, set up a meat shop in the suburbs. The Magistrate, Mr Pidcock, immediately shut it down on the production of the earlier orders by the Hindus,¹⁷⁴ and in the ensuing debate he veered wildly, first from a proposed lifting of all the restrictions on butchers' shops and then, finally, to the imposition of a more rigid ban, banishing all butchers' shops to the neighbouring *pargana*. There is no doubt that Pidcock was intimidated by the Hindus' economic might. The slaughter of a cow during his magistracy had prompted the *mahajans* to abandon Kasipur for three months, thus endangering the revenue-collection machinery and upsetting the fragile economy of the Muslim weavers. He had needed

¹⁷¹ In 1884 Allahabad's *Prayag Samachar* referred to a riot at Kasipur over cow-killing in 1825. As the other dates and information that the paper mentions in connection with Kasipur's history of cow-killing disputes are correct, it seems likely that the reference to a riot in 1825 is also correct. *Prayag Samachar*, 31 Mar. 1884, SVN 1884, p. 248.

¹⁷² R. Lowther, Offg Comr Moradabad, to Welby Jackson, Regr to Nizamat Adalat, 5 Oct. 1833, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/56, 10 Feb. 1834, no. 18.

¹⁷³ The nominal character of Okeden's order is demonstrated by the fact that when a subsequent magistrate, Mr Pidcock, attempted to implement it he discovered that any shop erected two *jaribs* from the town would have been sitting in the middle of the Dehla stream. *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ F.P. Buller, Actg Magte Moradabad ND, to R. Lowther, Offg Comr Moradabad, 31 Oct. 1833, *ibid.*, no. 20.

the public assistance of the Raja of Kumaon to bring them back to the town, humiliating testimony to the limitations of British authority.¹⁷⁵

After this, a meat shop was opened in the *pargana* to the west of Kasipur and over the Dandi *nadi* which marked the *pargana* boundary. Thus it was officially confirmed that the Muslims of Kasipur ought to travel a round trip of six *kos* across a river and back in order to purchase beef.¹⁷⁶

The following months saw a new crop of Hindu-Muslim disputes. Events in Almora, Kasipur's former capital, seem to be of importance here also. There the Hindus had been agitating against the presence of a lone mosque, erected as a direct result of the British takeover of Kumaon. With the British had come Muslim troops and Muslim administrators into this Hindu state and only with the implicit protection of the British could the mosque have been built and hope to survive. In 1831 the government upheld the right of the immigrant Muslims to their place of worship. The Muslims had won a considerable victory in an area where they were vastly outnumbered and Hindu traditions were strong and proudly maintained.¹⁷⁷

This affair encouraged the Muslims agitating for a more equitable share of religious privileges in Kasipur. At the forefront of the agitation were the two men previously mentioned, at least one of whom, Vazir Khan, had travelled well beyond this enclave of Hindu authority and tradition. These two men headed a campaign to claim as a mosque a partially-demolished building that the Hindus declared to be a *pathshala*.¹⁷⁸ They acted as *mukhtars* (agents or attorneys) for the Muslims and were sponsored by subscriptions from each Muslim householder in the town. Clearly more than two or three people thought that they had a grievance.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* On the matter of the boycott Buller commented: '[T]he Mohomedan population seem to have stood in the relation of regret to the Hindoos by their having been reduced in the refusal of the former to purchase the work of their looms (which they were accordingly obliged to send for sale to Moradabad) publicly to beseech that a compromise of the disputes in 1831 might be made.'

¹⁷⁶ Two subsequent commissioners believed that this order was a mistake and contributed greatly to the Hindu-Muslim illfeeling in Kasipur that festered throughout the 1830s. R. Lowther, Offg Comr Moradabad, to Welby Jackson, Regr to Nizamat Adalat, 5 Oct. 1833, *ibid.*, no. 18; G. Stockwell, Comr Moradabad, to C. Macsween, Secy to Govt, 10 Jan. 1834, *ibid.*, no. 17. However another magistrate argued that the Muslims could not have taken offence when all his predecessor had done was to codify local practice. F.P. Buller, Actg Magte Moradabad ND, to R. Lowther, Offg Comr Moradabad, 31 Oct. 1833, *ibid.*, no. 20. Either way Pidcock's order lessened the possibility of a gradual change in the prevailing practices.

¹⁷⁷ Commissioner Traill explained to Pidcock that the two year old mosque at Almora was the only one in Kumaon and that under previous Hindu governments such establishments had not been tolerated. He further explained that 'the prejudices of the Hindoos have been respected in regard to the Slaughter of Kine, but their objections to the existence of a Musjid have been treated by me as frivolous and have now been finally rejected by Government.' G.W. Traill, Comr Kumaon, to H. Pidcock, Offg Jt Magte Moradabad ND, 28 Dec. 1831, UPSA, Kumaon Comr, Pre-Mutiny Records, Judl Letters Issued, vol. 27, p. 240.

¹⁷⁸ F.P. Buller, Actg Magte Moradabad ND, to R. Lowther, Offg Comr Moradabad, 31 Oct. 1833, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/56, 10 Feb. 1834, no. 20.

In March 1833 the new Magistrate, F.P. Buller, was approached by people whom he identified as the principal Hindus and Muslims of Kasipur asking that the disputes be referred to arbitration by *panchayat*. The town's *raises* appear to have been worried by the erosion of their power as community leaders and perhaps also ^{by} the potential for bigger disturbances if the disputes were not soon resolved. Subsequently the Muslim spokesmen were shown not to have the support of all the Muslims of the town, and we are reminded of events in Bareilly in the 1870s and 80s when it transpired that the Hindu *raises* could not carry the lower classes with them on matters of public religious prestige. The Hindus nominated the erstwhile Raja of Kumaon, Gurman Singh, as their representative, whilst the Muslims selected the local *thanadar*, Fateh Jang Khan, to act for them. By their agreement of 6 May the prohibition on cow-slaughter was to remain whilst the bricks of the disputed building were to go to complete a public well and the site was to become part of the government's *zamindari* holdings. Buller advertised these decisions on 8 May 1833, but they were almost immediately challenged by Muslims who denounced the *thanadar* as a heretic.¹⁷⁹ These Muslims, according to Buller, were not ^{the} same people who had called for independent arbitration.¹⁸⁰

Four days later the town's *kazi*, Izat Ali, along with Vazir Khan, Muhammad Mhoseem, and one Summoo Khan, a woodcutter, convened a public meeting at the town's main mosque and arranged for the simultaneous slaughter of four cows, one in each quarter of the town. Then, before their inevitable arrest, they marched about the town in an armed state: 'Hostile Triumph' was the Commissioner's description. 58 Muslims were sentenced to various punishments, including six months' imprisonment and fines for Izat Ali and his closest companions. Izat Ali of course forfeited the post of *kazi*.¹⁸¹ The defiant and staged nature of this protest made it a symbolic protest in a way that previous attempts at surreptitious slaughter could never have been.

¹⁷⁹ R. Lowther, Offg Comr Moradabad, to C. Macsween, Secy to Govt, Judl, 20 Aug. 1833, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/43, 4 Nov. 1833, no. 24, para. 45.

¹⁸⁰ Unhappy Muslims later claimed that Fateh Jang Khan had been bribed by the Raja with liberal hospitality and presents, including an elephant, and that they had not wanted to be part of an independent arbitration anyway. 'Urzee of Mohammad Azim Khann, a Trooper of the 1st Regiment Native Cavalry, Wuzeer Mohummed, Abdoor Rushood Khan, and all other Mussulman inhabitants of Casheepore...to the Governor General', delivered 23 Jan. 1834, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/56, 10 Feb. 1834, no. 22.

¹⁸¹ R. Lowther, Offg Comr Moradabad, to C. Macsween, Secy to Govt, Judl, 20 Aug. 1833, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/43, 4 Nov. 1833, no. 24, para. 45; Welby Jackson, Register to Nizamat Adalat, to R. Lowther, Offg Comr Moradabad, no. 20, 8 Oct. 1833, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/56, 10 Feb. 1834, no. 19. Izat Ali had justified the killing of four cows on the grounds that during the Nawab Vizier's rule there had been four butchers' shops in Kasipur.

After the removal of these men from Kasipur's public life another Muslim spokesman came to the fore. Trooper Muhammad Azim Khan of the 1st Regiment of Native Cavalry, 'lately of Calcutta', continued to petition the local officers and the government on the injustice of the mosque/*pathshala* arbitration and the beef situation. He too was marked out by local officers as an outsider and a trouble-maker. But most of Kasipur's resident Muslims were in debt or under contract to Hindu financiers and their 1831 experience had taught them that overt protest was expensive. It is not surprising that the Muslims who led the agitation were not bound to the economy of the loom and, in the case of Vazir Khan and Muhammad Azim Khan, had travelled widely and to parts of the country where Muslims did not labour under such difficulties.

When a new Commissioner, G. Stockwell, inherited Kasipur's problems towards the end of 1833 he hoped to be done with the old orders. After a brisk assessment of the situation he suggested to the government that all the existing orders be annulled and a place on the outskirts of town, not so close as to be 'really and fairly offensive' to the Hindus, be selected for the slaughter and sale of beef.¹⁸² In this solution he was disappointed. Despite the already voluminous reportage of the matter the government directed Stockwell to go back to the townspeople and to inform himself:

as exactly as possible, what the previous usage in regard to the points in dispute has been, whether as relates to the Slaughter of Cattle, or the Sale of Beef in or near Kashipore.¹⁸³

The government clung to the notion that there was a single, identifiable tradition which, when restored, would erase the ill effects of the earlier officers' misguided interference and the subsequent bitterness of the rival communities. Stockwell laboured to convince his superiors in Calcutta that if the issue ever had been beyond dispute, which state he doubted anyway, it certainly never could be now, as the arguments and orders of recent years had become inextricably bound in as proof and counter-proof of the protagonists' claims about pre-British practice. That which the government wished to erase as false history was to the people of Kasipur as authentic and meaningful as that which preceded it.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² G. Stockwell, Comr Moradabad, to C. Macsween, Secy to Govt, 10 Jan. 1834, *ibid.*, no. 17.

¹⁸³ J.R. Colvin, Depy Secy to Govt, to G. Stockwell, Comr Moradabad, no. 542, 17 Mar. 1834, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/57, 17 Mar. 1834, no. 11.

¹⁸⁴ See for example the abstract of the petition from 'Chobi Jaulanath & other Hindoo inhabitants of Cashipoor', n.d., IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/58, 30 June 1834, no. 22, in which the petitioners complain about the incomprehensible intention of the government to deny them their 'ancient privileges' - incomprehensible because that government's own agents had formerly admitted them and confirmed them on paper.

Stockwell 'despaired' of ever being able to advance beyond the prevailing level of 'party spirit', and in this he had grasped the recurring problem in cow-slaughter disputes: the absence of space for explicit compromise between incompatible ideologies. Here, and in many other like disputes, British officers often unwittingly exacerbated the display of party spirit by accusing the protagonists of hypocrisy where there was proof of a former tradition of unparticularized compromise. The chief complaint of a former Commissioner, R. Lowther, against the Hindus of Kasipur was that their agitation was not genuinely inspired by religious feeling:

The objections urged by the Hindoos against the *sale* of meat in the Pergunnah while they wink at its importation into the Town if brought by the consumers from Thakoordwara [in the neighbouring *pargana*] are not only preposterous in the extreme but can only be referred to a bad and hostile feeling wholly unconnected with their religious prejudices.¹⁸⁵

In other words, a Hindu who 'winked at', or suffered to exist anything less than a complete ban on cow-slaughter and beef consumption, was not, in the eyes of Lowther, a very good Hindu and therefore not morally entitled to protest on behalf of his religion. It should have been obvious to Lowther and his colleagues that, faced with this sort of argument, the Hindus were almost certainly to eschew all signs of compromise, explicit and implicit, in favour of an all-out defence of their reputation as Hindus. Given their Christian, especially Protestant, reverence for the divine word, many British officers unthinkingly became agents of a crude fundamentalism, accusing Indians willy-nilly of hypocrisy and a lack of genuine religious feeling if they failed to act up to a British reading of their respective religious tenets. This further undermined the traditions of implicit compromise that had enabled people of different religious ideologies to share the same town.

Eventually Stockwell persuaded his superiors of the need to modify their adherence to established usage. Calcutta still refused to lay down any central policy, but it accepted that custom might have to be altered if it represented gross oppression of the rights of one group of people by another:

There are no rules or precedents for general application - each case must be decided on its own merits, with reference to what has been customary, as far as that may be practicable, *without causing any serious inconvenience or injury to any class of people.*¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ R. Lowther, Offg Comr Moradabad, to Welby Jackson, Regr to Nizamat Adalat, 5 Oct. 1833, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/56, 10 Feb. 1834, no. 18.

¹⁸⁶ C. Macsween, Secy to Govt, to G. Stockwell, Comr Moradabad, no. 1172, 9 June 1834, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/140/58, 9 June 1834, no. 7. Emphasis added.

As in the towns where the government, or its agents, had been sliding towards enshrining equal procession rights for different religious communities, here too this marked a first step towards limiting the absolute rights of one community over another.

Stockwell left the division before any order was passed. His successor, S.H. Boulderson, reverted to the certainties of earlier officers and, in March 1835, according to his reading of local custom, confirmed the most recent of the former orders, prohibiting cow-slaughter and beef sales anywhere within the *pargana*.¹⁸⁷

While contemporary officers tended to look for very specific causes for this sort of agitation, especially the evergreen 'trouble-makers', it is worth adopting a broader perspective. In 1881 Kasipur's residents numbered 14,667, a slight increase over the previous decade. But no longer were every five of its six residents Hindu. Instead there were 6190 Muslims to 8477 Hindus.¹⁸⁸ In addition, the volume of trade passing through the town was noticed to have decreased, thus reducing the town's importance in the region.¹⁸⁹ The decline in the economic and numerical superiority of the Hindus suggests a like reduction in their political power. As a process of some decades' maturation it is not difficult to see how many of the tensions in the 1830s were sparked off by Muslims seeking an improved social status to match their nascent rise against Hindu domination. In pre-British times this probably would have resulted in a bloody rearrangement of the existing compromise, perhaps not producing another stable equation of Hindu-Muslim relations for some years. Under British rule the situation was oddly frozen in an irrelevant reverence for past practice.

Little evidence survives of Kasipur's Hindu-Muslim relations after the 1830s, but we do know that in 1854 no changes had been made in the cow-slaughter rules. A riot at that year's Muharram in which Muslim weavers had set about the Hindu spectators with swords, killing at least five of them, suggests that the irritation at their lowly position in the town had not subsided.¹⁹⁰ Thirty years later, the Hindus seem finally to have lost their privilege. A newspaper reported that Hindus had rioted in Kasipur after the Magistrate had encouraged the Muslims to introduce beef sales discreetly into the

¹⁸⁷ S.H. Boulderson, Offg Comr Moradabad, to C. Macsween, Secy to Govt, no. 109, 18 May 1835, IOR, Agra Criminal Judicial P/231/13, 1 June 1835, no. 6.

¹⁸⁸ Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts*, III, pp. 395-6. The *Gazetteer* commented: 'The inhabitants in former days were almost entirely Hindu, but Musulmans have now settled here in considerable numbers and now number three-sevenths of the whole population.'

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

¹⁹⁰ H.B. Thornhill, Jt Magte Moradabad, to J. Strachey, Offg Magte Moradabad, no. 7, 9 Jan. 1855, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/234/1, 1 Mar. 1855, no. 14.

pargana. A subsequent order by the Magistrate, permitting beef sales in one street of Kasipur, was upheld by the Commissioner on appeal, and the Hindus, no longer in such a majority, were now said to be gearing up for a fight.¹⁹¹

Shamli, Muzaffarnagar - 1850s- 60s

Events in Shamli, Muzaffarnagar, in the 1850s and 60s provide us with insights into later developments in a situation similar to that in Kasipur. In the mid-nineteenth century Shamli and Kasipur shared many characteristics. Shamli's population was heavily Hindu, over three quarters of the total of ten thousand. Although not as grand as their Kasipur brethren, it was the Hindus who controlled the wealth in Shamli. In the event of a communal rift the petty traders and merchants among their number were both able and ready to cripple the commercial life of this market town, an entrepot between the Punjab to the west and Muzaffarnagar to the east.¹⁹² In comparison the Muslims were described by one magistrate as 'a feeble class', labourers in a variety of occupations. Even as an artisanal group they were not particularly strong, for Shamli was more of a trading town than a manufacturing centre. The few cloths woven in Shamli were coarse and cheap, requiring few production skills.¹⁹³

Shamli had nothing to recommend it as a particularly sacred town but again, as in Kasipur, the numerical and economic strength of the Hindus was such that they had imposed a virtual ban on cow-slaughter and beef sales within the town. The Muslim population did obtain beef but always by stealth; it was either brought in in covered baskets from neighbouring villages or, very occasionally, a cow or bullock was slaughtered covertly and the flesh was distributed to households privy to the secret. If news of the slaughter of a cow ever escaped then some sort of disturbance was almost inevitable. When this happened in British times the agitation would be carried before the district officers. On one of these occasions, in 1827, the Magistrate had been persuaded to prohibit cow-slaughter in Shamli and

¹⁹¹ *Prayag Samachar*, 31 Mar. 1884, SVN 1884, p. 248.

¹⁹² F. Williams, Comr Meerut, to G. Couper, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 153, 25 May 1861, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file 9/1861, no. 23.

¹⁹³ H.G. Keene, Magte Muzaffarnagar, to G.D. Turnbull, Offg Comr Meerut, 7 May 1860, *ibid.* H.R. Nevill (ed.), *Muzaffarnagar: A Gazetteer*, (Allahabad, 1903), pp. 312-13.

to guarantee that a Muslim *kotwal* would never be appointed to the town.¹⁹⁴ Although the government lost track of these orders, the Hindus never did.

In 1854 the situation in Shamli aroused the attention of the NWP government. The slaughter of a cow had brought the Hindus out onto the streets in huge crowds and the Magistrate, Mr Lloyd, was reduced to threatening them with the introduction of troops to the town.¹⁹⁵ Lloyd sympathized with the Hindus in their outrage and refused to contemplate a change in the existing practice, even though his Joint Magistrate, Mr Keene, favoured the erection of a slaughterhouse in an isolated and 'inoffensive' spot.¹⁹⁶

Two years later the butchers of Shamli were still petitioning the local government for the right to kill cows in their town. But the local officers, like others before them, did not want the situation to be altered. The Officiating Magistrate, Mr Berford, supported his Deputy Collector's defence of the local usage as:

pleasing to a very large Majority of the Inhabitants, not exceedingly injurious to the less numerous class, sanctioned by authority: prized by one sect and *acquiesced in by the other for a long period.*¹⁹⁷

In this Berford had the full support of his Commissioner, H.H. Greathed.¹⁹⁸ But by 1856 the NWP Government took a very different view of local usage. Some of the difficulties experienced in other districts had begun to impress upon senior officers the dangers of allowing one section of a town's population to claim official sanction for the privileges they wielded over another section. This time the government decided not to countermand the orders of the Magistrate and the Commissioner, but the Lieutenant Governor did express his unhappiness that no beef shop or slaughterhouse was to be established at Shamli.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ F. Williams, Comr Meerut, to G. Couper, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 153, 25 May 1861, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file 9/1861, no. 23.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ R. Thornhill, Offg Magte Muzaffarnagar, to C.P. Carmichael, Asst Secy to Govt NWP, demi-official, 31 Dec. 1855; C.P. Carmichael, Asst Secy to Govt NWP, to Offg Magte Muzaffarnagar, no. 464, 23 Jan. 1856, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/234/17, 23 Jan. 1856, nos. 358, 360.

¹⁹⁷ G. Berford, Offg Magte Muzaffarnagar, to H.H. Greathed, Comr Meerut, no. 57, 14 Mar. 1856, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/234/20, 14 Apr. 1856, no. 198. Emphasis added. This suggests an arrangement very similar to the one that prevailed in Bareilly, where one community accepted for many years a degree of inferiority in the public display of their religious character or symbols.

¹⁹⁸ H.H. Greathed, Comr Meerut, to Secy to Govt NWP, no. 55, 19 Mar. 1856, *ibid.*, no. 196.

¹⁹⁹ '[I]t must be considered to be against the general principles enforced by our Government [wrote the government secretary] that no avowed and sanctioned means should exist in any Town for prohibiting an article of wholesome supply which is required for the consumption of a considerable proportion of the population.' G.W. Williams, Offg Secy to Govt NWP, to Comr Meerut, no. 2386, 14 Apr. 1856, *ibid.*, no. 199.

After the Rebellion the government had even more reason to regret the official sanction of the cow-slaughter ban. The Hindus of Shamli had proved themselves of dubious loyalty. The *tahsildar*, Ibrahim Khan, had managed to hold his territory for the British until August 1857, but then it was discovered that Mohar Singh, chief landholder in the neighbourhood and supposedly sympathetic to the British cause, was in secret communication with the rebels at Delhi. Despite an influx of troops to the town, attempted uprisings in the neighbourhood were common.²⁰⁰ In 1861 Commissioner Williams spoke of Shamli's Hindus as 'notoriously the most contumacious & seditious community to be found in any town in the Division'; they were far from loyal and peaceable, and 'undoubtedly' they were in league with the rebels in 1857.²⁰¹

That the agitation continued after the Rebellion seemed to the officers of the new era ample proof that existing orders were in effect dead letters and that previous usage was not sufficiently clear-cut to justify continuing the prohibition. Accordingly, in April 1860 the Magistrate, Mr Keene, nominated a site in a Muslim *muhalla* for the slaughter of cattle and the sale of beef.²⁰² The reaction from the Hindus was swift and angry. Officers at all levels of government were deluged with petitions. The *baniyas* shut their shops and blocked the supply routes into the town. Mass protests were held before government offices.²⁰³ Support for the Hindus also came from outside, as befitting a market town. One of the petitions to the Meerut Commissioner was from the merchants of Ambala in the Punjab who pleaded that the *mandi* of Shamli, a meeting place of importance for all kinds of Hindus traders, be restored to its former sanctity.²⁰⁴

The Hindus could not preserve their privilege. This time the Magistrate, Commissioner and local government all agreed that the introduction of slaughter was desirable. Nevertheless it was an

²⁰⁰ A massacre of government servants at the *tahsildari* on 14 September 1857 was headed by Muslim rebels from Thana Bhawan a dozen miles to the north and it was the green flag of Islam that was unfurled in the assault. Nevertheless the British never again looked favourably upon the locals of Shamli, and the Hindus, because of Mohar Singh's duplicity, acquired a particularly bad name. Nevill, *Muzaffarnagar: A Gazetteer*, pp. 312-16, 324-7. In September 1804 Shamli had also been considered a hostile town in the long-running battle with the Marathas and Sikhs to hold the 'conquered' territories. Then Mohar Singh's father, Ghasi Ram, had organized a blockade of the Company's forces and the town had closed its gates to the British. Two months later when the troubled garrison had been relieved, the troops were allowed to burn Shamli as a punitive measure. *Ibid.*, pp. 187-8.

²⁰¹ F. Williams, Comr Meerut, to G. Couper, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 153, 25 May 1861, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file 9/1861, no. 23.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.* Commissioner Williams was astounded at the belligerence of the Hindus. He marvelled that they 'proceeded even to open turbulence before a European officer!' For shutting their shops eighteen of the *baniyas* were put to work as labourers on the roads for four days, a 'rather irregular but effective' punishment, according to Williams, but one which threatened to upset the Hindus even more.

²⁰⁴ Petition to Comr Meerut 'from Merchants of all description', 6 Sept. 1860, Ambala, *ibid.*

embarrassing time for the administration. The Hindus resented strongly having to surrender the official guarantees of their privileges and they kept bringing the old orders of the 1820s and '50s before the government, proving better than their rulers at preserving and reclaiming the past. It was an irony that would not have been lost on those officers who, only a few decades before, had strived to uncover exactly this type of documentation as an aid to resolving communal tensions.

Jawalapur, Hardwar - 1820s- 60s

The agitation over cow-slaughter at Jawalapur, near Hardwar, stretching right across the nineteenth century, provides a good illustration of the general shift from implicit compromise to public confrontation and the role of the British in promoting this change.

Jawalapur was not of itself of any definable sanctity, but its proximity to Hardwar - a mere two to three miles away - always made its status as a Hindu holy site a matter of some debate. It had a large population of Hindu priests, the *pandas*, who preferred to live there rather than in the less salubrious climate of Hardwar proper where they plied their trade.²⁰⁵ Most of the tenantry in and around Jawalapur was Hindu. However, the *zamindars* of Jawalapur, Kankhal, on the other side of Hardwar, and even parts of Hardwar itself, were Muslim Rajputs, converts from Hinduism of some generations' standing.²⁰⁶ During the big festivals they let out their lands to the *pandas* to accommodate the pilgrims who could not be housed at Hardwar. Both communities had economically powerful representatives and their interdependence meant that there was little scope for open confrontation. It is understandable therefore that some implicit compromise had been reached on the matter of cow-slaughter and seems to have held for some years prior to British intervention in the area. There was a sizable butcher community in Jawalapur, but the butchers never killed cattle openly, nor exposed beef for sale in public. It was the most common form of compromise: Hindus turned a blind eye to the practice as long as the Muslims acknowledged their sensitivity on the matter by not butchering the animals promiscuously.

²⁰⁵ J. Thornton, Secy to Govt NWP, to Comr Meerut, 5 May 1848, *Mr. Thomason's Despatches* (2 vols, Calcutta, 1856-58), I, p. 416.

²⁰⁶ G.F. Harvey, Magte Saharanpur, to G.F. Franco, Comr Meerut, 6 May 1843, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/21, 22 May 1843, no. 287.

In 1824 some incident disturbed the equilibrium of this arrangement and the issue was agitated before the Magistrate. But before he had a chance to rule on the practice the *zamindars* and the priests came to a private settlement and the case was struck off his books.²⁰⁷

For the next twenty years the matter did not surface before government officers, but then, in 1843, some Hindus petitioned the Magistrate, G.F. Harvey, complaining of the 'innovation' of cow-slaughter in Jawalapur and pleading for its suppression.²⁰⁸ It is unclear who drew up the petition, although the *zamindars* were quick to blame the local priesthood. The provocation is also uncertain. There is no independent evidence of an increase in cow-slaughter or its prominence in the town. Harvey had noticed an increase in the prosperity of the *zamindars* and in the numbers of Muslims resident in the region and the Brahmans of Hardwar were known to have suffered quite severely from the government's resumption of their *mafi* lands.²⁰⁹ This shift in the relative fortunes of the two groups of power brokers could have prompted the priests to attempt to shore up their status through the means offered by the new ruler. The Muslim *zamindars* saw in this approach to the British state an unforgivable breach of their unwritten understanding to settle things without the aid of the government and they reproached the priests for taking the matter before the Magistrate, a move which had effectively ended the era of implicit compromise.²¹⁰ From now on the matter was one of public discussion and contention; no Hindu would admit to previous occurrences of cow-slaughter and no Muslim would accept that it had been a surreptitious practice.

The petition was a strident one and its authors proved adept at investing long-forgotten orders with new significance. They uncovered an 1815 statement which banned cow-slaughter in the immediate environs of Mathura, Brindavan, and Hardwar, and then claimed that Jawalapur was part of Hardwar. This was a much wider interpretation of the ban than the authorities in 1815 had intended.²¹¹ The petitioners also argued that orders had been passed in 1824 prohibiting cow-slaughter

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ 'Petition of certain Hindoos of Kusbah Jooulapoor, Kunkul & Hurdwar, in the District of Seharunpoor', 29 Mar. 1843, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/20, 3 Apr. 1843, no. 5.

²⁰⁹ Comr Meerut to N.J. Conolly, Magte Saharanpur, no. 688, 4 Apr. 1837, UPRAA, Saharanpur Collr, Pre-Mutiny Records, Judicial Letters Recd, vol. 197, no pagination.

²¹⁰ G.F. Harvey, Magte Saharanpur, to G.F. Franco, Comr Meerut, 6 May 1843, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/21, 22 May 1843, no. 287.

²¹¹ In 1815 the Vice-President in Council had agreed with Hindu petitioners that the killing of cows in Hardwar was 'highly objectionable', especially as he believed that it had not been tolerated under Muslim rule. He decided that in future no cows were to be killed in the immediate vicinity of Hardwar, Mathura and Brindavan, but that this ought to be effected without the issuing of specific orders. The Superintendent of Police was instructed that 'whatever measures may be ultimately adopted should appear to the public to originate in the local authority of the Magistrates, rather than in the direct interference of the Government.'

in Jawalapur, although at most these were *muchalkas* taken from the butchers to ensure that they did not kill any cattle until that particular dispute was resolved. Now in 1843, at *mela* time, they despaired for the salvation of the pilgrims and the sanctity of the whole area, given that the evil of cow-slaughter had erupted again:

...thousands of Cows and other precious things will be given to the poor persons in alms, but owing to this new system of killing the Cows the whole crowd of persons will fly away and will be much grieved on seeing this new system contrary to the Hindoo Law - and it is true what interest and pleasure will they derive on coming on such a pilgrimage, when they see before their own eyes such nasty acts...²¹²

As a last, familiar resort they threatened to shut their shops, thus inconveniencing the locals, 'together with those employed by Government in digging the new Ganges Canal.' The reference to the *mela*, the shops and the new canal works adds another clue to the identity and concerns of the petition's authors. As we have seen, the 1830s had been a difficult decade throughout north India, with severe famine and its attendant malaises of social crimes and economic depression disrupting society. Several European observers had noted the decline of the Hardwar *mela*, once famed for its trade in horses and exotica and, although pilgrim visitors to Hardwar were probably increasing, the fair had certainly lost some of its former grandeur. The Ganges Canal scheme was an additional disruption to the locality, a work of empire on a grand scale, tampering with the holiest of Hinduism's rivers almost at its source. Rumours were rife about the threat to the Ganga and the almost certain revenge to be exacted by the gods, even though the authorities did their best to counteract these fears with pamphlets explaining the beneficial effects to be had from the completed canal.²¹³ It is plausible that the priests and the traders of Hardwar should have begun to fear that their world was being turned upside down, that nothing - not even the Ganga - was safe any more from the inroads of the new power and the increasingly wealthy and numerous Muslims. Cow-slaughter was clearly one issue on which one could make a stand.²¹⁴

W.B. Bayley, Actg Secy to Govt, to Actg Supt Police WP, no. 91, 23 May 1815, IOR, F/4/1306 (51857), 'Pilgrim Tax/Appendix'.

²¹² 'Petition of certain Hindoos of Kusbah Jooulapoor, Kunkul, and Hurdwar, in the District of Seharunpoor', 29 Mar. 1843, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/20, 3 Apr. 1843, no. 5.

²¹³ See, for example, the Hindi pamphlet 'Ganga ki nahar ka sankshep', 'An outline of the Ganges Canal', published in 1854 by the NWP Govt, IOL, VT 205 (H).

²¹⁴ There were other issues on which the Hindus could make a stand as well. In the 1850s the priests and other Hindus expanded their agitation to take in questions of public festivity. In spite of a traditional arrangement whereby the Hindus observed their festivals in Kankhal and Hardwar and the Muslims kept theirs in Jawalapur, in the 1850s the Hindus tried to take out Ramlilas and Krishnalilas in Jawalapur. In 1855, after some tension, an agreement was signed by the *raises* of both communities which stated that henceforth Muharram would only be observed in Jawalapur and Ramlila in Kankhal. Ironically, the government understood this to mean that Ramlila could never be celebrated publicly in Hardwar, not something that either the Muslims or the Hindus had intended. From the early 1890s when all of the Hindus in the Union plus the Muslim members of the municipality petitioned to have Ramlila allowed at Hardwar the government refused

Harvey was at first completely out of sympathy with the petitioners. Nevertheless he took *muchalkas* from the butchers of Jawalapur to prevent them from killing cows during the April *mela*, with a view to conducting an enquiry once the pilgrims had dispersed.²¹⁵ It is unclear what made Harvey change his mind, but on 3 August 1843 he positively prohibited cow-slaughter in Jawalapur and convicted three of the local butchers for 'killing kine on a Public Road of the Hindus in Jawalapur.' There had been an affray and the Hindus had shut their shops.²¹⁶ The Sessions Judge at Saharanpur upheld the conviction on the grounds that Jawalapur was part of Hardwar proper and that therefore the 1815 order was relevant here.²¹⁷

Only five years later the government bitterly regretted these orders. Since 1843 the butchers of Jawalapur had maintained a clamorous agitation for the restoration of their full livelihood. One petition complained of their ruination and humiliation at the hands of the local Brahmans and *mahajans*.²¹⁸ The Muslim *zamindars* had also supported the butchers' demands. In 1848, with no sign of the agitation waning, the NWP Government decided to attempt a return to the pre-1843 practice. However, the Lieutenant Governor, James Thomason, wanted the change to be an unobtrusive one, partly to avoid the embarrassment of a public reversal of government orders, but also to try to circumvent the anger of the Hindus at losing their recently-confirmed privilege.²¹⁹

The most important thing about the new order was Thomason's instruction to de-emphasize the religious component of the dispute and to stress in its place concerns about public health and safety. This did not become standard practice until after the Rebellion, but this 1848 decision was an indicator of future policy. Having commented on the 'generally offensive' nature of any flesh exposed to public view, especially in the north Indian climate where it decayed rapidly, Thomason advised the

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to sanction any change in the existing practice. In 1903 the government was still refusing to allow Hindus to celebrate Ramlila at one of the most renowned *tirths* in all of India. On top of the other unpopular state actions at Hardwar, which are discussed in the next chapter, this must have come as the ultimate example of state hostility to Hinduism. Offg Comr Meerut to Secy to Govt UP, no. 1540, 24 June 1903; Secy to Govt UP to Comr Meerut, no. 1492, 22 Aug. 1903, UPSA, UP General, B progs Aug. 1903, no. 43, file 557c, box 67.

²¹⁵ G.F. Harvey, Magte Saharanpur, to R.N.C. Hamilton, Secy to Govt NWP, 4 Apr. 1843, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/20, 10 Apr. 1843, no. 80.

²¹⁶ Government Verdict: Bhoodoo, Chota and Jumna butchers (defendants), 3 Aug. 1843, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/232/68, 5 May 1848, no. 60.

²¹⁷ Order by H. Lushington, Sessions Judge Saharanpur, 29 Nov. 1843, *ibid.*, no. 61.

²¹⁸ 'Translation of a Petition presented by the Butchers of Jawalapur near Hurdwar in Saharunpoor', 16 Jan. 1848, *ibid.*, no. 59.

²¹⁹ J. Thornton, Secy to Govt NWP, to D.B. Morrieson, Comr Meerut, no. 1803, 5 May 1848, *Mr. Thomason's Despatches*, I, p. 418.

Saharanpur Magistrate to handle any future cow-slaughter dispute 'without prominent reference to religious feeling'. He further suggested that:

the ostentatious and offensive exposure or slaughter of animals by the butchers may be punished as [an] offence against the conservancy rules, and acts of unwarranted hostility by the Hindoos against the butchers may be punished as trespasses and assaults.²²⁰

Gau kushi, cow-slaughter, was not to be an offence in itself, but when it was conducted with a deliberate intent to insult the Hindus and thereby threatened public tranquillity the act could be adjudged of a criminal nature. Furthermore, the government was prepared to pay the costs of erecting a modest, discreetly-placed abattoir if this was likely to help achieve the desired result.

In Jawalapur, however, such a move seems to have come too late. The butchers were angry at the all out assault that the Hindus had launched on them, and when the new slaughteryards were built they irritated the Hindus by making a show of carting the meat from the yards to their houses.²²¹ Eventually, in the 1860s, the Hindus determined to be rid of the nuisance for all time. With the government's backing they subscribed enough money to buy out the butchers (at three times the value of their property) and to relocate their colony near the slaughteryards. The butchers were furious at their helplessness before the wealth of the Hindus, but their protests were ignored by the government, which, in 1866, ordered the compulsory acquisition of the butchers' land.²²² One of the ironies of the dispute is the fact that by the mid-1860s the Muslims were branded as the instigators of the annoyance and the Hindus were portrayed as the long-suffering victims of Muslim oppression.²²³

Municipal Self-Government and Cow-Slaughter

After 1857 the government regularly emphasized the issues of public health and safety in cow-slaughter disputes, usually with much more success than that experienced at Jawalapur. As we shall see in the next chapter, the Rebellion of 1857 triggered important changes in social administration in British India. The apparent effectiveness of the cry of 'religion in danger' in rallying support to the rebel cause had frightened the British. The Queen's proclamation of 1 November 1858 declared with

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 417-19.

²²¹ H.D. Robertson, Magte Saharanpur, to F. Williams, Comr Meerut, no. 112, 12 June 1865, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, file 7/1866, dept XVII, no. 42.

²²² H.D. Robertson, Offg Magte Saharanpur, to F. Williams, Comr Meerut, no. 77, 11 Apr. 1865, *ibid.*

²²³ Dt Supt Police Saharanpur, 'Report upon the dispute relative to the slaughter of cattle of Jwallapore', *ibid.*

renewed vigour Britain's intention to rule over its Indian subjects without any partiality towards or interference with specific religious beliefs.

At the same time, the appalling casualties inflicted on the British troops by cholera and dysentery led to a new appreciation of the importance of sanitation. The survival of the empire was seen to depend upon the health of its army and its enveloping civilian environment. Western medical science, especially that relating to public health, was entering its heyday, promising accessible cures for mass social ills and stability for the society as a whole. The technology and its rationale were confident and interventionist and the British willingly harnessed them to their Indian administration. Western science promised to be an objective, incontrovertible body of knowledge which would endow them with administrative insights that properly overrode the prejudices of the individual faiths.²²⁴

In addition, the post-1857 developments in municipal government enabled the British to transfer much of the responsibility for decisions about cow-slaughter to local residents.²²⁵ The magistrates - even as chairmen of the municipal committees - could no longer be seen as solely responsible for these sorts of decisions. Indians were now sharing in the process, reluctantly or otherwise, and they would have to share equally blame and credit for controversial decisions.

Francis Robinson has argued that the creation of municipal committees in the NWP offered new arenas for communal politics, in particular increasing the scope for cow-slaughter disputes. His argument is based on the premise that prior to the appointment of municipal commissioners the decisions of municipal management, such as the location of a slaughterhouse, were 'in the hands of the

²²⁴ One extreme example of the increased confidence and the sense of righteousness afforded to administrators by a crude grasp of the new basics of science comes from the town of Negapatam in Madras in 1876. An aged and respected Brahman of the town had, two months before his death, entered the fourth, ascetic stage of life so that, upon his death, he was technically a *sanyasi*. Accordingly his family did not cremate his body, but buried it on the banks of a water tank that lay within the municipal boundaries. Assistant Magistrate Weld reckoned the burial to be a sanitary hazard and ordered that the body be exhumed in spite of the family's willingness to provide remedial measures such as the sinking of cement walls around the grave. Weld's actions caused serious offence in Negapatam and in the district of Tanjore as a whole. In the subsequent enquiry Weld was suspended and then demoted whilst the residents of Negapatam were praised for 'their entire abstinence from any violent acts or language, under circumstances which were calculated to excite the warmest feelings of grief and anger'. Order of Govt Madras, Financial Dept, no. 1585, 2 Sept. 1876. Upon receiving the relevant papers the Secretary of State for India minuted: 'The desire to amend the habits of the natives of India, in accordance with the latest results of European civilization, is, in the abstract, highly to be commended; but the object is sometimes pursued with a dangerous zeal. Without in the least depreciating the value of sanitary reforms, there are other considerations which it is even more urgent to remember, both for the welfare of the people themselves, and in the interests of our rule in India.' Minute by the Marquis of Salisbury, 4 May 1877, PP, 1877, vol. 63, paper 265, pp. 777, 824.

²²⁵ The elective principle was introduced to municipal government in NWP with the Municipalities Act of 1868. It was extended in 1873 and again in 1883, by which time there were municipal boards with elected majorities in over one hundred towns in NWP and Oudh. A majority of these was in the Meerut and Rohilkhand Divisions. Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, pp. 50-2.

Kotwal, an autocrat whose word was law.'²²⁶ The suggestion that there were no cow-slaughter disputes in towns managed by *kotwals* is obviously wrong; if that was the case Bareilly, Kasipur and Shamli would never have posed the problems they did for the local authorities. And, as Bayly has shown, the decline of the *kotwal's* authority set in long before the election of Indians to municipal government.²²⁷ From his premise Robinson continues:

So, under the guise of the hygienic management of slaughter houses and kebab shops, Hindus could defend the cow and impose their standards on Muslims, while, for Muslims, the maintenance of their right to slaughter cows and eat them could become a symbol of their ability to protect their religion and culture.

There must have been some instances where the siting of slaughterhouses and meat shops triggered communal rivalry within a municipal committee. However, the only examples that Robinson provides come from local newspaper reports of 1902-04, a period of heightened communal sensitivities because of the overlap of Muharram and Ramnaumi in those years, and the date of at least one of his references - February 1902 - suggests that the cow-killing in question is a Bakr Id sacrifice.²²⁸ In his discussion of cow-protection, he refers only to disputes about cow-sacrifice, as at Bakr Id, rather than cow-slaughter, which was concerned with the regular killing of cattle for their flesh. The two issues are quite different and ought not to be confused. In most municipalities the district magistrate retained the power to permit or prohibit the sacrifice of cows at Bakr Id; rarely was it left to the deliberations of municipal committees.

But the introduction of municipal self-government did herald important changes in urban religious politics. The men who served on the municipal committees, especially in the early years, were meant to be government men. The British expected them to respond to appeals to their 'reason' to implement new and often unpopular measures, and to popularize them amongst their less-enlightened fellows: for example, vaccination against smallpox, the licensing of pilgrim lodging-houses, the extermination of stray dogs, or, for that matter, the placement of slaughterhouses. Many of the responsibilities of municipal government touched upon religious sensibilities, but it was not the competition between communities that was so important, but the fact that a spokesman for a community - a 'native gentleman' or 'natural leader' in the terminology of the administration - was

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²²⁷ See above, p. 102.

²²⁸ Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, pp. 79-83.

expected by the government to adhere publicly to a less than perfect statement of his religion's ideals. In other words, a Hindu on a municipal committee would be part of a process that decided where a slaughterhouse for cows should go; the option of saying that there would be no cow-slaughter at all was not open to him if he valued his reputation with the British. Similarly, a Muslim municipal commissioner would be expected to advise on the new site for a Muslim burial ground, not to oppose outright the shifting of the existing one out of the inhabited area. It is easy to see how men in such a position could be howled down by the more radical sections of their community as yes-men, slaves to the administration, and not accepted as independent politicians by their co-religionists.²²⁹ In this way municipal self-government had more impact on the politics within religious communities rather than between them.²³⁰

In the 1860s, 70s and 80s cow-slaughter became one of many items on the sanitation agenda, along with questions of public latrines, night-soil removal, and the positioning of burial grounds, cremation sites and 'unhealthy' industries, such as tanneries and distilleries.²³¹ It did not lose

²²⁹ An example of the pressure put on municipal commissioners as representatives of their religious community comes from Bareilly in 1893 where the Magistrate, J.P. Hewett, set up a committee of two Hindu and two Muslim municipal commissioners to select suitable sites for Bakr Id sacrifice. The committee, which included the municipality's vice-president, Rai Damodar Das, and Pandit Het Ram, C.I.E., did not have the option of banning cow-sacrifice. Not surprisingly, the Hindu members did not want to be a party to any sort of compromise on this matter, and the Muslim members did not want to be seen to be restricting the Muslims' right of sacrifice in any way. 'In these circumstances', recorded a disgruntled Hewett, 'the members of the Committee were, it seems to me, disinclined to give me all the assistance I might have expected.' Order of the Magistrate of Bareilly, J.P. Hewett, 27 Apr. 1893, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4342, A progs Sept. 1893, no. 2, enclosure.

The cost in community support of being too close to the government is well illustrated by Lala Lachmi Narayan, the former treasurer of Bareilly who was liberally rewarded for loyalty in 1857. In 1870 the Commissioner of Rohilkhand summoned Lachmi Narayan to help work out a compromise between Bareilly's Hindus and Muslims for the Ramnaumi and Muharram festivals. But he did not come. The Commissioner accepted his explanation that he was unpopular with both the Hindus and the Muslims and that he feared for his life if he attempted to take part in the negotiations. R. Drummond, Comr Rohilkhand, to Secy to Govt NWP, no. 79, 25 Apr. 1870, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4551, A progs Nov. 1894, no. 203.

²³⁰ Nevertheless I take Robinson's point that with a municipal commissionership came a chunk of patronage, the power to appoint relatives and favourites to municipal jobs and to lease out government contracts, and that communal rivalry was often a feature of one commissioner's use of his patronage vis-à-vis another's. Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, pp. 52-6.

²³¹ See Veena Talwar Oldenburg's 'The City must be Clean' in her book, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877* (Princeton, 1984), pp. 98-144, for a study of the impact of sanitary theories on the post-rebellion administration's social policy and how they were used to confirm existing British prejudices about domestic Indian life. Needless to say, many widely-held theories of the 1860s and '70s - most notoriously that of the miasmatic spread of disease - were later to be proved wrong. But this in no way lessened their impact at the time, as Oldenburg shows convincingly. On the link between municipal government and sanitation Oldenburg comments: 'The municipal committee's most important responsibility, its *raison d'être*, in fact, was sanitation'. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

See also J.B. Harrison's 'Allahabad: A Sanitary History' in *The City in South Asia: Pre-Modern and Modern*, K. Ballhatchet and J.B. Harrison (eds) (London, 1980), pp. 167-95, for a straightforward history of sanitary developments in Allahabad in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Unlike Oldenburg's work this does not cover the reactions of Allahabad's residents to the fairly drastic changes that were imposed on them in the name of progress, nor does it consider how the native municipal committee members adjusted to the conflicting demands of the British administration on the one hand and their traditional power base on the other.

its potential for rousing religious passions, but it was freed from the crippling inheritance of the policy of established usage and the many conflicting orders that had marked that era. Magistrates no longer had to call upon native informants to establish past practice and they could rescind with relative ease the cow-slaughter bans that dated from the first half of the century. Gradually the NWP Government established self-contained slaughterhouses for most towns in the province beyond the limits of their residential areas. The butchering of all animals, not just cattle, was carried out at these houses and, ideally, they were models of discretion and cleanliness, with high walls to discourage attention from both scavenging hounds and passers-by.²³² Hindus would have had to go out of their way to witness a cow being killed and this would have not been considered a sufficient excuse for them to protest against it. This was the closest that the colonial administration ever came to recreating the pre-British type of compromise between Hindus and Muslims: a form of imposed compromise, locally-implemented, and dependent upon the cooperation of all interested parties for its success.

Unfortunately, few details survive of the shift of butchers' colonies to the urban margins of the NWP's towns and cities. Oldenburg reports that this was completed in Lucknow by the late 1860s, one of the first steps in the campaign of the city's enthusiastic civil surgeon, Dr Bonavia, to relocate all of the 'polluting industries'. The butchers and slaughterhouse were moved out to Moti Jhil, a lake on Lucknow's outskirts, followed shortly thereafter by the *chamars* and the distillers. Oldenburg does not mention that the move of the butchers was accompanied by any disturbances or expression of discontent.²³³

From the sanitary and municipal reports for the NWP we can trace the dates of slaughterhouse construction in some other towns, although the references are brief and include no notices of any social upheavals that may have accompanied the changes. In 1868, for example, the Sanitary Commissioner of the NWP, Charles Planck, noted that Meerut had a new slaughterhouse, 'well-situated, just outside the city'.²³⁴ In 1869 he described with horror the state of the butchers' quarter in Moradabad, bloodied

²³² Often there were at least two abattoirs to a town, at only one of which cows would be killed. This was to enable meat-eating Hindus to buy their mutton - goat or sheep's flesh - without fear of it having been polluted by the crime of cow-slaughter. Even before municipal slaughter houses became commonplace the trade of mutton and beef butchers tended to be kept separate. See replies to a query from the Government of India by: Comr Benares, 17 Dec. 1869; Chief Comr Oudh, 22 Jan. 1870; and Comr Allahabad, 13 May 1870, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs 19 Feb. 1870, nos. 36-9 and A progs 11 June 1870, no. 166.

²³³ Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877*, p. 116.

²³⁴ C. Planck, Sany Comr NWP, to Secy to Govt NWP, no. 171, 10 Oct. 1868, 'Sanitary Condition of the Town of Meerut', p. 3.

and soiled with decaying animal matter and open to dogs.²³⁵ But in 1884 the municipal committee of Moradabad was reported to have spent money on putting stone flooring in the slaughterhouse, presumably a reference to a place constructed by the municipality since Planck's earlier visit.²³⁶ Of Cawnpore, the 1881 municipal report observed:

The conservancy cattle lines have been rebuilt at a place distant about one mile from the inhabited site. The new slaughter-place of sheep and goats has been built, and the slaughter of these animals on private premises forbidden, to the general sanitary improvement of the city.²³⁷

A new slaughterhouse was built at Bareilly in 1876, presumably on its outskirts, for in 1894 when Hindu residents were protesting at the sacrifice of cattle at Bakr Id some observed that the slaughter of cattle for flesh was not so obnoxious because they were less likely to hear and see what went on 'outside the town'.²³⁸

Bakr Id Sacrifices

There was however one form of cow-killing that retained its potential to provoke Hindu-Muslim antagonism and which proved impossible to dislodge from the rhetoric of established usage. *Gau kurbani*, as opposed to *gau kushi*, was the ritual sacrifice of cows by Muslims at Bakr Id. Primarily it was a religious act and only secondly a source of food for the sacrificer's family and friends. It could not be banished to the abattoirs; it was a matter of great prestige to the families that had a tradition of Bakr Id sacrifice that it took place within their own compounds. All that district officers could do under these circumstances was to attempt to establish which houses customarily

²³⁵ *First Annual Report of the Sanitary Commissioner of the North-Western Provinces, 1868* (Allahabad, 1869), p. 39.

²³⁶ *Report on municipal taxation and expenditure in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, during the year ending 31st March, 1884* (Allahabad, 1885), p. 7.

²³⁷ *Report on the working of municipalities in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh during the year ending 31st March, 1881* (Allahabad, 1882), p. 19.

²³⁸ H.D. Moule, Comr Rohilkhand, to Chief Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 1629/XIII-534, 4 Aug. 1894, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4551, A progs Nov. 1894, no. 201. Also the *Ninth Annual Report of the Sanitary Commissioner of the North-Western Provinces, 1876* (Allahabad, 1877), p. 32. A considerable amount of municipal income was raised at Bareilly from the fees paid at the slaughterhouses and the rents of a large municipal meat market, built in 1904 with a loan of Rs.40,000 raised for the purpose. Small municipal markets for the sale of beef were dotted about the suburbs. Nevill, *Bareilly: A Gazetteer*, p. 138.

One more interesting reference comes from Jeitpur, in Hamirpur district, a town of some 5,000 inhabitants, with only twenty Muslim households. In 1873 Planck wrote: 'there is some difficulty about the slaughtering of cattle, which never was permitted until after the mutiny, and is very repugnant to the feelings of the people now. However there is a slaughter place established at a place far outside the town, where an average of four head of cattle are slaughtered daily. The meat principally goes away to Koolpahar, where Mahomedans are more numerous. This business, being done as it were by stealth, is well done, the slaughter place properly hidden away'. *Sixth annual report of the Sanitary Commissioner of the North-Western Provinces, 1873* (Allahabad, 1874), p. 55.

sacrificed cows and to ensure that it was carried out as discreetly as possible. Of course all of the problems that we have seen in tracing tradition applied here, perhaps even more so,²³⁹ so that it is not surprising that resolution of disputes was as far beyond the local officers as before. It is to be expected that in the later nineteenth century most of the disputes about cow-killing start with particularistic complaints about Bakr Id sacrifice. The Hindus were no longer in a position to demand that cow-slaughter *per se* be banned, but they were still able to challenge the right to sacrifice within private compounds. Likewise the British had ruled out the possibility of slaughtering for food within towns, so that Muslims were left defending with only the right to private sacrifice. This had the unforeseen consequence of making cow-killing a more obviously 'religious' issue, and focussed Hindus' anti-cow-killing agitation on Muslims alone, rather than on Muslims and Christians together as beef-eaters.

Bakr Id - Delhi, 1883

At the festival of Bakr Id in Delhi in October 1883 a minor disturbance erupted between Hindus and Muslims when Maulvi Yakub Ali, an outspoken defendant of Muslim religious privileges, attempted to sacrifice several cows at his mosque within the city, at least one of which had originally been a gift to a Brahman. Yakub Ali had been offered a large price for the cow by a Hindu prominent in the city's cow-protection agitation, but he refused either to sell it or to substitute another in its place. According to the Deputy Commissioner, Hindu-Muslim relations prior to this had been relatively amicable and it was essentially the intended fate of the one doubly-sacred cow that had sparked off the trouble.²⁴⁰ From the subsequent agitation this would appear to have been an overly simplistic rationale; clearly there were men in the city who had already established themselves as antagonists in the cow-slaughter debate and the grievances on either side proved to be more durable than one thwarted act of cow-sacrifice would suggest.

In Delhi the slow leakage of Muslim power and status in the first half of the nineteenth century attained torrential proportions after the Rebellion. After the recapture of the city multitudes

²³⁹ The purchase of a cow for a sacrifice was an expensive undertaking, and only the wealthiest of families could have sacrificed cows annually. Other families substituted goats in the years between sacrificing cows, and this often enabled Hindus to claim that cow sacrifice was not customary, especially if the gap between the years of cow-sacrifice was a long one. Investigating officers often found it very difficult to establish the difference between an occasional sacrifice and a customary one.

²⁴⁰ Memo. by G. Smyth, Depy Comr Delhi, 4 Sept. 1884, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs Nov. 1884, no. 45, enclosure.

fled, fearful for their lives in the indiscriminate and terrible revenge exacted by the Company's troops. The Muslims were the last to be allowed to return - in January 1859 - only to find their property plundered, their houses attached and many fine architectural relics of Mughal rule destroyed. The army occupied the Jama Masjid and the Fatehpuri Masjid had been sold to Lala Chunna Mal, a banker.²⁴¹ Of the Hindus and Jains who had been allowed to return to the city earlier a small knot of financiers had grown enormously wealthy speculating in confiscated property: houses, land and the crown jewels. Only a couple of Muslims, amongst them the Mughal Mirza Ilahi Baksh, were to join this elite - the 'Lalacracy' as it is called by Narayani Gupta - which went on to dominate municipal politics and to answer to that familiar label of 'respectable native gentlemen'.²⁴²

On the two matters of religious privilege that have concerned us here - cow-slaughter and festival precedence - the position of Muslims in post-rebellion Delhi was greatly reduced. By the late 1870s Jain festivals as well as Hindu ones had been accorded the same rights of celebration, where once they had depended upon the pleasure of the Emperor, inevitably bowing to Muharram at times of overlap. In the 1885-86 Ramlila and Muharram coincidence Ramlila would be celebrated with the grandest pomp: ten days of processions through Chandni Chauk, the commercial heart of the city, with as much illumination, decoration and music as the Hindu traders and landlords of the area could muster, all culminating in a splendid *tamasha* at Tis Hazari, the polo ground outside of Lahore Gate.²⁴³ Every year, wailed a Muslim petition, the Hindus come closer with their *tamasha*, 'their ultimate goal being perhaps the inside of the city itself.'²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Narayani Gupta, *Delhi between two empires, 1803-1931* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 21-31.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30. Gupta stresses that the rebellion in Delhi 'cannot be simplistically stated as being between a declining Muslim aristocracy and a nascent Hindu bourgeoisie, but between those who sided with the Emperor and those who were far-sighted enough to back the British and thus set up a store of security and rewards for the future.' She names several prominent Hindus who sided with the rebels and several Muslims who were loyal to the British to illustrate her point. *Ibid.*, p. 20. Nevertheless, once the rebellion was crushed, there is no doubt that British perceptions of a communal divide encouraged them to reward and punish along communal lines with relatively few exceptions, so that the post-rebellion picture did become one of a declining Muslim aristocracy and a nascent Hindu bourgeoisie. As many of the rewards took the form of titles and land grants, whether revenue-free or otherwise, the foundations were in fact laid, anachronistically, for a nascent Hindu aristocracy.

²⁴³ Memo. on the Muharram and Ramlila festivals at Delhi by R. Clarke, Offg Comr Delhi, 22 Oct. 1885; H.W. Jackson, Supt Police Delhi, to Depy Comr Delhi, 22 Oct. 1885, NAI, India Home (Public), B progs Apr. 1886, no. 114.

²⁴⁴ Petition to the Viceroy, sd. Muhammad Abdul Haq, Kucha Raiman, Hajee Ala Baksh, Muhammad Diu and nearly 7000 others, n.d., *ibid.*, no. 113. In 1886 one of the Ramlila processions was attacked by Muslims participating in a *taziya* procession. Gupta notes that this clash over the use of the city centre would have been out of the question in pre-1857 years because then 'the Ram Lila route had been along the northern wall, well away from the Jama Masjid area'. Initially Muslims tried to keep the Hindu processions out of their areas: 'Many *mohullas* in the area between Chandni Chowk and Jama Masjid improvised *kucha* gates during the early days of the Ram Lila procession, though this practice was prohibited by the government.' Gupta, *Delhi between two empires*, p. 131. But Gupta must be mistaken in blaming the later problems of the mid-1880s on the "impartial" officialdom that allowed the Hindus into hitherto forbidden areas after the

As for cow-slaughter the Muslims of Delhi were uniquely repressed for a community once ascendant. The slaughter of cattle for flesh had long been banned within the city walls, a prohibition dating from the days of Mughal rule.²⁴⁵ Meat shops were also restricted in their number and placement, although these restrictions derived at least in part from after the Rebellion.²⁴⁶ But the sacrifice of cows at Bakr Id had not been prohibited before the Rebellion; afterwards this too was banished to the slaughterhouses outside of the city, a ruling without parallel anywhere in the neighbouring NWP and one which impressed upon the Muslims of Delhi the extreme disadvantage of their position.

Ironically the ban had been all the more easy to implement because of the decrees against cow-slaughter made by Bahadur Shah during his brief reign in 1857. Desperate to focus the anger of the rebel troops on the British and to prevent it from turning inwards in communal hostility, Bahadur Shah repeatedly warned against characterizing the Rebellion as *jihad*, or Islamic holy war. His boldest stroke to preserve communal harmony was a ban on cow-sacrifice at the Bakr Id of August 1857, an attempt to avoid alienating Delhi's already jittery Hindu population.²⁴⁷ Nor were the butchers of Delhi very popular with either community. In July 1857 five of their number were murdered and their shops were shut when they were caught taking meat to the English camp on the ridge outside of Delhi.²⁴⁸ After

rebellion. There must have been some restraint on the part of the Hindus as well, for had they wished to enter certain *muhallas*, *kachcha* gates alone were unlikely to keep them out.

²⁴⁵ See the collection of papers 'Commotion at Delhi', IOR, F/4/827 (21946), for Thomas Metcalfe's 1822 attempt to ban Bakr Id sacrifices within the city walls. From this episode it transpired that the butchers had long practised their trade beyond the city boundaries.

²⁴⁶ In 1882 the Punjab Government replied to a query from the Government of India with the information that: 'The slaughter of cattle within the City of Delhi has been prohibited for a long time, and about 1870 the shops selling meat at Kashmeri and Mori Gates and at Phatak Habash Khan were closed and transferred to the meat market near Mor Serai. Besides this, there are beef shops in Muslim quarters, though none in Hindu quarters. So far their existence has created no bad feeling.' Quoted in Gupta, *Delhi between two empires*, p. 129.

²⁴⁷ *Mutiny records: correspondence*, Punjab Government Records, vol. VII (Lahore, 1911), pp. 280-1. Gupta cites evidence that shows that this sort of conciliatory behaviour was entirely to be expected from Bahadur Shah, that on previous Bakr Id celebrations he had refrained from sacrificing cows and had urged others to do the same. But I cannot accept her claim that the British introduced the practice of cow-slaughter to Delhi and that without their interference before the Rebellion there would never have been any cow sacrifice in the city at Bakr Id. Gupta, *Delhi between two empires*, p. 10. If there was a pre-Rebellion ban on cow sacrifice within the city - and it seems unlikely given the resistance from Muslim religious men that Bahadur Shah encountered with his 1857 proclamation - it can only have dated from the reign of Bahadur Shah himself, and not 'the Mughal rulers' in general as Gupta states. From Thomas Metcalfe's attempt to ban Bakr Id sacrifice within the city in 1822 it seems almost certain that there was some tradition of the practice within private compounds, although Hindus vociferously contested it. See above fn. 245.

²⁴⁸ 'Narrative of Mainodin' in C.T. Metcalfe, *Two native narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi* (London, 1898), p. 68. Intelligence received by the British said that the butchers had been murdered by Hindus because they had killed cows, but this is not borne out by the other evidence and it seems to have been wishful thinking on the part of the British who prayed daily for a communal cleavage between the rebels. Muir, *Records of the Intelligence Department*, I, p. 450.

the Rebellion, the British merely had to preserve the existing situation to publicize the degraded state of the Muslims as a religious community.

To many of the British officers serving in Delhi this reduced status was no more than what the community deserved for its treachery. After the 1857 disturbance the Commissioner, Major Nisbet, marvelled that the Muslims should even dare to ask for the return of former privileges. In his opinion the aggression of the Hindus was strongly mitigated by 'the original cause' of the excitement: Yakub Ali's determination to sacrifice his life within the city walls.²⁴⁹ When some Muslims petitioned the government to have Bakr Id sacrifices restored Nisbet tried to remind them of their proper place:

Although the English Government have consented to bury the memories of 1857, and the murder, bloodshed, and cruelty that was perpetrated by Muhammadans in the City of Delhi, and which led, on the retaking of the city after prolonged siege, to their expulsion from it, the memorialists might, if necessary, be reminded that their return to Delhi at all, after such events, was an act of unparalleled generosity that they should never forget.²⁵⁰

Clearly the resentment of the British worked to the advantage of the Hindus in the matter of religious display.²⁵¹

In the agitation after the 1857 disturbance divisions within each community were noticeable, much as we have seen in the agitation over festivals in Bareilly in the 1870s. Narayani Gupta has identified amongst the Muslims of the 1880s a renewed interest in things 'temporarily forgotten' in the calamitous years after the Rebellion. A new generation was prepared to discuss social issues of the day: the Hindi-Urdu controversy, the menace of Christianity, the control of the major mosques in the

²⁴⁹ Major R.P. Nisbet, Offg Comr and Supt Delhi, to Offg Secy to Govt Punjab, no. 2188, 11 Oct. 1884, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs Nov. 1884, no. 45.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.* The Punjab Government forbade Nisbet from mentioning the Rebellion in his reply to the memorialists. C.L. Tupper, Offg Secy to Govt Punjab, to Comr & Supt Delhi, no. 768S, 21 Oct. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 45 1/2.

²⁵¹ There is a parallel in Koil, in Aligarh district, where it is clear that the Magistrate saw the removal of the slaughterhouse to the outskirts of the town as fitting punishment for Muslim disloyalty in the Rebellion. In 1859 the butchers of Koil repeatedly petitioned the government in protest at their victimization at the hands of the Hindu subordinate officers. They were unhappy that cow-slaughter had been stopped in the town and the butchers' shops closed. Officiating Magistrate Prinsep denied that the butchers had been maltreated. Upon his arrival in the district he had found that the butchers were slaughtering and selling beef outside of Koil, their colony having been burned on the recapture of Aligarh by the British. Prinsep decided that it was best to preserve this arrangement and he blocked the butchers' expected return to the city by ordering that they must never again slaughter animals within two hundred yards of a habitation, an order designed 'to protect Hindoos from insult'. When the petitions to the government did not stop Prinsep reminded his superiors that these were the sort of complaints that one could expect from people 'whose atrocities during the rebellion and hatred towards the Hindu Community are already too well known'. But in case it should prove necessary to downplay the political motives behind his exile of the butchers to the town's periphery, Prinsep was happy to provide another, apparently more objective, assessment of his actions. The butchers were dissatisfied, he reported, because of 'the sanitary measures taken by me'. The government approved Prinsep's actions and henceforth the petitions were ignored. W.H.J. Lees, Secy to Bd of Examiners, to Offg Under Secy to Govt India, Home, no. 30, 12 Sept. 1859, forwarding translation of a petition, 6 Aug. 1859, from 'the respectable inhabitants of Coel in Ally Ghur', IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/235/7, 7 Oct. 1859, no. 181; J. Prinsep, Offg Magt Aligarh, to F. Williams, Comr Meerut, no. 216, 13 Oct. 1859, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/235/9, 15 Nov. 1859, no. 112; Same to same, no. 236, 3 Nov. 1859, *ibid.*, no. 307.

city, government employment opportunities, and, occasionally, cow-slaughter and beef sales.²⁵² This last was still not an issue that the 'loyalist Muslims' could take up whilst hoping to preserve their reputation with the administration, a fact reflected in the composition of the 1884 petition. The men named as responsible for the petition were *maulvis*, pleaders, a druggist and Sayyid Ahmad, the petition's author and a school master in the Delhi Government School.²⁵³ Nisbet reported with satisfaction that these 'fanatical Maulvis' had not been able to inspire the Muslim *raises* of the city to join their protest to have cow-sacrifice returned to the city:

the leading Muhammadan gentlemen of the place, to whom Government looks for information and advice in all matters affecting the Muhammadan community, have not joined it.²⁵⁴

Far from being a matter for congratulation, this evidence of a split in the Muslim community should have caused the government some concern. Nisbet had baldly stated that the administration's Muslim allies were completely out of touch with the people mounting the current agitation. These 'Muhammadan gentlemen', the principal of whom were Mirza Suleiman Shah and the Nawab of Loharu, were frequently abused and insulted by the protesters for refusing to side with them in their protests against the Hindus and the administration. Their conspicuous loyalty to the government cost them their reputation as good Muslims with many of their co-religionists.²⁵⁵

The Hindus vociferous in their defence of the cow were similarly divorced from those of their co-religionists who were identified by the government as loyal and responsible gentlemen, although not to quite the same extent. Among the pleaders, jewellers, cloth dealers and agents of merchants that the Deputy Commissioner named as being responsible for the near constant petitions, meetings and fund-raising drives of 1884 was Lala Hardhian Singh, a banker and member of the municipal committee since 1880. In 1908 he would be one of the Delhi hosts of the Bharat Dharm Mahamandal.²⁵⁶ We do not know how prominent Hardhian Singh was in the cow-protection movement; he was not listed as one of the men who housed the meetings. But his mere inclusion in a list of 'instigators' of classic

²⁵² Gupta, *Delhi between two empires*, pp. 125-31.

²⁵³ Memo. by G. Smyth, Depy Comr Delhi, 4 Sept. 1884, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs Nov. 1884, no. 45, enclosure.

²⁵⁴ Major R.P. Nisbet, Offg Comr & Supt Delhi, to Offg Secy to Govt Punjab, no. 2188, 11 Oct. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 45.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* In a move that was likely to compound their difficulties within the Muslim community as a whole, several Muhammadan gentlemen were singled out by Nisbet to receive rewards as a sign of the government's appreciation of their loyalty in the face of overwhelming pressure from their co-religionists.

²⁵⁶ Gupta, *Delhi Between Two Empires*, p. 130.

colonial definition suggests that the Hindus in Delhi, even in the 1880s, were less haunted than the Muslims by the shadow of government mistrust and that consequently they felt freer to organize as a community without forfeiting government approval.²⁵⁷ This is also suggested by Nisbet's observation that in the run up to the 1884 Bakr Id 'the aggressive humour was certainly more marked on the side of the Hindus.'²⁵⁸ In general, however, Hindus who sought the government's favour, like the Muslims, abstained from overt religious agitation.

It is not surprising therefore that in the Ramlila-Muharram riots of 1886 the administration failed utterly to communicate with the people in the streets: all the municipal commissioners went underground, and 'community leaders' such as the banker, Lala Ram Kishan Das, and Mirza Suleiman Shah had too little direct influence with the rioters to be of much use. They served as symbols of their respective communities and as such often attracted the hostility of the opposite community but they were unable to control members of their own communities at this level of agitation.²⁵⁹

Bakr Id - Bareilly, 1893-94.

At the 1893 festival of Bakr Id in Bareilly twenty Muslims sacrificed cows in their private compounds having first obtained sanction in writing from the Magistrate. Never before had officers of the government in Bareilly authorized so many particular acts of cow-killing. In its own way it was as

²⁵⁷ Lala Hardhian Singh must have been a man of some political ability for, following the 1884 Bakr Id and Ramlila celebrations, he was named by Smyth as one of the 'native gentlemen who rendered willing and useful assistance' in preventing open Hindu-Muslim hostility, a rare example of a British officer accepting that a man given to religious protest could also be socially responsible. G. Smyth, Depy Comr Delhi, to Comr & Supt Delhi, no. 356, 4 Oct. 1884, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs Nov. 1884, no. 45 1/2.

²⁵⁸ Major R.P. Nisbet, Offg Comr & Supt Delhi, to Offg Secy to Govt Punjab, no. 2155, 7 Oct. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 45 1/2.

²⁵⁹ Gupta, *Delhi between two empires*, pp. 132-3. In the numerously-signed petition submitted by the Muslims after the Ramlila of 1885 it was argued that no Muslim had been happy with the procession routes drawn up by a committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner. Of the committee members - Mirza Suleiman Shah, honorary magistrate; Azizuddin, pleader; Lala Ram Kishan Das, honorary magistrate; and Lala Hardhian Singh, municipal commissioner - the petitioners could only explain their acceptance of the Deputy Commissioner's suggestions by branding them as 'Municipal Commissioners, his personal friends or his official subordinates.' Petition to the Viceroy, sd., Muhammad Abdul Haq, Kucha Raiman, Hajee Ala Baksh, Muhammad Diu and nearly 7000 others, n.d., NAI, India Home (Public), B progs Apr. 1886, no. 113. See also: Memo. on the Muharram and Ramlila festivals at Delhi by R. Clarke, Offg Comr Delhi, 22 Oct. 1885, *ibid.*, no. 114.

In 1885 the route of the Ramlila processions went up Chandni Chauk to the Fatehpuri Masjid, straight through to Lahore Gate and thence to the *maidan* at Tis Hazari. It was the proximity of the route to the *masjid* that was most frequently cited by the Muslims as the cause of distress, a doubly important factor when we see from Gupta's work that it was always the custodians of this mosque who took a more belligerent line towards the administration. Gupta comments: 'The Jama Masjid appears to have been more "loyalist" than the Fatehpuri, which was the venue of unorthodox religious sermons and animated politics, and was patronized generously by the prosperous Punjabi merchants of Sadar Bazaar.' Gupta, *Delhi between two empires*, p. 128. In 1885 it was the same Punjabi merchants who closed their shops in disgust at the liberties accorded to the Ramlila celebrations. Nor are we surprised to learn that Mirza Suleiman Shah, the Muslim most favoured by the government as the representative of his community, was a member of the Jama Masjid Committee, not the Fatehpuri Masjid. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-7.

significant as the decision in 1837 to protect the Ramnaumi procession of the Hindus. Increasingly after the Rebellion the Hindus had opposed the practice, insisting that there never had been a tradition of Bakr Id sacrifice in Bareilly and that the Muslims had only introduced it in the post-1857 era of administrative religious impartiality.²⁶⁰ Many Muslims were outraged that they had to prove to government officers that they had a history of private Bakr Id sacrifice in order to obtain the necessary certificate of approval.

There is no doubt that there had been a long history of private cow-sacrifice in Bareilly. Even if the local officers' interpretation of old, tangentially related orders had not convinced them of this, it would have been inconceivable that a city once home to Hafiz Rahmat Khan should not have had cow-sacrifice in its Muslim calendar.²⁶¹ Predictably, however, there was no indigenous documentation of rights of sacrifice; the Muslims and the Hindus had observed some tacit compromise whereby undue offence was neither given nor taken frequently. In 1893 the Commissioner of Rohilkhand complained that a former Magistrate, Mr Campbell, had, in 1892, destroyed this local tradition of compromise by refusing to 'wink at' surreptitious sacrifice at Bakr Id as everyone else had before him. Persuaded by the Hindu *kotwal's* representations and the failure of the Muslims to produce any written proof of their right to private sacrifice, Campbell had declared the practice unknown in Bareilly and had ordered all sacrifices to be carried out at the slaughterhouses.²⁶² After this extraordinary blunder Campbell's successors were forced to resurrect the policy of established usage, seeking out evidence at the level of individual householders to try to distinguish between valid and fraudulent claims of long-standing practice. Every step of this process hardened previously flexible behaviour without any corresponding gains in Hindu resignation to the practice. It was of crucial importance to the life of these sorts of disputes that they were beyond explicit solution. If the Hindus did not want to be convinced of the long-standing nature of Bakr Id sacrifice at Bareilly, then the type of evidence that the government or the Muslims could produce would not be sufficient to change their minds.

²⁶⁰ 'The humble petition of the Hindu community of Bareilly, a town in the North-Western Provinces, to His Exy. the Viceroy and Governor General in Council', sd. Suraj Mal Khattri, son of Tanu Mall Khattri, and two others, 18 May 1894, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4550, A progs June 1894, no. 135.

²⁶¹ H. D. Moule, Comr Rohilkhand, to Chief Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 1629/XIII-534, 4 Aug. 1894, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4551, A progs Nov. 1894, no. 201.

²⁶² H.D. Moule, Comr Rohilkhand, to Chief Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 1830, 26 July 1893, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4342, A progs Sept. 1893, no. 2.

But if Bakr Id sacrifice was not new in Bareilly and if the Hindus had already corrected the previous imbalance in the rights of public religious celebration, why was there this prolonged assault on the sacrifices and which of Bareilly's Hindus sustained it in the face of strong government disapproval? Since the mid-1880s cow-protection had demanded the attention of many Hindus right across north India with highly organized *gaurakshini sabhas* in many districts, raising funds, distributing pamphlets and posters, sponsoring travelling preachers, and instructing Hindus in their duties to *gau mata*. As Freitag has shown, cow-protection was the main article of faith commonly held by conservative and radical Hindu activists, best exemplified by the Sanatan Dharmis and the Aryas respectively.²⁶³ Bareilly, not least of the major towns of the NWP, had long played host to all manner of defenders and reformers of Hinduism, locally-based organizations as well as itinerant preachers.²⁶⁴ But in 1894 when the Bareilly cow-protection agitation was at its height, the movement in other parts of the NWP was already in tatters, many of its supporters frightened away and its organizers driven underground by the government's fearsome reaction to the Bakr Id riots in 1893.²⁶⁵ Whilst Bareilly's Hindus might have drawn some encouragement from the provincial network of protest, they clearly possessed an independent source of inspiration and organization, otherwise we could have expected them to be cowed in 1894 along with everybody else.

Initially the government had hoped to pass off the Hindu's protest as a product of external agitators. The first petition had arrived at the Lieutenant Governor's office from Calcutta signed only by a Bengali, Hirendra Nath Datta, and apparently lacked genuine links with the Hindus of Bareilly whose grievances it claimed to voice. Subsequently it was resubmitted in May 1894, this time with the signatures of Lala Suraj Mal, and Pandits Jagannath Pershad and Chidamni Lal, all said to be Bareilly residents. The provincial government denied that they were 'men of any note or position', but

²⁶³ Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*, pp. 149-56.

²⁶⁴ From a debate over a book published at Bareilly in 1862, *Asul-i-din-Hindu*, said by M. Kempson, the Director of Public Instruction, to be a 'scurrilous lampoon' of Hinduism, it transpired that a Dharm Samaj, known locally as the Tuthu Bodni, had been convened at Bareilly some time in 1862 or 1863. According to Kempson, the members were all 'men of education and respectability', who denied publishing an earlier critique of Islam, *Tohfatul Islam*. M. Kempson, Director of Public Instruction NWP, to Secy to Govt NWP, no. 276, 23 June 1863; same to same, no. 690, 16 Sept. 1863, IOR, NWP Genl P/216/14, A progs 24 Oct. 1863, nos. 75 (12 Sept. 1863) & 38 (24 Oct. 1863). It is not known how long this Dharm Samaj remained active. The earliest reference to the existence of a branch of the Arya Samaj in Bareilly comes from 1882. Nevill, *Bareilly: A Gazetteer*, p. 95. According to the Gazetteer, Bareilly was strong in Arya activities, and the Samaj counted many 'leading resident' amongst its members.

²⁶⁵ See Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*, pp. 66-70, for a description and analysis of the government's almost immediate success in crushing the *gaurakshini sabhas* which had offered many Hindus, especially those in rural areas, an alternative authority to that of the state.

nevertheless was forced to investigate their complaints.²⁶⁶ In June Babu Hirendra Nath Datta, the Honorary Secretary of the Indian Relief Society, sent the NWP Government a declaration by another two thousand Bareilly Hindus claiming to support the petition.²⁶⁷ Still more backing for the petition was to be revealed at the public hearing in the Commissioner's court in July. The Hindus in attendance filled the court and the enclosure: five thousand by their own count.²⁶⁸ After briefly questioning representatives from about fifty different *muhallas*, the Commissioner, H.D. Moule, was forced to concede that 'numerically the section supporting [the memorial] probably consists of the majority of the Hindu residents.' He used the word 'section' deliberately, as he drew some consolation from the observation that 'no Rais or Darbari has openly supported the memorial'.²⁶⁹ Towards the end of October another petition was sent to the government, this time with the signatures of ten thousand Hindus.²⁷⁰ Even if the agitation against Bakr Id sacrifices had initially been of limited extent, by the end of the year it was impossible to deny its appeal to Bareilly's Hindus; each step of the petitioning process had galvanized more Hindus into active support.

The government was faced with what should have been by now a familiar problem: a near perfect expression of community solidarity, with the exception of the *raises* and the *darbaris*, the very men to whom it looked to exercise community leadership. The government's 'native gentlemen' were, as per usual, torn between allegiance to the authorities and their co-religionists. That the best that Moule could say of them was that none 'openly supported' the cow-protection agitation suggests they had remained silent to avoid compromising their position with either the petitioners or the state. Moule's investigation revealed considerable hostility against the government's definition of men of respectability. We have already seen how the government dismissed Suraj Mal and his companions as men of no importance. Babu Hirendra Nath Datta on the other hand defended them as 'men of high

²⁶⁶ J.D. LaTouche, Chief Secy to Govt NWP&O, to Secy to Govt India, no. 666, 2 June 1894, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4550, A progs June 1894, no. 134. The Lieutenant Governor was reported to think that the memorial had been 'got up in Calcutta by professional agitators, aided, no doubt, by some of the Bareilly malcontents.'

²⁶⁷ Babu Hirendra Nath Datta, M.A., B.L., Hony Secy to the Indian Relief Society, to Chief Secy to Govt NWP&O, 18 June 1894, IOR, India Home (Public) P/4551, A progs Nov. 1894, no. 197. In this letter the Babu explained that he had initially signed the memorial himself as he had been authorized, as a member of the Indian Relief Society, to act as attorney for 150 Bareilly inhabitants. He added that the locals feared the 'highhandedness' of the local officers, hence their initial reluctance to put their names to the memorial.

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²⁶⁹ H.D. Moule, Comr Rohilkhand, to Chief Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 1629/XIII-534, 4 Aug. 1894, *ibid.*, no. 201.

²⁷⁰ Memorial from Suraj Mal, Shatri, son of Lala Tanu Mal, and ten thousand others, to Secy to Govt India, n.d., *ibid.*, no. 220.

caste and education'²⁷¹ and Suraj Mal at least could read English. Moule was none too gentle in his inquiry, accusing the Hindu delegates of lying, fabricating evidence and attempting to mislead a government officer. His language with Lala Suraj Mal who received the full force of his irritation may have been abrasive to the point of rudeness, for the October petition complained bitterly about the insults offered to the Lala. The petitioners also took issue with Moule's dismissal of them as unimportant members of the Hindu community:

Among the limited number of persons...examined, there were about 10 who were among the richest men in the city; but Mr. Moule remarked that the memorial was not supported by the Rais or Darbari (leading members) of the Hindu community. The undersigned, however, do not think it necessary to say anything more on this question.²⁷²

There is no reason to doubt the petitioners' claim that they counted wealthy men amongst their number. The petitions and the overall campaign were organized professionally. Far from the Bareilly Hindus being at the beck and call of Calcutta agitators, it was Bareilly money and influence that were securing the services of these professionals, such as Babu Hirendra Nath Datta and the barrister from Lucknow, Pandit Bishan Narain Dar, said by Moule to be 'one of the leading agitators on this question'.²⁷³ But the money and influence were not aristocratic, provenly loyal, or tied down within the government's extensive network of rewards and honours. Of the ten delegates who gave lengthy evidence before Moule in July, six were identified as *baniyas*.²⁷⁴ Herein perhaps lies the point of the agitation. It is impossible to argue that all ten thousand signatories to the October memorial understood the complaints in all their complexity. This petition and that proceeding it were in English, each several pages long and with numerous annexures detailing different interpretations of all the relevant government orders promulgated since 1837. At best we can say that the signatories were opposed to the sacrifice of cows in Bareilly: not an extraordinary stance for Hindus to adopt. The more important conclusion to be drawn from the agitation is that there was a group of Hindus, influential enough as men of their community to rally an enormous number of their co-religionists on

²⁷¹ Babu Hirendra Nath Datta, M.A., B.L., Hony Secy to Indian Relief Society, to Chief Secy to Govt NWP&O, 18 June 1894, *ibid.*, no. 197.

²⁷² Memorial from Suraj Mal, Khattri, son of Lala Tanu Mal, and ten thousand others, to Secy to Govt India, n.d., *ibid.*, no. 220.

²⁷³ Proceedings in the Court of the Commissioner of Rohilkhand, Bareilly, 16 July 1894, *ibid.*, no. 202.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* The men were: Suraj Mal, Khattri; Janki Parshad, Baniya; Puran Parshad, Baniya; Tulla Ram, Brahman; Sham Behari Lal, Brahman; Sundar Lal, Baniya; Lalji Mal, Khattri; Lalta Parshad, Baniya; Ramcharan Das, Baniya; and Kanhaiya Lal, Baniya.

a religious matter.²⁷⁵ Furthermore these Hindus resented the government's spurning of them as leaders of their community. With each rebuff from Moule the petitioners went out and gathered more people to their cause. It was the government's folly if it believed that such displays of group solidarity were unrepresentative of the population's sentiments if they lacked the support of the leaders that it had selected for them.



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²⁷⁵ The 1901 census enumerated approximately 60,000 Hindus in Bareilly. 10,000 signatures would suggest therefore that the petition organizers had been in direct contact with at least one third of the Hindu adult male population. Nevill, *Bareilly: A Gazetteer*, p. 206.

CONCLUSION

Before the imposition of British rule urban Hindus and Muslims appear to have coped with the problems generated by overlapping festivals and differing sentiments on cow-slaughter with a fluctuating tradition of implicit compromise, tailored, of necessity, to each locality's conditions. Rights of precedence in processions - a symbol of a particular religious community's status in the larger setting of the town - were not codified, either in terms of written agreements between the parties or in rulings imposed by the local authorities. This seems also to have been the case with cow-slaughter. Not only would codification have presupposed an unchanging relationship between the communities involved; it would have alienated one section of the population from the local ruler. In towns where the power imbalance between two religious communities was very great the implicit compromise was likely to involve the suppression of one community's public religious expression by the other. This was the case in Bareilly, where for generations the Hindus accepted that they were not to exhibit any signs of merriment during Muharram. Insofar as they tolerated this state of affairs and did not foment disturbances or shut their shops at every Muharram they were acting in a spirit of compromise and not conflict.

Of course there were outbursts of hostility and violence between different religious groups in pre-British India; such ill-will was not a product of British rule. These occurred most frequently when the existing compromise no longer suited the relative circumstances of the communities; when, in effect, new terms of compromise needed to be thrashed out to reflect a shift in the relationship, perhaps in the balance of population, wealth or political ambitions. The riots at Mubarakhpur in Azamgarh in 1813 provide the clearest example of this process at work. Essentially it was a pragmatic method that weeded out 'irrelevant' historical knowledge and concentrated on the contemporary problems of people of incompatible religious beliefs having to share the same setting. This does not mean that the protagonists did not have an appreciation of the past, but rather that their past was not independent of the present and that it too was capable of reflecting changes in contemporary statuses.

The introduction of a new, alien authority to India, one which was powerful but naive, irrevocably changed the practice of implicit compromise. Part of this was a simple function of the British presence as the new rulers; not personally involved in this sort of dispute they introduced excellent opportunities for particular religious communities to attempt to rework the balance of status in their favour. But the British also took an active role in the relations between religious

communities. They stimulated change with their insistence on codifying the rights of festival precedence and cow-slaughter according to a locality's history as their officers could best reconstruct it. The threat of freezing what had been a fluid practice - one which ebbed and flowed according to a community's fortunes - naturally encouraged people to present the past in the light most favourable to their contemporary religious objectives, a process of recurring irony whereby the new rulers' determination to prevent innovation in religious practice actually nurtured it.

Just as important as the documentation of compromise was the publicity which accompanied it. Compromise was acceptable, - indeed, attractive - to the British, but unspoken compromise, whereby one professed one thing and did another, was not. It smacked of hypocrisy when they wanted community leaders who would readily champion a doctrine of religious moderation and declare their willingness to share sacred time and space with their religious opponents.

All of this tied down the earlier, nebulous art of compromise. The public and lengthy process of dispute-solving under the British seems to have preserved at the forefront of local politics identities of 'Hinduness' and 'Muslimness' for longer periods after a communal dispute, so undermining the regeneration of other identities based on locality and profession. The emphasis on precedent and local history reinforced this, necessitating, in the case of overlapping festivals, a return every fifteen years or so to an earlier occasion when communal identities had been paramount in the town.

The evidence suggests that initially some Indians tried to avoid being drawn into British methods of dispute-solving, but resistance was only effective if both of the competing parties absented themselves from British jurisdiction. In Mubarakhpur in 1813 both the Muslims and the Hindus held aloof from the Magistrate's inquiries. In Hardwar the Muslim *zamindars* and the Hindu priests tried to keep their disputes out of the Magistrate's court for as long as possible. But, sooner or later, one set of complainants always turned to the British; the rewards were very big for any group that thought that it had a good chance of winning the state's support for its case. Generally-speaking, Indians enthusiastically took up the opportunities to have their contemporary gains cemented as rights in law.

After the Rebellion the British, alert to the dangers of alienating people on the basis of their religious affiliation, declared a new policy of equal rights of religious observance for all, regardless of past practice and regardless of locality. In reality, many district officers had been pursuing something like this long before the Rebellion. It appealed to them as a more honourable practice than that of upholding the symbols of one community's triumph over another. The Magistrate at Bareilly in 1837,

Mr Benson, is an example of such an officer. Even so the official demise of the established usage policy, marked by the Queen's Proclamation of 1 November 1858, was still important in signalling to Indians as a whole that they no longer had to accept an inherited position of inferiority *vis-à-vis* other religious communities. Moreover, the reduction of the emphasis on locality in dispute-solving legitimated the comparison of one community's status in one town with that of its sister community in another town. In other words, there was room for the disputes to get bigger and for grievances to spill out over traditional town boundaries. This, of course, is the sort of thing that was going on on a grand scale in the cow-protection movement in the 1880s and 90s.

The British never intended to force solutions upon communities in conflict. They always wanted to work through Indian agents and they wanted those agents to declare their sympathies with the British ideal of religious moderation. To this end they sought out secular leaders in the towns rather than overt religious figures such as *maulvis* and *pandits*. These latter they regarded as religious fanatics, politically immoderate and personally interested in the foment of religious excitement. The *raises* of British favour were educated and temperate in their views, ideally men of inherited wealth and land and not new seekers after status and power. They were the men who received honours and titles from the British: honorary magistrates, *darbaris*, and loyal supporters of the British in the Rebellion. Most important of all, the British reckoned that they ought to have an interest in maintaining a stable and peaceful society and be ready to exert their influence over their co-religionists to this aim. Decade after decade, the British leaned on this highly visible class to keep their tenants, retainers, employees, and debtors quiet and non-fractious at times of possible religious tension. With hindsight it seems that the closer these men moved towards the government the less able they were to exhort their co-religionists to one course or another. Whatever their economic dependence the urban masses repeatedly and belligerently declared their independence of the *raises* in matters of religious identity. This independence flourished as the century progressed, aided especially amongst Hindus by the political ambitions of commercial men of new wealth. In Bareilly we have seen how lower-class Hindus regarded the alliance of the government and the *raises* as particularly unholy, undermining the ability of the *raises* to see clearly the needs of their religion. As the British reacted to this and began to doubt the power of the 'native gentlemen' the chasm widened between those who would defend their identity in terms of their religion and those who would counsel moderation.

CHAPTER 3

WHERE ANGELS FEARED TO TREAD, SANITARIANS RUSH IN ...

**Colonial administration of Hindu fairs
in the age of scientific advance**



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INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of the Rebellion the drive to reform Britain's rule of India opened up many more areas of Indian life to administrative intervention. Paradoxically, the Queen's declaration of religious toleration with its promise of equal rights of worship for all religious communities heralded an age of unprecedented regulation and official control of religious behaviour, particularly of large *melas*, the focus of this chapter.

After the Rebellion all eyes were on the army. The realization that disease, chiefly cholera, had killed more of the Company's loyal troops in 1857 than rebel fire alerted the government to the importance of improved sanitary management. Moreover, the new, higher ratio of Europeans to Indians in the post-1857 army heightened the need to reduce its mortality rate. At home a partial sanitary reform of the army was already underway, chiefly because Florence Nightingale, flush with her triumphs over army bureaucracy in the Crimea, had badgered the War Office into action. From behind the scenes Nightingale had set up and run the Army Sanitation Commission of 1857, one of her co-workers, the statistician William Farr, marshalling the figures on army mortality which persuaded the commission to recommend to the War Office Nightingale's desired reforms.¹ The political appeal that Farr injected into his statistical tables and explanations points to a future harnessing of scientific advances to imperial concerns. In the light of the very recent mutiny of Indian troops in India, he had written:

The question of military hygiene is rapidly becoming a question of vital importance to the interests of the empire. Upon the British race alone the integrity of that empire at this moment appears to depend. The conquering race must retain possession. Experience has shown that without special information and skillful application of the resources of science in preserving health, the drain on our home population must exhaust our means. The introduction, therefore, of a proper sanitary system into the British army is of essential importance to the public interest.²

Having initiated change in the British army, Nightingale turned next to India, in 1859 winning, in spite of stiff opposition from the India Office and old India hands, a Royal Commission into the Sanitary State of the Army in India. The India Office delayed so long in providing the statistics the commission required that Nightingale sent directly to India for them. From the

¹ John M. Eyler, *Victorian social medicine: the ideas and methods of William Farr* (Baltimore, 1979), pp. 159-72.

² *Ibid.*, p. 171.

information received Farr projected a short life expectancy for the average European soldier in India and calculated a shockingly high mortality rate of 69 per thousand.³ In spite of the commission's optimistic conclusion that a white army could survive in the tropics given the correct attention to sanitation, its findings stirred controversy from the day of their publication. Indian army officers furiously rebutted Farr's high mortality rate and both the India Office and the Government of India looked askance at the cost of the proposed reforms.⁴ Only one of the commission's proposals was implemented quickly: three sanitary commissions, one for each presidency, were set up before the end of 1864.⁵

These too were beset by political problems. The Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, delayed announcing the rules on which the commissions could proceed. Army medical officers, mindful of their independence, mistrusted them. At home, according to a recent historian, 'the Horse Guards, the India Office and the War Office, locked in interdepartmental warfare, were united in wanting to retain a cheap army and doubly united in keeping out Miss Nightingale.'⁶ The presidency sanitary commissions could not secure money, power or information. Such inauspicious beginnings bedevilled public health administration in India for many years. As at home the rhetoric of sanitary reform was lofty, drawing on the moral tone of Victorian liberalism and the scientific credibility which the new age of statistics lent to it, but the achievements were fewer. Administrative conservatism and the parsimony of the government combined to thwart the ideals of many sanitary visionaries and the scientific and medical principles applied in India were often years behind the latest developments in Britain and Europe.

Given the intransigence of the army medical establishment it is unsurprising that the sanitary commissions soon turned their attention to the civilian environment.⁷ It was a pragmatic shift, but also a justifiable one. There was more room to move in the world of civil administration and, at the same time, an appreciation that the health of the army depended upon the health of its host environment. Moreover, in the 1860s international concern focussed on India as the home of cholera

³ F.B. Smith, *Florence Nightingale: reputation and power* (London, 1982), pp. 114-18.

⁴ Eyler, *Victorian social medicine*, pp. 174-5; Smith, *Florence Nightingale*, pp. 122-3.

⁵ Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army in India, PP, 1863, vol. IXX, pp. xvii, lxxxiv.

⁶ Smith, *Florence Nightingale*, p. 121.

⁷ The commissions' only achievements with the army, such as a new design for barracks, were things that the army bureaucracy itself wanted to implement. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

and Europe demanded that Britain destroy the menace at its source. In 1866 the International Sanitary Conference at Constantinople stressed the regularity with which Indian Muslims coming on the Haj carried cholera upto the shores of the Red Sea and thus endangered Europe's health and trade. Importantly, the Conference also expressed concern about the threat to international public health posed by Hindu pilgrimage, which, although confined to India, was seen also to have the power to trigger a cholera pandemic. The Conference advised the Government of India to control big Hindu gatherings by licensing pilgrims, deploying sanitary police, and establishing quarantine facilities.⁸

The perception of a link between cholera and Hindu pilgrimage was not new. Large fairs had long been seen as the ideal foci of epidemics, beset by problems of overcrowding, polluted water supplies, and, most of all, unhealthy or non-existent conservancy management. David Arnold has argued that, for all the supposed objectivity of the scientific approach to disease management by the British, they often confused medical and moral judgements.⁹ This, as Arnold shows, was a conflation first deployed in the early 1800s by Claudius Buchanan, a Company Chaplain who campaigned for the severance of all connections between the Company and the Jagannath temple at Puri. In his polemical tracts he intertwined observations on the obscene nature of the worship at Jagannath and on the disgusting state of cholera-stricken pilgrims. Disease and delusion were seen to go together. In the post-Rebellion era the perception of this link between cholera and Hinduism was sharpened by the new emphasis on public health, and assaults on cholera often doubled as assaults on Hinduism.¹⁰

For most of the second half of the nineteenth century grand public health projects, such as the registration of births and deaths or smallpox vaccination, achieved little success. Ira Klein has shown how twentieth-century sanitarians looked back on their predecessors' efforts with a mixture of regret, shame and resentment. Former sanitary commissioners complained that the medical profession, the cream of which went to the army, did not take preventive medicine seriously and denied that it required

⁸ *Proceedings of the International Sanitary Conference opened at Constantinople on the 13th February 1866* (Calcutta, 1868), especially pp. 12-14, 71-4, 875-6.

⁹ David Arnold, 'Cholera and colonialism in British India', *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), pp. 138-42.

¹⁰ Arnold concludes very strongly that: 'The attack on cholera was also an assault on Hinduism, one which was all the more authoritative for its invocation of medical science.' *Ibid.*, p. 142. I appreciate his point, and indeed in this chapter I go on to show how much of an assault on Hinduism the sanitary men did mount in the late nineteenth century, but I am not ready to grant such a degree of consciousness to that assault as Arnold's statement suggests that he does.

any special training.¹¹ In this discouraging setting, the careful management of fairs was perhaps the one area in which an overstretched sanitary officer could hope to effect some immediate 'good'. But the fear of failure and its consequences were fraught with tension. The first Sanitary Commissioner in the NWP once observed that he had experienced no work quite as stressful as his *mela* duties.¹²

To meet the costs of sanitary reforms at *melas* administrators across the NWP levied a variety of taxes - on stalls, vehicles, animals, and eventually pilgrims. The local government always refused to create any uniform fund-raising scheme for the NWP and it frequently voiced its opposition to the direct taxation of pilgrims. Pilgrim taxation was seen to be politically dangerous but not morally wrong, a marked shift from the official position of 1840 when the taxes at Gaya, Allahabad and Puri had been abolished. Then religion had been at the heart of the issue: the propriety of a Christian government collecting revenue from idolatry and the fear that good administration was propping up heathenism. The absence of this theme from the taxation debates of the 1860s and '70s highlights the effect of the import of the 'scientific' rationale into the issue. The goal of public health was seen to be universally good and to transcend religious divides. It gave a new confidence to colonial administration so that no longer were the British primarily Christians; they were impartial civil servants possessed of a knowledge that could be employed to everyone's benefit. This inevitably increased the paternalism of *mela* administration. Individual pilgrims may not have been bothered about the life-threatening nature of their congregations, but they could not be allowed, so many officers argued, to inflict that risk on the population at large.

But intrusive reforms at the big pilgrimage sites generated a lot of hostility amongst Hindus and the new taxes were often unpopular. After three or four generations of freedom from government control the priests of the NWP resented attempts to bring them within the ambit of new sanitary laws. Many Hindus either protested that pilgrims had never before been taxed, or complained that the government was no longer benevolent as it had been in 1840. In this politically uneasy environment,

¹¹ Ira Klein, 'Death in India, 1871-1921', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXXII (1973), p. 657. Klein writes that: 'One of the failures of the public health advocates was their inability to convince the best young medical men coming to India that sanitation, vaccinating villagers or purifying water supplies made glamorous careers.' Klein notes that the major problem, however, was the lack of government money and support for the initiatives of the sanitary officials.

¹² C. Planck, *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Sanitary Commissioner of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, for the year ending 31st December, 1881* (Allahabad, 1882), p. 41. '...I cannot recall any occasion of professional anxiety greater than that of my times of fair experience.'

local officers were forced to temper the self-assurance of their initial attempts to clean up *melas*. By the turn of the century the NWP Government, unnerved by cow-protection riots, the Benares waterworks fiasco, and, in general, an increasingly assertive Hinduism, had come to realize that although public health was a desirable goal it was not paramount, and that at times it had to be sacrificed to more pressing political objectives. At the same time the British saw that the division between non-Hindu administrator and Hindu pilgrim remained a very real one despite the imposition of the all-encompassing ideology of public health, and they looked to 'Hinduize' their *mela* administration. Again they turned to their favoured category of 'native gentlemen' for advice and, more importantly, support. Educated Hindus, loyal and landed, were requested to advise officers on the acceptability of aspects of their fair management. But the government did not want to surrender any authority; these men were intended only to bridge the gap between the uneducated pilgrim's religious priorities and the enlightened administrator's civic priorities. These developments in *mela* administration are inseparable from wider developments in Hinduism in the last quarter of the century. As the British were trying to make the administration of *melas* more obviously Hindu, Hindus were seeking the same end. Those Hindus that won the approval of government did not necessarily have the support of other Hindus, so that some *melas* effectively became political arenas in which competing elements set out to define correct Hindu identity and behaviour.

CLEANING UP THE MELAS

An initial experiment: the Hardwar Kumbh Mela, 1867

By the early 1850s some officers in the NWP were beginning to consider questions of hygiene and public health at fairs, but the first major sanitation experiment was made at the Hardwar Kumbh Mela of 1867. The singling out of this fair for special attention is not surprising. For decades the Hardwar *melas* had captured the British imagination, more so even than the comparable fairs at Allahabad. Until the mid-1800s the annual Dikhauti Mela at Hardwar had been famed as much for its trade as for its capacity to draw pilgrims. Every spring, in early April, horses, shawls, dried fruits and other exotic items were brought to Hardwar from the north west to be purchased by or for India's aristocracy. The traders took back with them Banarasi brocades and other luxury items. Most of the pilgrims were Punjabis, but in any year pilgrims from all over the subcontinent could be found there. Before the British took over in 1804, the Marathas had taxed the vehicles and goods coming to each *mela*, but every twelfth year, at the Kumbh, all temporal power was vested in the *akharas*, Hinduism's great monastic orders. Not infrequently the ascetics fought bloody battles over ritual and administrative precedence, the victors winning a higher place in the bathing hierarchy and a bigger share in the government of the *mela*. Under British rule physical conflict was suppressed and disputes about the ranking of the different *akharas* were 'resolved' by reference to the usage of previous years. As in other settings the British initiated the definition and demarcation of religious rights. The British also deprived the ascetics of their periodic ascendancy as 'kings' of the *mela*, taking all aspects of the fair's government upon themselves. As fair managers they presided over a decline in its trade: after the 1820s and the near cessation of internal warfare the demand for horses petered out, and the demand for luxury goods declined in accordance with the unhappy fate of India's princes. By the 1830s and 40s most observers agreed that the trade at the Hardwar fair was a shadow of its eighteenth-century self. Nevertheless, pilgrimage to Hardwar boomed in the nineteenth century, as at the other big *tirths* of north India. Tens of thousands of pilgrims came to ordinary fairs, and *lakhs* to the Kumbhs. The ascetics, too, kept on coming in their thousands, although now they filled a narrower monastic or priestly role in the fair, in contrast to their former status as temporary sovereigns.

From a sanitary officer's perspective, Hardwar's facilities in the 1860s were woefully inadequate to cope with gatherings of such magnitude. The elaborate preparations for the 1867 *mela* were probably partly in response to the huge, unexpected assemblage at the Mahavaruni Mela two years

before.¹³ A near disaster at this fair, coupled with local resentment at the inadequate safety measures for bathing, alerted the authorities to the need for greater precautions at the 1867 Kumbh.¹⁴

H.D. Robertson, the Magistrate of Saharanpur, was in charge of the 1867 preparations. His colleague from neighbouring Bijnour expressed surprise at the meticulous detail of Robertson's work, regretting his inability to match it on his side of the river.¹⁵ It is unlikely that the pilgrims were any less surprised. All over north India it was rumoured that this was to be the last Kumbh Mela, that the holy Ganga was losing her sanctity to the monstrous sacrilege of the irrigation engineers.¹⁶ Pilgrims arriving in April 1867 found much that was unfamiliar. Major construction work had been carried out on the main channel of the Ganga, a necessity imposed by the canal works which, in the 1840s, had replaced a gentle stream, safe for bathing and easily fordable, with a deep, swift torrent. The channel depth was reduced, holes in the bed were filled in and ten bridges-of-boats were erected to connect the bathing *ghat* with Rauri Island. These were to carry the pilgrims across the river after bathing: no one was to turn back into the oncoming crowd.

On 12 April, the great bathing day, no carts, horses or elephants were allowed into the township. All pilgrims regardless of their rank or sanctity had to walk to the bathing *ghat*. The ascetics were denied their traditional processions through the town's streets and they had to leave their parade elephants on Rauri Island and cross and recross the bridges on foot like all the ordinary pilgrims. This was not a concession easily gained from the six *akharas*, which totalled over fifty thousand men.

¹³ A fair of this peculiar sanctity had not occurred for almost half a century and it drew the largest concourse of pilgrims that any British officer could remember seeing in north India: about 25 *lakhs*. The officer sent in to oversee the last minute preparations complained about the lack of advance warning from the local priests, accusing them of ignorance of the intricacies of their own religious calendar. He believed that the priests were as much taken aback as the British by the huge turnout. C.A. Daniell, Jt Magte Saharanpur, to H.D. Robertson, Offg Magte Saharanpur, no. 98a, 22 Apr. 1865, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file 6/1867, no. 52.

¹⁴ There were not enough bridges to carry the pilgrims on over to Rauri Island after bathing, so some turned back into the oncoming crowd. A large-scale tragedy was averted, but even so four people were trampled to death in the mud. *Ibid.* Resident Gosains blamed the British for the problems: first, for altering the river so as to make it unfordable, and second, for failing to provide the requisite number of bridges. H.D. Robertson, Magte Saharanpur, to F. Williams, Comr Meerut, no. 7, 6 Jan. 1866, *ibid.*

¹⁵ Magte Bijnour to Comr Meerut, no. 161, 11 May 1867, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file 37/1867, no. 60.

¹⁶ F. Williams, Comr Meerut, 'Report on the Hurdwar Fair, 1867', n.d., IOR, NWP General P/438/30, A progs 31 Aug. 1867, no. 122, 22 July 1867. Rumours such as this gained currency in the late-nineteenth century, and they were always received with satisfaction by British officers who read into them a desperation on the part of the Hindu priesthood to drum up custom before enlightened Hindus turned away completely from the superstitions of their upbringing. Williams' reaction here is typical and it shows the wonderful confidence and brashness of many Victorian administrators: 'Although the Brahmins have a prediction, dating about the time when they became convinced the Ganges would succumb to the intellect of Engineers, that there will be no more great Koomb or great fair, - that the sanctity of the Ganges and Hurdwar will cease, or cease to be recognized, - there will be gatherings of considerable magnitude before the prediction is verified fully, as it may be hoped it will be by the expanded intellects of the people refusing to accede to a simple but magnificent line of drainage such reverence as they have hitherto paid.' Emphasis added.

At first they threatened to leave the fair *en masse*, but eventually their *mahants* opted for the lesser sacrifice of surrendering their processions.¹⁷

In addition to these traffic controls - largely successful in preventing bottle-necks in the crowd - there were conservancy measures of an unusually intrusive nature. Robertson observed with pride that the pilgrims 'wherever encamped, were forced to submit to the sanitary rules enforced by the police'.¹⁸ Trench latrines were dug near the main camping ground, itself marked out in unfamiliar streets and blocks, and it was prohibited to retire in privacy elsewhere. Police patrolled the surrounding jungle and the banks of the Ganga all the way up to Rishikesh. These arrangements were functional by mid-March and so distressed the locals that an officer arriving at Kharkari, a village on the Dun side of Hardwar, found that 'the strict conservancy rules...had driven many of the Town's people to the Khukurree Jungles, and the lands were becoming very filthy.'¹⁹ Within a few days these lands too were cleaned up and put under police supervision. Some months later the Commissioner of Meerut was better able to appreciate the inconvenience and anxiety that the enforced use of public latrines occasioned many Hindus:

I have heard from a native gentleman, that rather than go to public latrines, many people, women particularly, abstained from relieving themselves during the two or three days the fair lasted at Gurhmuktesur lately.²⁰

Food supplies at the 1867 *mela* were also strictly controlled. Robertson endeavoured to stockpile grain well in advance to head off the 'famine prices' that had prevailed at the Mahavaruni Mela. Orders were issued for the immediate seizure and destruction of any unwholesome supplies in the market.²¹

¹⁷ *Ibid.* Robertson flattered himself that the ascetics had agreed to give up their procession because he had threatened them with a prohibition on marching naked. Had Robertson thought about it he must have realized that no one could take seriously his threat to thrust clothing on several thousand naked men. H.D. Robertson, Magte Saharanpur, to Comr Meerut, no. 102, 27 May 1867, *ibid.*, no. 126.

¹⁸ *Report on the cholera epidemic of 1867, in northern India* (Calcutta, 1868), p. 5.

¹⁹ C.A. Daniell, Supt Dehra Dun, to F. Williams, Comr Meerut, no. 71, 21 Apr. 1867, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file 2/1867, no. 50.

²⁰ Comr Meerut to R. Simson, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 30, 30 June 1868, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file 31/1868, no. 75. The Commissioner also found amongst the Hindus, especially 'the better class of natives', an abhorrence of hospitals, which, if provided at a fair, increased the likelihood that sickness would be concealed from the authorities.

²¹ Robertson's experience at the 1865 *mela* had convinced him that the grain merchants would always make enormous profits at the expense of pilgrims unless provided with a degree of competition from his own stockpiling and subjected to a careful watch on the quality of their foodstuffs. H.D. Robertson, Offg Magte Saharanpur, to F. Williams, Comr Meerut, no. 90, 26 Apr. 1865, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file 6/1867, no. 52. But he may have exaggerated the cupidity of the merchants for in 1867 there were few complaints about adulterated foodstuffs. A bigger problem for Robertson and one over which he had no control was the food brought into fair for personal consumption: 'as many of the poorer pilgrims brought

Given these unprecedented precautions it is ironic that it was at this *mela* that cholera erupted in an especially virulent form. Unlike Puri in the east, Hardwar did not have a bad reputation for cholera. It had not served as a focal point in the 1861 epidemic and the disease had last appeared at a *mela* there ten years previously in 1857.²² Before that tradition only recorded outbreaks at the *melas* of 1783, 1819 and 1829.²³ In 1867 Hardwar was probably not the source of the disease; it appeared at the very end of the *mela* after *lakhs* of pilgrims had been safely encamped there for several days already. Only nineteen cases were seen at Hardwar, but the homeward-bound pilgrims, some two millions of them, carried the disease across north India: north-west into the Punjab and Kashmir, south-west into Rajputana and south-east into Rohilkhand and Awadh.²⁴ In the next few months almost a quarter of a million people were attacked by cholera and, of these, about half died.²⁵

Cholera, in its epidemic form at least, was a disease of the nineteenth century. The indiscriminate application of the label 'cholera' to all manner of ailments over the course of two thousand years means that even now it is not clear whether a completely new disease appeared in India at the turn of the nineteenth century, or whether a pre-existing one suddenly acquired an epidemic character. In either case, the first well-documented epidemic is the devastating one of 1817, well into the era of Company rule.²⁶ It is not surprising that Indians associated cholera with the British: a disease coterminous with their rule and apparently, when it ravaged military cantonments and their surrounding bazaars, spread by their agents.²⁷ In 1867 at Hardwar the pilgrims were convinced of the

food all ready cooked from their homes, much that was unwholesome found its way into the fair.' *Report on the cholera epidemic of 1867*, p. 6.

²² This was 'an outbreak of considerable severity' according to the 1867 report, *ibid.*, p. 12.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 12. In spite of this the 1866 International Sanitary Conference at Constantinople identified Hardwar as one of the biggest danger spots for the dissemination of cholera throughout India. At the time this damning assessment was made there was no evidence to support it; but it shows the readiness of the European scientists and diplomats who made up the conference to point an accusatory finger at this symbol of the exotic and the superstitious. All of the conference's proceedings were permeated by the fear of the foreignness of cholera, so that it was only natural for the delegates to stress the role of 'irrational' religious practices in spreading the disease at the expense of more 'rational' aids to dissemination, such as the movement of troops around India by the imperial power. *Proceedings of the International Sanitary Conference*, pp. 71-4.

²⁴ The other customary post-*mela* trek, north-east to the Himalayan shrines of Badrinath and Kedarnath, was stopped by the Garhwal authorities who broke down the swing bridge just north of Rishikesh and refused to allow pilgrims to move beyond that town. C.A. Daniell, Supt Dehra Dun, to F. Williams, Comr Meerut, no. 71, 21 Apr. 1867, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file, 2/1867, no. 50.

²⁵ *Report on the cholera epidemic of 1867*, p. 101.

²⁶ N. Howard-Jones, 'Cholera nomenclature and nosology: a historical note', *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 51 (1974), pp. 317-24. Howard-Jones argues that 'the first really convincing description of true Asiatic cholera' dates from the early 1780s in the report of a surgeon on a small British warship anchored off Madras.

²⁷ David Arnold has pointed to the aptness of military metaphors for cholera outbreaks in India. Cholera did seem to 'attack' or 'invade' local populations, as in 1818 when it erupted in western India in the wake of the Company's third war against the Marathas. In 1857-58 too it dogged the Company's troops in the campaign against the rebels. Arnold also marshals enough anecdotes of indigenous responses to the disease to suggest

causal link between the new sanitary regime, especially the latrines, and the unexpected appearance of cholera at the fair. Robertson mocked the reasoning of the 'ignorant and terror-stricken multitude':

Other fairs, they argued, in which no attempt had been made to interfere with their ordinary habits, had, as a rule, come and gone without any serious sickness. Now when a new system had been in force how disastrous were the results.²⁸

However, Robertson's scorn was embarrassingly out of place. The pilgrims were right to doubt the healthiness of the latrines, but they wrongly pointed to foul air as the chief evil. Although the subsequent inquiry praised the sanitation preparations in general, it condemned the burying of night soil in the porous riverbank, for 'the whole ground must have been more or less impregnated with sewage, and the water of the Ganges must have become contaminated with the accumulated excreta of an immense multitude.'²⁹ The inquiry concluded very strongly in favour of the theory of the water-borne transmission of cholera,³⁰ but beyond the physical causes, the pilgrims also discerned the intervention of a divine player. Robertson paraphrased their reaction thus:

In former years they had trusted to Kallee [i.e., Kali], and she had preserved them in health. What were all these so-called sanitary improvements, but evidence of distrust, and was it strange that the goddess should resent them, and visit the offending people with her grave displeasure.³¹

that there was 'a shared belief that the British were in some way responsible, whether through the direct violation of Hindu taboos or indirectly through the disruptive effects of their military intervention on the Hindu cosmos.' Arnold, 'Cholera and colonialism in British India', pp. 126-9.

²⁸ *Report on the cholera epidemic of 1867*, p. 18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁰ Curiously this was one of the few times that this theory was officially accepted in India until Koch's isolation of the cholera comma bacillus in a Calcutta water source in 1884. In the intervening years senior government officers resolutely advocated theories in which miasma, particularly noxious under India's 'peculiar' climatic conditions, was the chief culprit, even though these arguments had long since lost favour in Europe. Arnold, 'Cholera and colonialism in British India', pp. 143-5. At home scathing judgements were passed on the competence of the sanitary officers in India, with an emphasis on their refusal to accept that cholera was spread by poisoned water. *The Times*, in an article dated 18 November 1875, accused the Bengal Sanitary Commissioners of unwittingly aiding the spread of cholera by their so-called preventive measures. Other publications, amongst them *The Lancet* and *The Practitioner*, took up the theme of scientific incompetents running India's sanitation programmes. O.P. Jaggi, *Western medicine in India: public health and its administration*. History of science, technology and medicine in India, vol. 14 (Delhi, 1979), pp. 100-3. It was J.M. Cuninghame, the Government of India's Sanitary Commissioner, who most opposed theories of water-borne transmission. The Punjab's first Sanitary Commissioner, A.C.C. DeRenzy, had to fight both Cuninghame's antipathy to municipal water schemes - which DeRenzy believed could bring urban cholera under control - and the local government's refusal to sanction any expensive works. In 1876 DeRenzy was transferred from his post after he had conducted a long and public campaign in London decrying Cuninghame's professional ability. John C. Hume, Jr, 'Colonialism and sanitary medicine: the development of preventive health policy in the Punjab, 1860 to 1900', *Modern Asian Studies*, 20 (1980), pp. 712-18. See also Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *The making of colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877* (Princeton, 1984), pp. 97-111; and J.B. Harrison, 'Allahabad: a sanitary history' in K. Ballhatchet and J.B. Harrison (eds), *The city in South Asia: pre-modern and modern* (London, 1980), pp. 167-95, for the dominance of the miasmatic theory and the way in which this determined the sanitation programmes of municipalities. Waterworks schemes were always unpopular because of their cost, but, as Hume points out, as long as air and filth were determined to be the main channel of disease communication delays in providing clean and controllable water to cities and towns were justifiable.

³¹ *Report on the cholera epidemic of 1867*, p. 18.

While it is possible that the Magistrate wanted to explain away the pilgrims' annoyance at the sanitary innovations in terms of their 'superstition', it is also likely that the pilgrims did attribute the outbreak of cholera at least in some part to divine displeasure. This combination by the pilgrims of apparently incompatible rationales - the one Western and mundane, the other indigenous and divine - to explain cholera's appearance at the *mela* is important for the light it sheds on pilgrim behaviour in general. It is not dissimilar to the phenomenon observed by many doctors in India that, when faced with an epidemic, Indians would resort to a combination of Western and traditional remedies: cholera pills, indigenous medicines, and appeasement of the deity. Both points suggest that, unlike contemporary British observers and later commentators, Indians did not perceive hard and fast divisions between Western and homegrown methods of disease prevention and care. From this it follows that there probably was not much truth in the charge frequently made in the nineteenth century that Hindu pilgrims opposed sanitary reforms at pilgrimage sites purely because of their novelty. Pilgrim reaction to sanitary innovations was not uniformly hostile. However, where reforms did produce irritation, although its initial edge may have been blunted by familiarity, the dislike never entirely disappeared; pilgrims often resorted to subtle means of evasion instead.³²

Customarily pilgrims returning home from a fair, especially a grand one like the Kumbh, could expect a jubilant welcome. The journey for many was long and hazardous and the mere fact of their safe return was often sufficient cause for celebration. But the pilgrims also carried with them an auspiciousness unattainable elsewhere which they were empowered to share with their family and friends. In 1893, the Punjab Sanitary Commissioner enquired into the practices of homeward-bound pilgrims to try to discover what made cholera incidence so high amongst them. Most pilgrims, he observed, brought back with them a jar or pot of sacred Ganga water (*gangajal*) from Hardwar, as well as sweetmeats purchased at the fair. The pilgrim performed the *ganga bhog* ceremony immediately

³² Throughout this period of reform many British officers preserved images of two types of Hindu pilgrim: one who was enlightened and would greet officers with praise for the cleanliness of a *mela* site, and the other who remained sunk in ignorance and would resist sanitation reforms. In 1868 the Magistrate at Saharanpur, Mr Webster, attributed the very small attendance at that year's Hardwar *mela* to the cholera scare of 1867. He belittled as 'a distinct afterthought' the *pandas'* explanation that 'last year the people had been so disgusted at the restrictions under which they were placed, that they had actually preferred to stay away rather than again subject themselves to such annoyances.' Webster could not believe that any sensible pilgrim would have denied the wisdom of the reforms; indeed many had assured him of their great satisfaction. But Webster overlooked the fact that complaints were unlikely to come directly to a European. The distress of unhappy pilgrims naturally tended to surface through rumour or perhaps, as in this case, through their priests, a group accustomed to dealing with the local authorities. H.B. Webster, Magte Saharanpur, to F. Williams, Comr Meerut, no. 128, 10 June 1868, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file 5/1868, no. 62.

upon reaching home. Priests, relatives and friends would attend, all receiving a share of the holy substances. The house was purified during the ritual and any remaining *gangajal* was used for purifying polluted places, such as a defiled tank.³³

But many of the pilgrims returning home in 1867 were not welcomed. It was obvious that cholera was amongst them and some pilgrims were all but rejected. The Commissioner of Kumaon reported that the Kumaonis perceived a clear link between the return of the pilgrims and the introduction of cholera to their villages at the foot of the hills, so that the pilgrims, 'instead of meeting with respect, received unlimited abuse from all classes on their return.'³⁴ For others their arrival home marked the end of a nightmarish journey of sickness, hunger, and harassment from officers and local residents. A doctor in Muzaffarnagar, fifty miles south of Hardwar, reported a steady stream of diseased pilgrims passing through his district:

They were, they said, in great alarm on account of the pestilence, and expressed much anxiety to hurry on so that the journey might the sooner be ended. As the stream of traffic increased in density, it was seen that not only cholera existed amongst the people, but that smallpox, diarrhoea, and fever also prevailed.³⁵

In Sirsa district in the Punjab the Deputy Commissioner met 'diseased and unhealthy' pilgrims, many parties being composed 'chiefly of aged and emaciated women and sickly children, and old and tottering men who seemed quite exhausted from fatigue.'³⁶

Quarantine measures were implemented along the most frequented routes of return. They were especially stringent in the Punjab where plans already existed for this type of cholera outbreak and where the authorities had more time to ready themselves before the pilgrims began arriving. Pilgrims were stopped at rail stations and bridges and examined for symptoms of the disease; confirmed and suspected cases were detained in temporary hospitals. Certain rail routes were closed to them and they were made to by-pass large towns, cordons of police being used to direct them on to less-frequented

³³ Surgeon Lt-Col. W.A.C. Roe, Offg Sanitary Comr Punjab, to Offg Junior Secy to Govt Punjab, no. 38, 1 Aug. 1893, UPSA, NWP&O Sanitation, A progs June 1894, no. 40, file 275B, box 3. Contemporary scientists believed that the cholera vibrio could survive in ordinary drinking water for up to seven or eight days (much longer in purified water), so Roe concluded that pilgrims within a week's journey of Hardwar - whether by foot, rail, or cart - were in an excellent position to contaminate their home water supplies even if they appeared healthy themselves at the time of their return.

³⁴ *Report on the cholera epidemic of 1867*, p. 32. A doctor serving in Cuttack reported that locals traditionally avoided pilgrims returning from Puri, knowing them to be sources of cholera infection year after year. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

passages. Those pilgrims who resided in such towns were kept outside in quarantine camps for two to five days and:

Before being allowed to re-enter their town or village, they were obliged to wash, and their clothes were fumigated. The bodies of the dead were burnt or buried as soon as possible, and the clothes of all persons who had been attacked were destroyed. Food of good quality was provided and supplied gratis to those who were too poor to pay for it.³⁷

Officers in the Punjab and the upper NWP believed that these efforts had slowed the advance of cholera in the more important towns and cantonments, but such success was achieved at the cost of the pilgrims' comfort. There is no doubt that some local authorities over-reacted to the threat and caused more deaths amongst pilgrims than might otherwise have occurred. The Civil Surgeon of Amritsar reported on the distress of some:

[T]he pilgrims complained bitterly of the treatment they had received near _____ being driven off the regular road and forced to walk through the heat of the day for miles through heavy sand without food or water. In fact, they attributed a great many of the deaths to this cause.³⁸

The consolidation of sanitary reform

The 1867 *mela* ought to have been an embarrassment for the authorities. Their attempts at sanitary control had failed and they had not popularized the measures with the Hindu public. But the local government displayed remarkably little caution in building on this early experiment and almost no consciousness of its fallibility. In the following year Sanitary Commissioners were appointed to Oudh and the NWP. Charles Planck, the energetic Sanitary Commissioner of the NWP from 1868 until 1885, drew up a list of recommendations for the sanitary management of fairs and pilgrimage sites.³⁹ Any fair drawing more than 100,000 people was classified as an 'important fair' and at these an officer of the seniority of District Magistrate was expected to take control. His chief object would

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6. The report does not detail the measures adopted at all of the towns affected. Nevertheless, it is clear that in the Punjab quarantine cordons were thrown up around Ambala, Kurnal, Rohtak, Hissar, Sirsa, Hoshiapur, Jullundar, Amritsar, Lahore, Gurdaspur, Ferozepur, Shahpur, and Muzaffargarh. Pilgrims were not allowed to travel by train from Amritsar to Lahore, being diverted onto the Grand Trunk Road instead. Rail travel was permitted between Amritsar and Multan but the trains were prohibited from halting at Lahore. Medical checkpoints were established at the bridges-of-boats over the Sutlej at Phillour and Ferozepur. And the Maharaja of Kashmir was persuaded to split up his camp of many thousands and to skirt around Ambala; the main body of followers was not allowed to proceed to Jammu via the Grand Trunk Road. In the NWP some of the towns to be cordoned off were Budaon, Bareilly, Moradabad and Roorki. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-7.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

³⁹ Similar rules were drawn up by the Sanitary Commissioner of Oudh, Mr Sutherland. Almost immediately he initiated a swing away from concerns about the purity of water supplies by declaring robustly that air was the most important channel of epidemic disease, 'of more importance than that of the food we eat or the water we drink.' Circular no. 18-1186, 31 Mar. 1869, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs 30 Oct. 1869, no. 153.

be to prevent the outbreak and spread of disease. The district's Civil Surgeon was to be the fair's medical officer, in charge of hospitals and responsible for the segregation of the sick. The police were to enforce the conservancy arrangements. They were also to be responsible for traffic control, the reportage of illness, and the prevention of the entry of diseased persons to the main fair site. If possible the Sanitary Commissioner himself was to attend and submit a full report for the information of government.⁴⁰ In the event of an outbreak of disease the healthy pilgrims were to be encouraged to leave as soon as possible. Magistrates who could expect returning pilgrim traffic were to reroute the pilgrims away from major towns. No pilgrim was to be allowed to enter his home town until he had spent a disease-free week in a quarantine camp on its outskirts. These camps were to be provided with food, water and medical care, and to be subject to the same rules governing the management of the original fair site.⁴¹

These rules were sweepingly comprehensive and it is unlikely that they were ever enforced to their full extent. The requisite establishment and degree of organization was probably beyond the reach of most District Magistrates. Even in imperfect application however they still allowed for the creation of numerous figures of authority who would greet pilgrims arriving at large fairs, figures whose power derived solely from their secular connection with the government, rather than any established link with the sacred traditions of the holy site. They would exercise a control of the most personal and intrusive nature and yet it would be defended by the British as a cautious policy because, in their narrow definition, it avoided interference with the pilgrims' religious expression. The way in which the sanitary perspective overruled the religious one in the eyes of the authorities is well brought out in the report of the 1895 Garhmuktesar *mela*. The reporting officer observed with satisfaction that the pilgrims had 'behaved excellently from a sanitary point of view' and he pointed proudly to the conservancy arrangements:

Perhaps the most prominent feature that would strike the new arrival's eye would be the long and prominent line of straw latrines that lay all along the rear of the fair, teaching the pilgrims from the very first a sanitary lesson.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Rules to be observed in the management of important fairs in the North-Western Provinces*, Allahabad, n.d. of publication. Received at Cambridge University Library in 1872.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴² T.C. Edwards, Offg Jt Magte Meerut, to Magte Meerut, 23 Jan. 1896, UPSA, NWP&O Misc. (General), A progs May 1896, no. 1, file 69B, box 8. Elsewhere a municipal report referred to the building of bathing *ghats*, traditionally an act of private religious enterprise, as works worthy of much praise 'from a sanitary point of view'. *Report on the working of the municipalities in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*,

The new rules had an immediate effect. At the Garhmuktesar fair in Meerut district in 1868 the patchy sanitary reforms of the previous couple of years were tightened up and a new regime implemented. The fair site was divided into streets and camping blocks, trading areas and recreation spaces. Circular latrines were erected on the outskirts of the fair and watchmen were employed to keep people from soiling the jungle or nearby crops. Any long grass at the fair site was cut down to prevent people from 'committing nuisances' at the *mela* itself. The cost of these measures was met by a rent taken from stall-holders.⁴³

At the Ballia fair in Ghazipur district similar arrangements were effected, although there the costs were covered by a subscription scheme amongst the stall-holders.⁴⁴ At the Batesar *mela* in Agra district the local officers undertook to introduce the principles of sanitation not only to the pilgrims but also to the cattle and the horses, each of these sections of the fair being subjected to new controls.⁴⁵ The fair at Bithur in Cawnpore district also experienced a new order of cleanliness and neatness.

As officers in charge of *melas* and pilgrimage sites acquired more experience their sanitary reforms did not necessarily lose their experimental character. Well into the next century debates flourished about the best type of temporary latrine, the best system of waste disposal, the best method of constructing hospitals, the best way of ensuring a clean water supply.⁴⁶ Even in established *mela* administrations there were frequent changes to the sanitary agenda. Nevertheless individual officers

during the year ending 31 March 1880, pp. 11-12 on Bulandshahr, NAI, India Home (Municipal), A progs Feb. 1882, nos. 7-14.

⁴³ C. Planck, Sanitary Comr NWP, to R. Simson, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 202, 9 Nov. 1868, *Sanitary Arrangements at the Gurhmooktesur Fair of 1868*, (Allahabad, 1869).

⁴⁴ Bulliah Fair of 1868, (Allahabad, 1869), pp. 1-5.

⁴⁵ F. Baker, Asst Magte Agra, 'Report on the Butesur Fair of 1871', *Selections from the records of Government. North-Western Provinces. Second Series*, VI, 2 (Allahabad, 1872), pp. 300-10.

⁴⁶ Latrines occasioned voluminous speculation about 'native preferences', and nearly every officer was ready to report the success of one design *vis-à-vis* another. Implicit in this experimentation was a belief that there was one perfect design which, when discovered, would prove acceptable to the pilgrims. Conflicting theories abounded as to whether natives preferred privacy or openness within the latrine enclosures; perceived differences between the preferences of the sexes further complicated the debate. Some officers do seem to have understood that absolute cleanliness was likely to have been the primary concern of any pilgrim rather than the design of the latrine, although even this was acknowledged patronizingly. In 1891 the Sanitary Commissioner wrote of the behaviour of the pilgrims at the recent Hardwar Kumbh Mela: 'The tendency of the natives is to resort to any retired spot, but such habit was restricted and controlled though not without some resistance at first, and a resistance more or less determined which disappeared when nature could be obeyed in a cleanly and orderly manner....Cleanliness is appreciated by the natives, and cleanliness is freedom from odour, nuisance and annoyance, and the conveniences at Hardwar might have been entered by a European without offence.' Surgeon-Major G. Hutcheson, Sanitary Comr NWP&O, to Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 327/C, 27 May 1891, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/4061, A progs Jan. 1892, no. 11, file 432B. In spite of Hutcheson's glowing report it is unlikely that any latrines made of grass with dirt floors and frequented by thousands could have long remained in a state of appealing cleanliness. The pilgrims' long-standing antipathy to the temporary latrines erected at *melas* was probably well founded.

radiated confidence in the 'improvements' of their day and were loath to receive any comments from pilgrims who did not first acknowledge the wisdom of the government's vision.

Lodging-house control: antagonism between priests and the state

It was at the Kumbh Mela of 1879 that the Sanitary Commissioner Charles Planck decided to tackle the problem of overcrowding in Hardwar's pilgrim lodging-houses. Hardwar's rents escalated at *mela* time. A single room could cost Rs.300 per month. Pilgrims were crammed into dark, unventilated closets, paying exorbitant rates for the privilege of not living under a lean-to on Rauri Island. Planck found 152 people in a house that he thought could reasonably have held only 25.⁴⁷ The town's sweepers could not cope with ^{the} volume of waste produced under these conditions so Planck and the Magistrate sent in the police, with the result that the houses' population was 'thinned to reasonable limits.'⁴⁸ Planck did not specify how this was achieved: it was unlikely to have been without some distress to pilgrims, especially women in seclusion.⁴⁹

Planck never slackened in his war against unhealthy lodging-houses but it was not until the Ardh Kumbh Mela at Hardwar in 1885 that the local authorities seem to have addressed the issue with the thoroughness that he thought necessary.⁵⁰ In 1885 the lodging-houses were registered, 117 in all, and allotted a maximum number of residents. Each was inspected before eight o'clock every morning by a European officer, with a visit later in the day from a hospital assistant. 'Excess' pilgrims were moved onto Rauri Island.⁵¹ The authorities' definition of excess was obviously at odds with that of many lodging-house proprietors. In 1892 Ganpat Gir, a 35 year old Gosain, complained of the loss inflicted on him by the new rules:

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⁴⁷ *Eleventh annual report of the Sanitary Commissioner of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, 1878* (Allahabad, 1879), p. 46.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 47. In one lodging-house the discovery of a cholera victim led to the closure of the house and its fumigation with sulphur, the dispersal of its 150 pilgrim inhabitants, and the quarantining of the dead man's family in a hut near the hospital for four days.

⁵⁰ This initial concentration on Hardwar meant that the registration and control of lodging-houses was always more effective and thorough there than in any of the other NWP pilgrimage sites to receive attention subsequently. *Report of the Pilgrim Committee, United Provinces, 1913* (Simla, 1916), p. 8.

⁵¹ A.H. Harington, Magte Saharanpur, to Comr Meerut, no. 102, 15 Sept. 1885, UPSA, NWP&O Misc., A progs July 1886, no. 2, file 283, box 9.

I have a *haveli* at Hardwar. On the occasion of Mahavaruni fair [in 1892], in the ticket fixed by Government, only 165 pilgrims were allowed to stop in my house. There is room for 500 people. The Government did a great *zulum* [oppression, tyranny] in allowing 165 instead of 500 pilgrims in my house. I charge rent from pilgrims. This is my means of livelihood.⁵²

Planck's campaigning bore fruit on a larger scale in 1892 with the passing of the NWP Lodging-House Act (Act I of 1892).⁵³ The legislation enabled municipalities to fine lodging-house owners for maintaining unlicensed establishments and for ignoring basic sanitary requirements. Overcrowding, lack of ventilation and light, contaminated wells and foul latrines were the evils that the Act was intended to combat. The right of inspection and the imposition of licence fees were intrinsic to the Act's successful operation and financing.

But the Lodging-House Act was very unpopular and in Benares, Allahabad and Mathura the lodging-house keepers opposed its application with determination and skill. As early as 1883 rumours that a lodging-house tax was to be collected at Benares had alarmed the owners of *dharmshalas* and lodging-houses who feared the increased avenues it would afford the police for oppression and bribery.⁵⁴ It was this complaint that was repeated most frequently in the protests against the 1892 legislation. The March 1891 edition of Allahabad's *Hindi Pradip* complained that the bill would put the *pandas* of Allahabad, Mathura and Benares at the mercies of the police. Certainly pilgrims needed protection, but it was the police and the railway officials who needed to be controlled, not their *pandas* who fed and housed them.⁵⁵ The apprehensions were not confined to the lodging-house keepers. Many people were frightened at the prospect of health officers and their underlings being granted inspection powers. Holy men would be subjected to the insults of the police; female pilgrims would be shamed and their families humiliated; householders would no longer be allowed to accommodate holidaying friends and relatives; and extended families would be forcibly separated. In short, all manner of activities once venerated by society would now incur the unfavourable attention of the police and other municipal authorities, and acts of charity would be regulated and taxed.⁵⁶

⁵² Evidence of Ganpat Gir, 4 Sept. 1892, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs Mar. 1893, no. 76, file 511 B, box 64. After the 1879 clearance of the Hardwar lodging-houses the Saharanpur Magistrate reported that he had been inundated by complaints from houseowners about the sudden curtailment of their income. 'Memorandum in re Hardwar Fair, 1879', J. Sladen, Magte Saharanpur, 30 Apr. 1879, IOR, NWP&O General P/1458, A progs Feb. 1880, no. 64, 7 Feb. 1880.

⁵³ *An Act for Licensing, Inspection and Regulation of Lodging-Houses in Municipalities in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, passed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, 27 Nov. 1892.

⁵⁴ Report in the *Kavivachan Sudha*, a Hindi newspaper published weekly at Benares, 7 May 1883, SVN 1883, p. 415.

⁵⁵ *Hindi Pradip*, March 1891, SVN 1891, pp. 349-50.

⁵⁶ See, amongst others: *Hindustani*, 15 June 1892, SVN 1892, pp. 221-2; *Prayag Samachar*, 30 Nov. 1893, and *Bharat Jiwan*, 11 Dec. 1893, SVN 1893, pp. 539, 564; *Halat-i-Hind*, 15 Jan. 1894, SVN 1894, p. 52;

Protests notwithstanding, the Lodging-House Act was applied to the municipalities of Hardwar, Allahabad, Benares and Mathura before the end of 1894.⁵⁷ Hardwar, already used to lodging-house regulation, experienced little active opposition to the new legislation.⁵⁸ After the 1895 *mela* the chairman of the municipality reported that the extent of the new rules' ability to check overcrowding was indicated 'by the unusually large number of pilgrims who though the fair was by no means a large one were unable to find accommodation in the town & camped out in Rori Island.'⁵⁹ In the other three sites, however, the Hindu priesthood managed to elude the workings of the Act by a sophisticated combination of legal manoeuvres and popular protest. Their success testified to the extent to which their grievances were shared by the larger Hindu public.

The Act had defined a lodging-house keeper as someone who regularly received a direct or indirect consideration for housing visitors on his premises. But most of the lodging-houses were managed and/or owned by resident priests who, as part of their service to their wealthier clients, would house them in this more substantial accommodation rather than subjecting them to makeshift residences on the river sands. The cost to the pilgrims might have been high, but it is probable that they did not pay a separate sum for rent, as opposed to a general lump sum, expressed as a donation, for all of the priest's services. In reducing the numbers of lodgers allowed in each house, the health officers would have threatened not only the income of the priests but also the degrees of distinction that they could have offered their most valued pilgrim clients.⁶⁰ However, because the health officers could never prove that priests in charge of lodging-houses had been paid for providing accommodation, the

Najm-ul-Hind, 24 Jan. 1895, *Hindi Pradip*, Sept. and Oct. 1894, *Hindustan*, 15 Mar. 1895, *Hindustani*, 8 May and 12 June 1895, *Faryad-i-Hind*, 15 July 1895, SVN 1895, pp. 9, 74, 87, 147, 243-4, 370.

⁵⁷ The Act was also extended to the municipality of Ajudhia-Faizabad, although I am uncertain of the date of its application.

⁵⁸ In Hardwar lodging-houses had to be licensed according to the new rules after 1 October 1894. People were slow to come forward for licences; very few applications had been received by the end of January. After this the Joint Magistrate, Mr Dampier, took up residence in Hardwar in order to enforce the licensing of lodging-houses before the 1895 Mahavaruni Mela, due in March. He successfully prosecuted several people for maintaining an unlicensed lodging-house or for exceeding the number of lodgers stated in a licence, with the result that applications for licences increased rapidly in March. The fines imposed for a breach of the new laws were stiff, upto Rs.50 and even Rs.100 in some cases. R. Allen, 'Annual report of the Hardwar Union Municipality for 1894-95', UPSA, NWP&O Municipal, B progs Dec. 1895, no. 8, file 103B, box 34.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ In opposing the extension of the Pooree Lodging-House Act (Bengal Act IV of 1871) to Gaya in 1883, the Gayawals argued that they never charged their pilgrims a rental fee, but that if faced with a licence tax they would be forced to pass this on to their patrons. This, they argued, would render pilgrimage to Gaya 'difficult and impractical to a numerous class of Hindus, who for the most part visit Gaya by begging alms on their way.' Memorial to the Viceroy, March 1883, signed by Joteendro Mohum Tagore and others from Gaya, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs June 1884, no. 132. The Bengal authorities had earlier rejected this plea with the argument that the pilgrims had always paid a rental fee of some sort but that it had traditionally been included in 'one lump fee, proportioned to the pilgrim's means, but payable probably in instalments'. J.C. Geddes, Offg Supt and Remembrancer of Legal Affairs, to Secy to Govt Bengal, 22 Sept. 1879, *ibid.*, no. 134.

Act was virtually a dead letter amongst this class of people. The few lodging-house keepers who did not also provide pilgrims with religious services were more easily prosecuted for failing to take out licences.

In Mathura the Chaube Brahmans agitated furiously against the Act. Numerous signed petitions were sent to the NWP Government and to the Viceroy in which the Chaubes denied that they took rents from their pilgrims. When the Act was not withdrawn they refused to house the pilgrims who were thus forced to camp all about the city's gardens. The Chaubes' protest was sufficiently striking to engage the attention of many of the NWP's newspapers.⁶¹ The pilgrims joined in the agitation with a petition to the Viceroy complaining about the loss of their regular accommodation and backing the Chaubes' assertion that rent was never paid for lodging.⁶²

There is no doubt that the official assumption that the mass of lodging-house keepers did collect rent was viewed by the Mathura Chaubes as a slur upon their good character. Many of them did not own the houses in their care, but had been appointed to managerial positions by the proprietors - pious and wealthy Hindus who had undertaken to provide free accommodation for Hindu pilgrims. In this sense, most of them would have claimed to be managers of *dharmshalas*, not lodging-house keepers. The municipality's classification of them as the latter was tantamount to accusing them of betraying the trust of Hinduism's benefactors. The pilgrims were equally reluctant before the government to accuse their spiritual guides of self-aggrandizement.⁶³ The Chaubes soon triumphed, winning an exemption from the workings of the Act before the end of 1895. An inquiry in 1913 discovered that, of Mathura's many lodging-houses, only three were licensed, another 33 were specifically exempted from licensing, and the majority had no official status at all. Prosecutions for keeping an insanitary lodging-house had all but ceased because of the near impossibility of securing a conviction.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Hindustani*, 8 May and 12 June 1895, *Anis-i-Hind*, 22 June 1895, and *Bundelkhand Punch*, 1 July 1895, SVN 1895, pp. 243-4, 299, 310, 331, 345.

⁶² *Bharat Jiwan*, 8 July 1895, *ibid.*, p. 345.

⁶³ In 1913 a government inquiry into the sanitary conditions of the UP's pilgrimage sites regretted that in cases where lodging-house *pandas* had been taken to court, especially in Mathura and Benares, their lodgers had been loud in their defence and had always refused to accept that anything that they might have given their *panda* equalled an accommodation fee. *Report of the Pilgrim Committee*, pp. 7-9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17, but see also p. 11 where the number of licensed lodging-houses is put at eight. See also the article from *Faryad-i-Hind*, 15 July 1895, SVN 1895, p. 370

In Benares the success of the priesthood in avoiding the attentions of the municipal authorities was even more marked. All the Panch Dravid Purohits were exempted from the Act, so that of the 398 lodging-houses registered in Benares only 58 were required to have a licence.⁶⁵ Even in the licensed houses that the standards of hygiene were not very high. The 1913 inquiry found that municipal employees were no match for the powerful combines of the lodging-house keepers:

In the places of pilgrimage the lodging-house keepers have, as a class, a very considerable amount of influence, and if the whole duty of fixing the standards according to which licenses will be granted or refused is placed on the health officer, the tendency will be for the standards to be relaxed generally.⁶⁶

The Prayagwals of Allahabad did not secure such a clear-cut victory. In 1913 there were 84 licensed lodging-houses in the city and there appears to have been no blanket exemption in favour of the Prayagwals. Nevertheless their protest is noteworthy. There, as in Mathura, the priests refused to submit to licensing inspections and they stopped taking in pilgrims. This form of protest continued sporadically for several years and as it coincided with the depression of the late 1890s many locals linked the two factors of the Lodging-House Act 'oppression' and the decline in the attendance of pilgrims at the annual *mela*. The Prayagwals cannot have been united in the suspension of their accommodation facilities for the municipality did launch some successful prosecutions against them for overcrowding and one local paper, the *Prayag Samachar*, occasionally complained of the fines levied on them.⁶⁷ But nor can the municipality have achieved the control that it desired; the 1913 Pilgrim

⁶⁵ *Report of the Pilgrim Committee*, p. 11.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁶⁷ *Prayag Samachar*, 7 May 1896, SVN 1896, p. 260; *Prayag Samachar*, 14 Jan. 1897, SVN 1897, p. 47; *Prayag Samachar*, 3 Aug. 1899, SVN 1899, p. 413. In 1896 the Deputy Sanitary Commissioner complained of the difficulties made by the Prayagwals to the inspection and licensing of their lodging-houses. W.G. Thorold, Deputy Sanitary Comr 2nd Circle NWP&O, to Sanitary Comr NWP&O, no. 133, 20 Feb. 1896, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/4906, A progs Aug. 1896, no. 13a, file 372. The Magistrate of Allahabad complained that upto 18 April 1896 only sixteen licences had been taken out. In consequence he had instructed the municipal commissioners to watch buildings suspected of housing pilgrims so that prosecutions could be launched accordingly. By mid-May several cases were awaiting trial. One Prayagwal had already been convicted and fined but, as he was appealing to the High Court, the Magistrate held over the other prosecutions until that decision had been handed down. H.M. Bird, Magte Allahabad, to Comr Allahabad, no. 121/XXII-8, 22 May 1896, *ibid.*, no. 17a. After the 1897 *mela* Magistrate Fuller observed that although he had secured two convictions for overcrowding of lodging-houses it was unlikely that the Prayagwals could ever be persuaded to take out licences. He thought that the Lodging-House Act's usefulness was limited to its penalties for overcrowding. J.B. Fuller, Magte Allahabad, to Comr Allahabad, no. 99/XXII-6, 11 May 1897, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/5125, A progs July 1897, no. 1d, file 372. In 1901 very heavy rain fell at the Magh Mela which meant that many pilgrims preferred to be housed in the city rather than in the Prayagwals' makeshift huts at the confluence. As a result of this the health officer launched a large number of successful prosecutions against Prayagwals for housing pilgrims in unlicensed premises. W.E.M. Campbell, Jt Magte in charge of the Magh Mela, 'Report on the Magh Mela of 1901', UPSA, NWP&O Misc. (General), A progs Dec. 1901, no. 2b, file 372.

Committee included Allahabad in its complaint that in all the pilgrimage sites, perhaps with the exception of Hardwar, substantial numbers of *pandas'* lodging-houses had escaped licensing.⁶⁸

However the Lodging-House Act was not without effect. The fear of regulation and inspection by municipal authorities encouraged people who provided accommodation for pilgrims to make their services more overtly religious in order to avoid the disadvantages now consequent on obvious rent collection. *Dharmshalas*, or pilgrim rest-houses which provided pilgrims with free accommodation, were never intended to be regulated by the Act. These were the buildings erected at pilgrimage sites by pious gentlemen who wished to benefit their less wealthy fellows. They were often lofty masonry structures, suitable testimony to the benefactor's spirit of charity. Although in theory any Hindu pilgrim could hope to find accommodation at a *dharmshala*, most had a clearly-defined clientele and within a pilgrimage site different *dharmshalas* served as the focal points of regional, caste or professional affiliation amongst the pilgrims.⁶⁹ But if the original owner of the *dharmshala* did not reside locally there were often problems with the upkeep of the building and its management. In 1913 the Pilgrim Committee observed that this factor, combined with the widespread and practised dislike of the Lodging-House Act, had fostered the creation of a new type of pilgrim housing, 'spurious *dharmshalas*':

The distinction between a voluntary payment and a charge is very subtle and difficult to prove, and the knowledge of this, combined with the great freedom from special sanitary control which *dharmshalas* have enjoyed in the past, has tended to create a special class of house for the reception of pilgrims which are *dharmshalas* in name only. A rich pilgrim will build a *dharmshala* at a place of pilgrimage and make it over to his priest who is resident there to look after [it]. The latter will continue to call it a *dharmshala*, but will exact fees from all who put up in it: in other words the so-called *dharmshala* has become a lodging-house.⁷⁰

In Allahabad the District Magistrate found that some Prayagwals had adopted the simple expedient of calling their lodging-houses *dharmshalas* in order to escape municipal interference.⁷¹

Partly because of the difficulty of distinguishing between 'true' and 'spurious' *dharmshalas*, legislation

⁶⁸ *Report of the Pilgrim Committee*, p. 9.

⁶⁹ In Hardwar, for example, the Maharaja of Patiala kept a *haveli* with a resident *mahant* for housing *fakirs* of the Nirmala Akhara. Evidence of Mahant Kapur Singh, 40, Mahant of Nirmala Akhara at Kankhal, 2 Sept. 1892, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs Mar. 1893, no. 76, file 511B, box 64. Lachmi Chand, a *zamindar* of Meerut, maintained a house at Hardwar in which not only he but scores of pilgrims could stay, all without cost. At the 1892 *mela* at least some of the seventy or eighty pilgrims living in his *haveli* were personal acquaintances of his from Meerut and Hissar. Evidence of Lachmi Chand, 48, *zamindar* of Meerut, 7 Sept. 1892, *ibid.*, pp. 225-6.

⁷⁰ *Report of the Pilgrim Committee*, p. 22.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

introduced in 1915 replaced the Lodging-House Act with regulations encompassing all forms of accommodation for pilgrims, free or otherwise. By this move the priests of north India's chief pilgrimage sites lost their immunity from sanitary controls.⁷²

Antagonism between priest and state was a feature of nineteenth-century British rule in India, and the Lodging-House Act was only one of several attempts by the British to impose some sort of control on Hinduism's religious professionals. As we have seen, the British inherited a priestly class largely unfettered by taxation and government control, a legacy of the erosion of indigenous state power at the time of British expansion. This freedom, followed shortly afterwards by the growth in the pilgrimage industry, produced a professional group of increasing prosperity and independence.⁷³ By the early to mid-nineteenth century any attempts by the British to reincorporate the priests into the administrative framework of their respective localities were belligerently resisted, not only by the men concerned but by their patrons and disciples as well, reflecting a growing consciousness amongst Hindus that it was wrong to subject their religious guides to secular control. Ironically, it was attempts to tax the priests that were most disliked, as two examples from Mathura and Hardwar will show.

At Mathura in 1816 several hundred Chaubes sat *dharna* in the Magistrate's camp for almost a week before submitting to the 'voluntary' *chaukidari* tax that he was attempting to impose on them. The Chaubes claimed never to have paid any taxes before and they resented enormously this 'innovation' of British rule. One infuriated protester threatened the Magistrate, Mr Halhed, with an insurrection that would see every Englishman in India cut to pieces. The other inhabitants of Mathura were happy to pay the tax but they did not support Halhed in his insistence that the Chaubes should also have to pay.⁷⁴ But if under strong regional governments the Gayawals, the Prayagwals and the

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 8, fn. Similarly tough legislation was enacted for Gaya in the Bihar and Orissa Places of Pilgrimage Act of 1920. Clearly, earlier lodging-house legislation was felt to have failed there also. Vidyarthi reports that the 1920 Act was vigorously opposed by the Gayawals, who saw in it a sustained attack on their privileges and income. The Lodging House Committee set up in Gaya to administer the Act took Rs.3 per pilgrim from the Gayawal or the owners of the house who accommodated the pilgrims; in the 1950s the Gayawals complained of the deleterious effect that this had had on their earnings. L.P. Vidyarthi, *The sacred complex in Hindu Gaya* (London, 1961), pp. 100-1.

⁷³ Vidyarthi believes that the Gayawals' freedom in the nineteenth century substantially contributed to their wealth and their sense of power: 'While the number of pilgrims continued to increase, the government did not take any steps to curtail the sacred and secular roles of the Gayawal in dealing with the pilgrims. The Gayawal had a free hand in accommodating their pilgrims, in conducting them to different sacred centres, and in receiving from them as much in the way of gifts as they could. The monopolistic status of the Gayawal left them free to extort wealth either through persuasion or compulsion.' *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁷⁴ Halhed eventually forced the Chaubes into submission, having cut off their food and *bhang* supplies and threatened them and sympathetic townspeople with a double rate of tax if they did not halt their protest immediately. All of Halhed's actions were illegal; Mathura was not required by law to have a *chaukidari*

Benares Gangaputras had all paid some sort of tax, it seems unlikely that the Chaubes had always been exempt. In 1816 it is more likely that they were attempting to cement a privilege of only ten or twenty years' standing.

We get a glimpse of the priests' protected status in formation at Hardwar in 1831, where a new *chaukidari* tax was under consideration. After protests to local officers, the Gaur Brahmans of Hardwar were exempted from the tax. It was of greater significance, however, that in Jawalapur and Kankhal the Brahmans were allowed to opt out of schemes that had already been running for some years. All of the other townspeople continued with their monthly contributions. A suggestion that the Brahmans be responsible for policing in Hardwar was not welcomed by the Saharanpur Magistrate, who warned against any further concessions to their independence:

[T]he superiority they claim in point of personal consideration and the general sway exercised by them over persons of an inferior order render them impatient of control in their own persons, and less subservient than any other class of the native community to the ruling authorities.⁷⁵

In effect competition was developing between the government and the priests for the allegiance of the Hindus, and the priests, as men beyond the government's reach, were acquiring a loaded status as representatives of all that was traditional and unchanging in Hindu society. The British disliked the power wielded by the priests over their followers and, as it was an authority independent of the patronage of the colonial state, wanted all the more to tame it. Few officers believed that the priests had earned the respect which Hindus accorded them, and in attempting to subject the priesthood to their secular authority many styled themselves as benefactors of the mass of unworldly Hindus. By implication the priests did not have the welfare of their fellow Hindus at heart. This helps to explain why agents of the government adopted tones of righteous indignation when discussing priests' evasions of state controls. The 1913 Pilgrim Committee was very unhappy that priests, by virtue of their religious status, had been able to ignore the Lodging-House Act. Similarly the 1908-09 Municipal Taxation Committee stressed repeatedly the duty of the government to subject all classes of religious

establishment and any scheme should have been entirely voluntary. The Chaubes had every right to oppose the tax but the government chose to ignore Halhed's impropriety given that he had not stirred the townspeople to outright violence. N.J. Halhed, Magte Agra, to W.B. Bayley, Secy to Govt, 23 Dec. 1816; W.B. Bayley, Secy to Govt, to Magte Agra, 6 Jan. 1817, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/133/6, 10 Jan. 1817, nos. 1-2. N.J. Halhed, Magte Agra, to W.B. Bayley, Secy to Govt, 13 Jan. 1817, IOR, Bengal Criminal Judicial WP P/133/7, 7 Feb. 1817, no. 10.

⁷⁵ T.J. Turner, Actg Magte Saharanpur, to R.C. Glyn, Offg Comr Meerut, 13 June 1831, UPRAA, Saharanpur Collector, Pre-Mutiny Records, Judicial Letters Issued 1831-33, vol. 226.

functionaries to some form of licensing or taxation. It was unjust, argued the committee, that at sites of pilgrimage the priests should amass huge fortunes without returning any of their wealth to the community.⁷⁶

Godless science: the dispersal of the Hardwar Mahavaruni Mela, 1892

Sanitation reform, continually refined and emboldened, reached the height of its intrusiveness in the cancellation of the 1892 Hardwar *mela*. The local and imperial governments had for some years disagreed over the merits of the stricter forms of disease management, viz., the quarantining of pilgrims, either on arrival at or departure from a fair, and the banning of high-risk gatherings. The local government had usually favoured the more stringent controls; even so, the course adopted in 1892 was unprecedented.⁷⁷

The fair was an extraordinary one, a Mahavaruni Mela, for which 250,000 pilgrims were expected on the two big bathing days of 26 and 28 March.⁷⁸ But on 22 March the Sanitary Commissioner reported that cholera had broken out in the fair. With the backing of the NWP Government the Saharanpur authorities began to disperse the assembly. On the night of 23 March officials of the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway were instructed to stop issuing tickets to Hardwar. Oncoming trains were turned back and empty wagons were trucked into Hardwar to evacuate the seventy thousand pilgrims already there. Civil and military authorities in the surrounding districts were notified of the unexpected early return of the pilgrims and told to turn back those still on their way. In Hardwar

⁷⁶ Of Mathura the committee wrote: '[I]t is desirable that a license tax should be imposed on *pandas* and *ghatwals*. They make a large income from their clients, and return little of it to the community in the shape of taxation.' The committee also wanted to tax bankers and lodging-house keepers. Brindavan was open to similar recommendations: 'The temples and their servants and the lodging-house keepers are wealthy, and we think that though it is impossible that the temples should be taxed, it is desirable that the chief profession should pay for the municipal convenience it enjoys.' In Benares there were many classes that the committee wished to subject to increased taxation, especially the bankers and jewellers, however most indignation was reserved for the *pandas*: 'They are a wealthy and avaricious class, and we consider that they should be subject to a fairly heavy license fee. If this results in reduced numbers, it is probable that the fact will be beneficial to the visitors to Benares and in the best interests of the temples themselves. The measure would prove popular and was suggested by Hindu witnesses.' *Report of the Municipal Taxation Committee, United Provinces, 1908-09* (Allahabad, 1909), pp. 94, 100. It is hard to believe, in the light of the earlier successful agitation against the Lodging-House Act, that the licensing of the *pandas* would have been popular. It seems that the committee's witnesses came from that official category of men - 'respectable Hindu gentlemen' - which, by its very definition, would contain only men who shared many of the government's priorities. That they should have agreed with the government about the need to license *pandas* is only to be expected.

⁷⁷ The 1890 Magh Mela was broken up prematurely because of cholera, but only one or two days short of its completion and well after the main bathing day. Nevertheless the move provoked enormous criticism in the native press.

⁷⁸ The ordinary Dikhauti Mela at Hardwar would have followed on 10 or 11 April.

itself police and civil officers and some local notables were sent around to lodging-houses and encampment sites to explain to the pilgrims why they must leave.⁷⁹

But the pilgrims did not want to go. The railway carriages stood empty at the station until the afternoon of 25 March. Though no pilgrims offered violence to the police they were tenacious in their resistance. Some lodging-houses were cleared on 24 March, but the success was temporary. Of his duties the next morning the District Superintendent of Police reported:

We found that the lodging-houses had again been crammed, and the pilgrims, who had evidently been tampered with by Pandas, were far more sulky and stubborn than they were on the 24th. We often had to form a line of constables behind a crowd of pilgrims who would refuse to move on and push them on. At other times some of them would squat down with their bundles and say, 'It is better to die here. We won't go home (*behtar hai marna yahin: ham nahin jate ghar*).' These had to be forced up naturally [sic] and bundles shoved on to their heads and pushed on and told to go. Half measures were useless. The pilgrims would not get up by *khushamad karoing* [cajoling] them, and they had to be forced up. We also found that a very good method of moving them on was to raise your stick and rush at them. This generally resulted in a stampede for a certain distance.⁸⁰

In this manner lodging-houses were emptied and reemptied, some upto three times. Some wealthier pilgrims were able to delay their evacuation by bribing the police.⁸¹ Guards stationed at the Har-ki-pairi Ghat had to hold back pilgrims who were desperate to collect some of the precious *gangajal* before departing. The *halwais*, retailers of most of the eatables in the town, attempted to starve out the police. One *halwai*, when abused by an inspector for refusing to sell sweets to his constables, protested: 'I alone have not done it. All have combined not to sell the *sauda* [goods]. All the *bara admis* [lit. big men]. Any one who sells *sauda* will have to pay a penalty.'⁸² When the police, tired and hungry, could no longer effectively fight the resistance of the pilgrims a company of Sappers and Miners was called in to continue the evacuation. They started at the *ghats* where, on the evening of 25 March, several thousand pilgrims were still trying to bathe. The Superintendent of Police reported:

[T]he pilgrims moved down the riverside getting a dip where they could and thus we had to keep on following them about three miles, leaving sentries at every 30 or 40 yards to keep guard on the *ghats*....A number of pilgrims crossed over into the Bijnour jungle. The river was fordable in several places. After considerable difficulty we managed to get some Sappers and Miners between the pilgrims and the river and thus blocked them bathing. Pilgrims kept shouting '*Nahaenge, nahaenge*.' [We will bathe, we will bathe.]

⁷⁹ William Holmes, Magte Saharanpur, to Comr Meerut, no. 358, 8 Apr. 1892, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs Mar. 1893, no. 4, file 511B, box 64.

⁸⁰ Evidence of C.F. Knyvett, District Supt of Police, 22 Sept. 1892, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs Mar. 1893, no. 77, file 511B, box 64.

⁸¹ Evidence of Lala Ram Narayan, *saraf* of Amritsar, 20 Aug. 1892, and Maharaj Mal, trader from Amritsar, 23 Aug. 1892, *ibid*.

⁸² Evidence of Raja Ranbir Singh, resident of Dehra Dun, 21 Sept. 1892, *ibid*.

The women jumped in naked. We had to leave them behind....Pilgrims stayed on till 5th or 6th April or more than that, and the towns of Hardwar, Kankhal and Jawalapur were not thoroughly cleared till about those days. They loitered on for the Dekhauti fair. Pilgrims hid in every creek and corner in Siwalik hills, in jungles, in caves and in every possible hiding place.⁸³

At the station the railway and civil police had to force the pilgrims to buy tickets. The Traffic Superintendent of the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway described the pilgrims' resistance and the authorities' countermeasures:

The force used was that men were lifted up and pushed along towards the railway station. Policemen got hold of the men by their arms, lifted them up and pushed them along. The Panjabi pilgrims used to get behind the women. The police had to get between the women and pull out the men. When the outcry of separation from their families was raised, as an experiment Colonel Cantor released about six or eight men from the crowd. These men were shouting that they had left their wives and children behind. They simply returned and sat down before Colonel Cantor and begged of him to be allowed to stay on at Hardwar.⁸⁴

Eventually the town was cleared and the cholera contained; certainly there was no epidemic like that of 1867. The Magistrate of Saharanpur, Mr Holmes, was relatively satisfied with the proceedings. He acknowledged that there had been problems, but he attributed the pilgrims' 'reluctance' to the antagonism of the Hardwar priests and traders who stood to lose much money from the abandonment of the fair.⁸⁵ Neither he nor his superiors expected the enormous political backlash that swept across north India in the succeeding months.

The agitation was overwhelmingly urban, attracting most of its support outside Hardwar from the commercial and religious classes of Amritsar, Lahore and Calcutta. Traditional and modern means of organization and protest were harnessed: the *panchayat* and respectful petitioning on the one hand, and printing presses, public meetings and professional legal representation on the other. Demands for a public inquiry were loud and insistent. But the urban nature of the agitation, and particularly the involvement of journalists and lawyers from Calcutta, put the NWP Government on its guard. The Lieutenant Governor, Sir Auckland Colvin, was no admirer of the Hindu commercial classes; already he was unhappy that their representatives had excelled at elective municipal government at the expense of traditional, conservative landlords, his ideal pillars of a stable society.⁸⁶

⁸³ Evidence of C.F. Knyvett, District Supt of Police, 23 Sept. 1892, *ibid.*, no. 77.

⁸⁴ Evidence of A.W.A. Pope, District Supt of Traffic on Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway, 22 Sept. 1892, *ibid.*, no. 77.

⁸⁵ William Holmes, Magte Saharanpur, to Comr Meerut, no. 358, 8 Apr. 1892, *ibid.*, no.4.

⁸⁶ Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: the politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 57-8.

Together three 'outsiders', Pandit Gopinath of Lahore, Suraj Mal Jhanjhanwala of Calcutta, and one Sriman Swami of uncertain address, added structure and sophistication to the raw stirrings of protest amongst the unhappy pilgrims and priests. Sriman Swami was a *sadhu*, reputedly a former convict, who had acquired all-India fame as an advocate of cow-protection. His organizational skills and abilities as a public speaker were said to have generated the founding of dozens of *gaurakshini sabhas* in the previous four or five years, but his detractors - and there were many - accused him of pocketing donations for his own use. He was known to be hostile to the British and he forfeited few opportunities for insulting them and Christianity.⁸⁷ More than anything else, Sriman Swami's shadowy presence in the Hardwar agitation - he presided over a meeting of protest in Lahore, but then failed to appear at the subsequent inquiry - convinced the NWP Government that the protesters had no legitimate grievances and were simply attempting to foment discontent amongst their uneducated fellows.

Pandit Gopinath was the editor of *Akhbar-i-Am*, a Lahore newspaper, and president of the Punjab Sanatan Dharm Sabha. As there had been a huge gathering of the Bharat Dharm Mahamandal in Benares in early March it is possible that Gopinath had attended the functions in Benares and then stopped off at Hardwar on his return to Lahore, thus witnessing the dispersal.⁸⁸

Suraj Mal (d.1895), unlike Sriman Swami and Pandit Gopinath, could not be dismissed by the government as an impecunious, professional agitator. He was an immensely wealthy man, a Marwari banker renowned throughout north India for his liberality. The famed swing bridge, Lachhmanjhula, a boon to pilgrims journeying to the Himalayan shrines of Badrinath and Kedarnath, was built by him at a cost of Rs.28,000. Although his business interests were Calcutta-based he maintained a large presence in Hardwar. During the subsequent inquiry the Magistrate of Saharanpur was heard to say of Suraj Mal: 'He regards himself and is regarded by the Pandas as the Lord of Hurdwar.'⁸⁹ There is no doubt that his money and influence secured the services of the British Indian Association and its lawyers and it is probable that he helped some witnesses and observers with the costs of coming to

⁸⁷ J.R. McLane, *Indian nationalism and the early Congress* (Princeton, 1977), p. 301.

⁸⁸ Ten thousand people were said to have participated in one or more of the Mahamandal's functions, which included a concerted programme of prayers and offerings intended to lift contemporary Hinduism from its fallen state. *Tribune*, 19 Mar. 1892, p. 4; *Bharat Jiwan*, 21 Mar. 1892, SVN 1892, p. 101.

⁸⁹ *Tribune*, 7 Dec. 1892, p. 2.

Hardwar. He had a large *haveli* at Jawalapur and was certainly in a position to provide accommodation for any who attended the inquiry's sittings from afar.

In Calcutta and Lahore there were well-attended meetings of protest. Petitions were drawn up alleging acts of brutality and injustice in the dispersal of the pilgrims, and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta and Gopinath's *Akhbar-i-Am* published accounts of fantastic attacks on the Hindu religion, such as the killing of fish in the sacred pool, the defilement of idols, and the locking up of temples, all said to have been carried out by Europeans and Muslims on official duty at the *mela*. Newspapers in the NWP repeated the allegations and expressed horror at the rude interruption of a holy gathering. At the same time, however, many editors assured the government that they understood the nature of its difficulties. The comments in a Moradabad weekly, *Rahbar*, are representative:

Government, which sees through the spectacles of science, may say what it likes regarding cholera; but the Hindus, who believe in fate, think that no man can die until his hour has come, and cannot realize how the germs of disease which broke out a year ago still continue to exist, having survived the rains and the winter.⁹⁰

In July the British Indian Association forwarded to the Government of India a memorial signed by five hundred people claiming to have direct experience of the abuses at Hardwar. The Association's involvement in the agitation was probably crucial to the appointment of an inquiry for, although the NWP Government may have resented further intervention from Bengal, it would have been foolhardy to ignore the unusual degree of cooperation between commercial Hindus, professional agitators and this prominent landlord organization. The British Indian Association's members were Bengali *zamindars*, political and economic conservatives, who nonetheless could boast a tradition of protecting Indians' rights. In the indigo disturbances of the 1850s and '60s the Association had lobbied Parliament to protect the peasants from the oppressions of the European planters. In 1892 the Association faced a political void. Relations with the Congress had always been cool, and the loose alliance between the *zamindars* and Calcutta's rising professional class was under strain. In a few more years the new urban elite, led by the lawyer Surendranath Banerjea, would displace the older landlord group from the Calcutta Corporation. Tenancy reform threatened the *zamindars*' economic and social status; in the 1890s they no longer championed the cause of the cultivators.⁹¹ Thus, unsure of its place in the

⁹⁰ *Rahbar*, 17 May 1892, SVN 1892, p. 183.

⁹¹ McLane, *Indian nationalism and the early Congress*, pp. 217-20.

Hindu community and Bengal politics, the British Indian Association was probably relieved to take up the relatively safe question of the maltreatment of Hindu pilgrims.

Upon receipt of the Association's memorial the NWP Government convened a two-man committee of inquiry into the complaints. In August Kunwar Jwala Prasad, a Joint Magistrate of Saharanpur, and Lala Nihal Chand, an Honorary Magistrate and banker of Muzaffarnagar city, began hearing evidence. The careful choice of two Hindus indicates that the local government had finally grasped the political implications of its actions at Hardwar. But both men were classic examples of the NWP administration's favoured 'native gentlemen' and Jwala Prasad in particular was so closely identified with the government's cause that the vernacular press targeted him as an official yes-man, next to useless in an inquiry into the misbehaviour of government employees.⁹²

The inquiry is interesting not for its conclusions - the authorities were found to have used only reasonable force and the individual charges of assault on the Hindu religion were dismissed as malicious fabrication - but for the extent of antagonism that it uncovered between the representatives of the government and Hardwar's religious community.⁹³ Of the 163 witnesses produced by the complainants, 130 came from around Hardwar, and, of these, 86 were classified in the report as *pandas*, *pujaris*, priests or Gosains. The remaining 44 were shopkeepers. The final report pointed out, obviously enough, that all of these witnesses were somehow related to one another, if not by caste, marriage, or profession, then by landlord-tenant engagements or neighbourhood. But the complainants

⁹² See the complaints about the inquiry's findings in the *Hindustani*, 14 and 21 Dec. 1892, the *Colonel*, 24 Dec. 1892, and *Bharat Jiwan*, 19 Dec. 1892; SVN 1892, pp. 466, 474.

Kunwar Jwala Prasad was the eldest son of Raja Jai Kishan Das Bahadur, C.S.I., of Moradabad, a former *tahsildar* handsomely rewarded for his loyalty during the Rebellion. Jai Kishan Das's father, a Chaube Brahman of Batesar, had been an agent to a Lucknow firm of bankers and had held considerable amounts of land around Etah and Agra. Jwala Prasad was a graduate of Calcutta University, through Queen's College at Benares, accomplished in English, Sanskrit and Persian. His government posts had included deputy collectorships and joint and officiating magistracies. After completing his duties on the 1892 committee of inquiry he was made an officiating judge, a permanent judgeship following shortly thereafter. At the turn of the century his son left for England to prepare for the civil service examinations. He returned with his ICS credentials to work in the UP. In 1911 the family's annual land revenue obligations amounted to Rs.22,000. *The Kayastha Samachar*, III, June 1901, p. 473. H.R. Nevill, *Moradabad: A Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1911), pp. 92-3.

Lala Nihal Chand's father and uncle were bankers and *zamindars* in Muzaffarnagar whose readiness to advance cash to British officers in difficulty in 1857 had earned them big increases in the size of their estates. By 1900 the family held 41 villages. Lala Nihal Chand, and later his son, Lala Sukhbir Sinha, dominated Muzaffarnagar's municipal politics and ran the Muzaffarnagar Zamindars' Association, founded in 1896. Francis Robinson has pointed out that Lala Nihal Chand was one of the very few municipal politicians that the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Auckland Colvin, was likely to admire: his money, his land, and his family were all 'old' and his loyalty to the government was unquestionable. *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, p. 58, n. 4.

⁹³ 'Report regarding certain complaints connected with the dispersion of the Mahavaruni fair held at Hardwar in March last', submitted by Kunwar Jwala Prasad, Jt Magte Saharanpur, to Magte Saharanpur, 26 Sept. 1892, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs Mar. 1893, no. 59, file 511B, box 64. Hereafter 'Report regarding certain complaints'.

from the religious professions shared other characteristics as well, a fact which added to the government's belief that irresponsible elements in Hardwar were conspiring to discredit the authorities before the mass of credulous Hindus. The government would have recognized none of these men as a 'respectable Hindu gentleman', but they were men of some financial independence. Several *pandas* owned up to earnings of one or two hundred rupees at the 1891 Kumbh Mela and several more reported paying modest sums of some twenty to forty rupees in income tax.⁹⁴

The complainants from Hardwar also shared a degree of familiarity with the institutions of government. They do not seem to have been intimidated by the proceedings of the inquiry; in the report charges of insolence and flippancy are frequently levelled at their manner of giving evidence. One witness, a *panda* of Jawalapur, detailed his extensive experience of the local courts and his history of petty religious disputes with Muslims:

I have attended Civil Courts. I have also attended Criminal Courts. I was one of the complainants in the *pipal* tree case between Hindus and Muhammadans. I was an accused in a criminal case. It was a case about fishing by a Muhammadan at the Ganges Canal *ghat* at Jawalapur. A Muhammadan was the complainant. I also brought a cross complaint. The Muhammadan was fined Rs.5. I was discharged. Sardar Lachhman Singh [on duty at the Mahavaruni Mela] came in the *pipal* case between Hindus and Muhammadans.

I am 39 years old. I have been visiting Courts for seven or eight years. I have been to Courts about 10 or 15 times. I have given evidence about two or three times.⁹⁵

Two more Jawalapur *pandas*, Nupa and Faqira, had knowledge of the local police because they were bound over to keep the peace during the Muharram observances at Saharanpur city. The Muslim police inspector who was on duty at the *mela*, Abdul Kayum, was the same officer who had bound them over as recognized trouble-makers.⁹⁶

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⁹⁴ Evidence of Gauridatt Deehet, Ram Chandra, Surja Babu, Mula and Lekha, all *pandas* of Jawalapur, *ibid.*, no. 71. Ram Chandra reported earnings of Rs.800 and Lekha Rs.4-500 from the previous Kumbh Mela. See also the evidence of Durga Datt, a *panda* and teacher in a vedic school in Kankhal and of Jagan Nath and Thandi Ram, *pandas* of Kankhal, *ibid.*, no. 69. If anything, the *mela* earnings were probably under-reported. The estimates were given to an inquiry anxious to prove that the complainants were motivated by economic self-interest, i.e., the financial losses that they had sustained as a result of the premature break-up of the fair. One witness corroborated the inquiry's suspicions about under-reportage of losses when he claimed that, as a *purohit* of some of the *pandas* of Jawalapur, he had made Rs.100-150 at the 1891 Kumbh Mela. As for his *jajmans* however: 'Pandas earn thousands of rupees. They support us.' Evidence of Shankar, *purohit* of Jawalapur, 3 Sept. 1892, *ibid.*, no. 76.

⁹⁵ Evidence of Surja Babu, *panda* of Jawalapur, 29 Aug. 1892, *ibid.*, no.71.

⁹⁶ Evidence of Faqira and Nupa, 3 Sept. 1892, *ibid.*, no. 76. Yet another *panda* of Jawalapur, Kanhaiya, was also familiar with this officer and the courts: 'The Inspector was a Muhammadan....He is a fat dark man. He has a beard. I have seen him in Saharanpur *kachahri*. I have always cases in *kachahri*. I have cases in Civil Courts. I saw that Inspector in Hardwar investigating cases. I saw him in Hardwar *mela*.' Evidence of Kanhaiya, 3 Sept. 1892, *ibid.*

A municipal commissioner, Balwantgir, who claimed to have witnessed the forcible closing of temples, had his evidence devalued by the inquiry because of his litigation with the municipality over compensation for lands taken up at the previous year's Kumbh Mela.⁹⁷

The depositions of the Hardwar witnesses also show that quite a few of them had come into contact with the *mela* authorities through the imposition of the lodging-house controls. We have already seen how one Gosain used the inquiry to complain of the government's tyranny in reducing the number of his lodgers from five hundred to 165. Several others were at pains to stress that they had not taken in more pilgrims than that specified in the ticket attached to their door.⁹⁸ It was Hardwar that had seen the most efficient lodging-house controls. As reforms were initiated there before the enactment of the Lodging-House Act, *dharmshalas* had not escaped registration and licensing, rendering it very difficult for a lodging-house keeper-cum-*panda* to evade the attention of the municipal health officers. Many of the *pandas* used the inquiry to show their resentment at this interference with their operations.

In the main, the inquiry rejected the evidence of the Hardwar witnesses and accepted that of the remaining witnesses, mostly Punjabi traders who levelled non-specific charges against the authorities of rough handling, separation of families, defilement of cooking areas, and general high-handedness. It is hard to disagree with the report's findings that many of the local witnesses had colluded to set up false accusations of gross outrages. But the inquiry took a particularly narrow view of the causes of this hostility, nor did it care to examine closely the implications of the charges thus put forward. Almost certainly every one of the Hardwar complainants had lost some money in the break-up of the *mela*, however this did not have to be the sole cause of their resentment. In giving evidence the Hardwar witnesses were asked to estimate the extent of their losses. The answer that nearly all of them gave, that the loss was in the damage done to their religion ('My *dharm* was lost.'), seems to have been viewed by the inquiry as an act of prevarication. One *panda* and lodging-house manager lamented that

⁹⁷ A complaint presented to Joint Magistrate Thornton on behalf of the temples' *pujaris* was dismissed too because it was written by Jhandagir, an agent of Balwantgir: 'The application was drawn up at the instigation of Bulwantgir, and the allegations in it are tissues of falsehoods.' 'Report regarding certain complaints', pp. 82-3.

⁹⁸ Evidence of Nupa, *panda* of Jawalapur and *thikadar* of a *haveli* at Gaughat, Hardwar, 3 Sept. 1892, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs Mar. 1893, no. 76, file 511 B, box 64. See also the evidence of Sattu, *panda* of Jawalapur, 30 Aug. 1892, *ibid.*, no. 71.

by the action of the government 'the sanctity of the *tirath* was diminished.'⁹⁹ And yet this type of complaint was accorded no legitimacy in the inquiry.

Even though the British traditionally attributed to priests an unrivalled ability to control their pilgrims, the priests at Hardwar were not consulted about the break-up of the fair, nor was their assistance sought in effecting it. Resentment at this crude slight shows strongly in the deposition of Shankar, a 65 year old *purohit*:

I have seen 5 or 6 *Kumbhs*. I have not yet discovered why this *mela* was stopped. The *saheb* did not send for the *chaudharis* of Brahmans and consult them. Never a fair was dispersed before the *parbi* [bathing day]....There was great *mar dhai* [chaos] in the *mela*. There was no *bandobast* [order, system] about any matter.¹⁰⁰

In the light of this statement it is interesting to discover that the memorial of complaint that initiated the inquiry was drawn up and signed at two *panchayats* of the local *pandas*, following on from the agitation in Lahore and Calcutta. Mulchand, a school master, was responsible for the composition of the memorial, but it was framed under the auspices of the *chaudharis* of the religious professions. The first *panchayat* was held at the Jawalapur residence of Suraj Mal Jhanjhanwala. Khub Chand, *sarpanch* of the *pandas*, convened the second *panchayat* at Kankhal. Potential witnesses amongst the *pandas* who did not attend either *panchayat* were later sought out for their support and signature. The inquiry viewed this as further evidence of conspiracy, rather than as a reassertion of the customary forms of authority and decision-making that had been ignored during the dispersal.

Shankar's statement above also points to a sense of disorder, all that was proper and natural at a religious gathering had been repudiated by the unprecedented intervention of the authorities. Jai Dyal Gir, a 60 year old Gosain from Hardwar, protested that 'the *mela* was dispersed by *mir pit* [beating]. Such *afat* I never saw before. I saw three or four Kumbh *melas*, but I never saw such an *afat* as at the Mahavaruni fair.'¹⁰¹ A trader from Amritsar who kept a shop in Hardwar likened the dispersal to 'the massacre of Delhi'.¹⁰² And a *panda* who saw his *jajmans* chased away by *sipahis* in the midst of a ceremony for their ancestors bemoaned that: 'Never such a *zulum* took place. It did not take place even under Muhammadan rule.'¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Evidence of Lekha, 30 Aug. 1892, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁰ Evidence of Shankar, 3 Sept. 1892, *ibid.*, no. 76.

¹⁰¹ Evidence of Jai Dyal Gir, 4 Sept. 1892, *ibid*.

¹⁰² Evidence of Sannu, 4 Sept. 1892, *ibid*.

¹⁰³ Evidence of Mahesh, *panda* of Jawalapur, 29 Aug. 1892, *ibid.*, no. 71.

The inquiry ought to have confirmed the government's worst suspicions about these men of religion. They were sufficiently familiar with government institutions not to be in awe of their workings and they were independent enough of state patronage to be able to question the government's priorities. The charges that the *pandas* constructed showed that they expected the authorities to be hostile to them and their religion. For example, to argue that Muslim *sipahis* were used extensively in the *mela* dispersal was not so much an attack on Muslims, but rather on the government; in its perceived lack of sympathy with Hinduism it was seen to have gone out of its way to humiliate the priests and pilgrims at Hardwar.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, a charge that *sipahis* had trampled on *pindas* [offerings to one's ancestors] was not an accusation of carelessness against the authorities but one of their intent to convey deliberate insult.

The inquiry seemed to take this hostility for granted, although, as noted above, it discerned its origins in short-term, material grievances. It also accepted without question that the pilgrims' resistance had been manufactured by their priests.¹⁰⁵ It did not enter the inquiry's deliberations that priests and traders were not the only ones to feel any loss, that together the pilgrims and the residents of Hardwar shared a perspective of the *mela* which the authorities had violated. It ought not to have been surprising that organized protest was forthcoming only from the men who had had some dealings with the local establishment. The status of those pilgrims who did appear before the inquiry - Punjabi bankers, traders, and *zamindars* - supports the contention that the mass of pilgrims, cultivators from the Punjab and the upper NWP, would not have come forward to express their grievances in a formal setting. This does not mean that they felt the insult less. There is little doubt that the priests distorted the actions of the authorities at the *mela*, but it does not follow, however, that they also misrepresented the sentiments of the pilgrims who experienced the dispersal.

The administration seeks allies in reform

Although the NWP Government hailed the inquiry's findings as a vindication of its actions at the *mela*, its subsequent approach to disease control at fairs was much less aggressive and self-assured.

¹⁰⁴ The inquiry decided that there had been no preponderance of Muslim constables and officers on duty at the *mela*, and that in some areas, e.g., the sacred pool at Har-ki-pairi, only Hindu officers had been employed in the evacuation work. 'Report regarding certain complaints', p. 90.

¹⁰⁵ A.W.A. Pope, District Supt of Traffic on the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway, 22 Sept. 1892, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs Mar. 1893, no. 77, file 511 B, box 64.

Upon receiving the inquiry's report the government set up a committee, presided over by the Sanitary Commissioner, but composed chiefly of 'respectable Hindu gentlemen' to advise the authorities on palatable ways of introducing sanitary improvements at Hardwar.¹⁰⁶ In the early days of sanitary reform the Government of India had hoped to enlist men of this class to dissuade their unenlightened fellows from undertaking life-threatening pilgrimages, but the NWP Government uncovered such hostility to this proposal that it refused to pursue it beyond the initial enquiries.¹⁰⁷ In 1892 the programme was less radical: an attempt to work within the tradition of pilgrimage rather than to change it from without. Nevertheless the authorities could still not divest themselves of their mistrust of the local religious classes.¹⁰⁸ Of the Hindus selected to serve on the 1892 committee not one was a Hardwar man: Lala Nihal Chand, the Muzaffarnagar banker and landholder who had sat on the initial committee of inquiry; Rai Pramoda Das Mittra Bahadur, Assistant Professor in the Anglo-Sanskrit Department of Benares College and renowned 'conservative' Hindu;¹⁰⁹ Kunwar Ram Singh of Bara, Allahabad; Babu Durga Parshad of Farukhabad; and Pandit Het Ram, one of the largest landholders in the Bareilly district.¹¹⁰

The committee was empowered to call upon 'one or two principal residents' of Hardwar who might have special knowledge of the subjects under discussion, but eventually fifteen *pandas* and

¹⁰⁶ Resolution no. 3201 of 1892, 12 Dec. 1892, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs Mar. 1893, no. 80, file 511B, box 64.

¹⁰⁷ R. Simson, Secy to Govt NWP, to Secy to G. of I. (Home), no. 1212, 13 Mar. 1868, IOR, NWP General P/438/32, A progs 1 Aug. 1868, no. 144, 14 Mar. 1868. The Commissioner of Benares reported of his gentleman informants that: 'Looking on pilgrimage and bathing at certain times and places as highly meritorious, of course they could not recommend any one to fail in such duties merely for fear of disease or death.' A. Shakespear, Comr Benares, to Secy to Govt NWP, no. 220, 28 Nov. 1867, *ibid.*, no. 130, 18 Apr. 1868. In Cawnpore the Hindu gentlemen reacted with similar abhorrence. The Magistrate wrote that: 'They all treat [pilgrimage] as a religious matter, and look upon the suggestion to avoid attending these fairs on account of fear of sickness as wicked in the extreme, death to the older ones at such places being their *summum bonum*, leaving nothing to be desired on their own or their relations' part.' W.S. Halsey, Magte Cawnpore, to Comr Allahabad, no. 169, 23 Nov. 1867, *ibid.*, no. 163N, 27 June 1868.

¹⁰⁸ The attitude of J. Sladen, Magistrate of Saharanpur during the 1879 Kumbh Mela, provides an extreme illustration of the general opinion. Sladen wanted to ban all the extraordinary *melas* at Hardwar like the Kumbh because of the threat posed by cholera. He did not think that the pilgrims would have many objections and, as for the priests: 'Persons like the Brahmins of Jawalapur, who net a large income from pilgrims coming to the fair, would, of course, not like the Kumb stopped. They are simply extortionists, and not worthy in my opinion of a moment's consideration in the matter.' 'Memorandum in re Hardwar fair, 1879', by J. Sladen, Magte Saharanpur, 30 Apr. 1879, IOR, NWP&O General P/1458, A progs Feb. 1880, no. 64, 7 Feb. 1880.

¹⁰⁹ Pramoda Dass Mittra was of a Bengali Kayasth family which had settled in Benares in the late 1700s. He had broken with the family tradition of landholding and service to the Benares Raja in accepting the post at Benares College, although eventually he was to resign in disappointment at not securing the Professorship there. He was a Fellow of Calcutta and Allahabad Universities and an honorary magistrate. *The Kayastha Samachar*, IV, 1901, pp. 92-3.

¹¹⁰ Pandit Het Ram was a Kayasth, formerly Diwan to the state of Rewa under the Awadh government. He settled at Bareilly and bought extensive tracts of land so that in 1911 his descendants were paying over Rs.13,000 in revenue on their estates. He also had a large banking business and owned many houses in Bareilly city. Both and his son, Rai Kanhaiya Lal, were honorary magistrates. H.R. Nevill, *Bareilly: A Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1911), pp. 66, 102.

mahants were consulted, of whom over half had given evidence against the authorities in the earlier inquiry.¹¹¹ The Hindu members of the committee sought out the very men that the government had hoped to exclude; clearly they did not feel that they possessed the requisite authority amongst Hindus to recommend by themselves the changes that the government wanted. And although the report was essentially a technical one, with details of the engineering work needed to increase the flow of water at the Har-ki-pairi Ghat and to deepen the Bhimgoda tank, they appended a memorandum highlighting the difficulty of their dual role as unofficial servants of the government and representatives of Hinduism. They stressed that their duty had been a 'sacred' one, aimed at improving the welfare of millions of Hindu pilgrims, and they pleaded that:

our wise and paternal government will never, in future, find it advisable to order a premature and forcible dispersal of the large assemblage of pilgrims that gather here, which, as the government justly recognizes, cannot fail to cause distress and annoyance...¹¹²

The alterations to the tank and *ghat* were opened by the new Lieutenant Governor, Sir Charles Crosthwaite, on the eve of the 1893 Dikhauti Mela. After the undisguised hostility of his predecessor, Sir Auckland Colvin, to all forms of Hindu agitation, Crosthwaite was seen to understand that Hinduism had been bruised by the Hardwar affair. Throughout the preceding months, Colvin had steadfastly argued that the pilgrims had only themselves and their seditious leaders to blame for their troubles at the dispersal. Nevertheless even Crosthwaite incurred some hostility with his speech at the Har-ki-pairi Ghat, urging the local priests to donate money to the cause of sanitary reform at Hardwar.¹¹³ Hindu observers recognized that behind Crosthwaite's proposal lay the same old suspicion that all priests sat on hoards of ill-gotten money, and several newspapers reminded the government that the traditional patrons of religious institutions were secular leaders. Lala Suraj Mal

¹¹¹ The eight men concerned were: Mahant Saran Das, Mahant of the Akhara Udasi, Kankhal; Mahant Brahm Narayan, *mahant* of another *akhara* of Udasis at Kankhal; Lala Govind Jao, *zamindar* of Kankhal; Sarup Lal, *panda* of Jawalapur; Mahant Pancham Gir, Gosain of Hardwar; Lala Ram Parshad, Khattri moneylender and municipal commissioner of Hardwar; Sardar Khub Chand, *chaudhari* of the *pandas* of Kankhal; and Mahant Balwant Gir, Gosain and municipal commissioner. The committee also called upon Sardar Parma Nand, *chaudhari* of the Jawalapur *pandas*; Sardar Prabhu Lal, a 'petty' *sardar* of the *pandas*; Sardar Ganga Saran; Panda Suraj Mal; Panda Chhanga Ram; Lala Jawahir Singh; and Mahant Ghansham Puri of Bhimgoda. Report of Committee set up under Resolution no. 3201 of 1892, 11 Jan. 1893, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs Mar. 1893, no. 83, file 511B, box 64.

¹¹² Hindu Members of Committee to Chief Secy to Govt NWP&O, 10 Jan. 1893, *ibid.*, no. 85.

¹¹³ Lucknow's *Hindustani* agreed with Crosthwaite that no government had ever been so liberal as the British in handing out money for the sanitary improvement of pilgrimage sites, but it argued that the unhappy corollary of this was that no previous government had ever interfered with religion so much. *Hindustani*, 19 Apr. 1893, SVN 1893, p. 159.

Jhanjhanwala and the Maharani of Balrampur were both praised for their exemplary contributions to Hardwar's improvement fund.¹¹⁴

A more cautious approach was being followed at other pilgrimage sites also. Increasingly, Hindus were invited to advise local officers on the administration of Hindu fairs, and Muslim managers were replaced with Hindu ones.¹¹⁵ However the consultative role offered to Hindus was not so much an attempt by the government to elicit help as an attempt to shift some of the blame for unpopular administration from its own shoulders to those of the pilgrims' co-religionists, thereby reducing the apparent 'anti-Hindu' character of its *mela* management.

From 1883 the European officer in charge of Allahabad's Magh Mela took advice from a consultative committee of 'educated natives', Hindus from the municipal board.¹¹⁶ Control of the fair and control over the selection of the advisers, however, was expected to remain in government hands. After the 1885 Magh Mela the Commissioner of Allahabad advised his Magistrate to select only men 'of the old fashion, not of the young Bengali clique' for the advisory committee, thus underlining the government's fear of the city's expanding class of Hindu professionals, future supporters of the Congress in the NWP.¹¹⁷ It was difficult advice to follow, however. Allahabad's many lawyers, its busy printing presses and its skilled municipal politicians, soon ensured that a position on the *mela* subcommittee was something sought and gained independently of the patronage of the local officers. Although the administration had created the role of Hindu adviser it rapidly acquired a value of its own. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was the politician who best illustrates this. A sometime teacher, editor, publicist and lawyer, of a conservative but not very distinguished Brahman service family, he

¹¹⁴ *Rahbar*, 8 Apr. 1893, *Bharat Jiwan*, 17 Apr. 1893, *Aktar-i-Hind*, 5 May 1893, SVN 1893, pp. 141, 152, 177. The Magistrate of Saharanpur, Mr Holmes, reported that the pilgrims were very pleased with the improvements, but he omitted to mention whether any of them perceived a link between the new works and the doubling of the pilgrim tax to two annas per head. W. Holmes, Magte Saharanpur, to Comr Meerut, no. 721, 24 July 1893, UPSA, NWP&O Misc., A progs Feb. 1894, no. 45a, file 432B, box 695.

¹¹⁵ The most prominent example of this comes from Allahabad where, from 1886, the management of the Magh Mela was entrusted to a Hindu *tahsildar*. Before this the Muslim *kotwal* had run the *mela*, and although his experience and skill marked him out as excellent for the job, the Joint Magistrate in overall control of the fair recommended that a Hindu would be a more suitable appointment. A. Macmillan, Jt Magte in charge of Magh Mela, to Magte Allahabad, 21 Mar. 1885, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs July 1885, no. 8, file 372, box 46. In recommending the change the Macmillan omitted to mention the long-running campaign against the Muslim manager of the *mela* that had been conducted by Hindu traders and municipal politicians in Allahabad. C.A. Bayly, *Local roots of Indian politics: Allahabad, 1880-1920* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 106-7.

¹¹⁶ T. Benson, Offg Magte Allahabad, to Offg Comr Allahabad, no. 221/L.F.-43, 25 May 1883, IOR, NWP&O General, A progs July 1883, no. 4, 28 July 1883. In this first year there was one Muslim, Sayyid Madad Ali, on the municipality's *mela* subcommittee, but by 1885 it was entirely Hindu in composition. A. Macmillan, Jt Magte in charge of Magh Mela, to Magte Allahabad, 21 Mar. 1885, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs July 1885, no. 8, file 372, box 46.

¹¹⁷ A.J. Lawrence, Comr Allahabad, to Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 3898/213, 5 June 1885, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/2450, A progs July 1885, no. 6, file 372.

was not 'respectable gentleman' material. But he was an extraordinarily gifted politician, for thirty years the mainstay of every Congress organization in Allahabad. He served long terms on the municipal board as an elected member and on the Provincial Legislative Council, and he patronized numerous Hindu causes: cow protection, the Nagri script, Hindu education - especially his cherished Benares Hindu University - and orthodox Hinduism.¹¹⁸ From the mid-1890s he frequently served on the *mela* subcommittee, his pronounced sympathy with the pilgrims' objectives earning him a grassroots level of popularity in Allahabad that few contemporary politicians could match. In effect, the pilgrims were his ideal constituency. But, surprisingly, he was also a success with the local authorities. By 1909 he was one of the two most prominent *mela* advisers and clearly he was uppermost in the Magistrate's mind when that officer suggested that some of the subcommittee's members be 'more formally' associated with the administration of the *mela*.¹¹⁹ With his multiplicitous Hindu interests Malaviya embodied the spirit of the *mela* in the late-nineteenth century, a time when Hindu revivalists of all kinds sought a patch of ground and an audience at the sacred confluence. And as both a conservative Hindu and a politician skilled 'in the Western style' he exemplified the uncommon abilities and sympathies needed to bridge the two very different sets of priorities of the pilgrims and administration at the *mela*.

A more cautious approach: the plague in the Hardwar Union, 1897-98

The NWP Government's cautious implementation of anti-plague measures in the late 1890s illustrates most clearly the tempering of its early self-confidence in disease management. The NWP Government had few of the unhappy experiences of the Bombay authorities. Certainly the plague posed the biggest threat in Bombay and Sind and the anti-plague measures there probably reflected a sense of desperation not felt by authorities in the other provinces. But the NWP authorities also had a history of popular resistance to sanitary reform. Throughout the plague years the lessons of the Hardwar *mela* dispersal were never far from mind and Sir Antony MacDonnell, the Lieutenant Governor

¹¹⁸ Bayly, *Local roots of Indian politics*, pp. 214-16.

¹¹⁹ H.M.R. Hopkins, Magte Allahabad, to Comr Allahabad, no. 587, 15 Mar. 1909, UPSA, UP General, A progs May 1909, no. 5, file 188, box 200.

from 1895 until 1901, was prepared to state openly that the eradication of plague had to be subordinate to the political contentment of the population.¹²⁰

When the government's first set of plague regulations was issued on 12 February there was an uproar at the vague definition of the powers to be allowed to plague-workers. Fears were expressed about the invasion of homes, the segregation of patients in plague hospitals, the seizure of corpses, and the many opportunities for the violation of women. In newspapers and at public meetings it was stressed that the government's preventive measures were worse than the disease itself, that a case of plague in a family would be affliction enough without the ruinous humiliation that would follow from the implementation of the plague rules.¹²¹

The government had to listen to the complaints, not least because the people loudest in protest were the very ones to whom it looked for support in its social administration, the 'respectable native gentlemen'. These were the men whose self-respect would be most imperiled if their families fell victim to the plague rules. Wisely, the government made a virtue of a necessity and, advertising its readiness to attend to legitimate grievances, took advice from 'a number of leading Hindu and Muhammadan landowners and residents' to help it remodel the regulations. Given the identity of these advisers - nearly all of them Rajas and Nawabs - it is not surprising that the new regulations, issued on

¹²⁰ The 1900 Magh Mela went ahead despite the presence of plague in Allahabad district. Explaining this decision to the Government of India the Lieutenant Governor recalled 'the excitement which prevailed at the stoppage of the Hardwar Mela in Sir A. Colvin's time', further observing that 'even an outbreak of plague would not be so serious a matter in the present conditions as the discontent among Hindus which would in all probability be the result of prohibiting so important a religious gathering as an Ardh-Kumbh Mela at Allahabad.' Secy to Govt NWP&O to Secy to G. of I., no. 2C/449C, 8 Jan. 1900, UPSA, NWP&O General, B progs Jan. 1900, no. 8, file 449C, box 12. It comes as no surprise that it was MacDonnell who should make this assessment. His term of office as Lieutenant Governor was marked by a repudiation of the old policy of conciliating the Muslim landlords and government servants and an attempt to win back the sympathies of the Hindu majority, which he feared had been alienated by long years of concessions to the Muslims and the obviously cosy relations between the government and Sayed Ahmed Khan's Aligarh clique. It was MacDonnell who made Nagri a legitimate script of official communication, requiring Indian government servants to be able to work in both the Nagri and the Persian scripts. And it was also he who fixed communal quotas for employment in the government services: no more than three Muslims were to be appointed for every five Hindus. Both moves disadvantaged traditional Muslim service families, and the Nagri resolution of 1900 was a particularly sweet victory for the Hindus who had long been campaigning against the ascendancy of Urdu in government offices. Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, pp. 42-4. Several reasons have been advanced for MacDonnell's drive against the Muslims in the NWP. Robinson suggests that his early service in Bihar during the Wahabi crisis of the 1860s and '70s prejudiced him against the community. Moreover, he viewed the NWP's administration as cliquish, corrupt and backward. *Ibid.*, p. 43, n. 4. J.R. McLane has pointed to MacDonnell's Irish Catholic background which was said to have given him a natural sympathy with the cultivating classes vis-à-vis *zamindars*. This manifested itself in Bengal in the 1885 tenancy legislation and in the NWP in his antipathy to the long-standing 'Oudh policy'; in each case he was concerned to stabilize agrarian relations and halt the political alienation of the majority of the population. McLane, *Indian nationalism and the early Congress*, pp. 244-6. Although the two analyses are not incompatible, McLane's clearly casts MacDonnell in a more favourable light than Robinson's does.

¹²¹ *Dahdab-i-Qaisari*, 6 Mar. 1897, *Hindustani*, 10 Mar. 1897, *Rahbar*, 8 Mar. 1897, *Oudh Akhbar*, 13 Mar. 1897, *Jami-ul-Ulam*, 14 Mar. 1897, *Azad*, 12 Mar. 1897, *Bharat Jiwan*, 22 Mar. 1897, SVN 1897, pp. 166, 182, 183, 199-201.

26 March, differed from the old chiefly in their reduced impact on the *raises*.¹²² Poor plague sufferers would still have to be carted off to segregation hospitals and their hovels demolished. Wealthy victims could be segregated at home and, in the event of a serious outbreak of the disease, they would be allowed to erect hospitals for the exclusive use of one caste or sect. In short, 'respectable natives' were to be subjected to no harsher rules than those applied to Europeans. Of broader relevance however were the tighter controls on the police and the much more prominent role offered to local notables as a buffer between the actions of the state and the reactions of the people. They were to assist and advise the plague-workers and educate the people at all points of interaction.¹²³ Even though most of the material gains were for a privileged few, the new rules did seem to ease people's fears. The concessions were an official acknowledgement that the priorities of Indians differed, and differed legitimately, from those of the state. In this sense the new rules were meaningful to all of the NWP's population.

Ironically it was at Hardwar, the scene of so many innovations in sanitary administration, that the plague regulations received their most prolonged trial. Plague was first detected there in April 1897 during the Ardh Kumbh Mela. Strict measures had been imposed to prevent its importation into Hardwar: the examination of road and rail passengers; the segregation on Rauri Island of pilgrims from plague-infected areas; and the provision of a large number of sanitary police to report illness. When plague was discovered in a lodging-house in the town the authorities decided to examine all the pilgrims upon departure as well. The medical checks and the segregation were reported to have proceeded smoothly, but they must have caused immense frustration and delay.¹²⁴

¹²² Resolution no. 211/XVI-404B, 26 Mar. 1897, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation P/5126, A progs June 1897, no. 236. In the resolution it was explained that the Lieutenant Governor had worked with a committee which had included Maharaja Sir Partab Narayan Singh of Ajudhia; Raja Sir Muhammad Amir Hasan Khan; Rana Sir Shankar Bakhsh Singh; Nawab Agha Mehdi Hussain Khan; Nawab Mumtaz-ud-daula Fai az Ali Khan of Pasahu; Raja Tasaddiq Rasul Khan; Raja Jagmohan Singh; Raja Jai Kishan Das; Honble Babu Sri Ram, Rai Bahadur; and Chaudhri Nasrat Ali. Two *maulvis* and two *pandits*, all well-known, had attended the meeting as 'expert advisers', and representations were received from a host of other Rajas also.

¹²³ For a summary of the differences between the two sets of plague regulations see R. Nathan, *The Plague in India, 1896, 1897* (4 vols., Simla, 1898), I, pp. 247-62. The new rules paid particular attention to the fears of the abuse of women, promising that only female doctors could demand to examine a woman or enter the women's quarters of a house. The principle of compensation for the destruction of property was admitted also, but it was left to the Magistrate's discretion to award payouts to those whom he thought would suffer severe hardship as a result of the loss of a hut or clothing.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 268-70. Fear of the authorities' power was more often suggested than expressed. One of the first cases detected was that of a convalescent Brahman woman, a lodging-house manageress. The Sanitary Commissioner reported that: 'One of her sons was a panda, whose clients were principally Sindis. Both mother and son denied that any people had come from Karachi, Sikkur or other infected centre lately; but their statements were evidently worthless. They feared that the lodging-house in which the mother lay, and in which the son's Sindi clients stayed, would be closed. The whole family was segregated, and the ordinary precautions as regards disinfection, &c. taken.' Surgeon-Major S.J. Thomson, Sanitary Comr NWP&O, to Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 1642, 19 Apr. 1897, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation P/5126, A progs Aug. 1897, no. 5.

After the *mela* the government prepared to tackle the plague head on. It was essential to the success of the campaign that the locals should believe that the government was trying to help rather than to harass them. More than anything else therefore the government wanted to keep Hardwar open to the pilgrims to avoid a repetition of 1892's unhappy events.

On 28 April Sir Antony MacDonnell came to Hardwar to meet with the municipal commissioners and the *mahants* (heads of the ascetic *akharas*) of the town. The Union's two thousand *pandas*, its largest occupational group, were not represented at the meeting; even in a crisis the government was not able to suppress its antipathy to them. The gentlemen who were in attendance promised every help in evacuating the one *muhalla* that was thus far beset by the disease. This was effected without any obvious resistance from the residents.¹²⁵

Two small bathing festivals on 31 May and 11 June were not banned, but would-be pilgrims were warned about the unpleasant conditions that awaited them. No railway tickets were issued for Hardwar or Jawalapur and those pilgrims who did manage to get there had to submit to the now dreadfully familiar medical examinations. All the lodging-houses were closed and the pilgrims had to live in a segregation camp outside of the town. They were escorted to and from the bathing *ghat* and urged to leave Hardwar as soon as possible.¹²⁶ The attendance at the fairs was smaller than usual, several newspapers commenting drily that the government had set about its objective intelligently, as the people feared the doctors and the police more than the plague.¹²⁷

But here the government had run into some resistance. The *pandas* complained that the stoppage of the railway booking was tantamount to closing the fairs. Lacking pilgrims to guide or to

¹²⁵ In all, in April, May and June, eighteen cases of plague were identified, most of them fatal. Before the evacuation no segregation of patients at home had been allowed. The *muhalla* appears to have been a poor one in which few people had the residential resources to provide separate accommodation in their houses for the sick, so all the patients were taken to plague hospitals. Relatives of the sick were segregated in special plague huts. Once the evacuation was in progress the healthy evacuees were housed in a separate camp. All huts and temporary structures in the *muhalla* were demolished and all the houses were disinfected and lime-washed. Nathan, *The plague in India*, I, pp. 270-1. Despite the reported willingness of the people to submit to the efforts taken on their behalf, there is a little evidence that suggests that people quietly avoided what measures they could. The Sanitary Commissioner reported that *baniyas* and *halwais* secretly transferred their grain and sugar stocks from Hardwar to Kankhal to avoid the examination and possible seizure of them by plague-workers. And he also found that the residents of Kankhal, watching the events in Hardwar from their uncomfortable proximity, were tempted to hide from the authorities the increasing numbers of dead rats in their own town, the classic symptom of an impending outbreak of plague amongst humans. Surgeon-Major S.J. Thomson, Sanitary Comr NWP&O, to Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 2957, 22 June 1897, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation P/5126, A progs Aug. 1897, no. 47.

¹²⁶ Nathan, *The plague in India*, I, pp. 271-2.

¹²⁷ *Anis-i-Hind*, 26 May 1897, *Jami-ul-Ulam*, 28 May 1897, *Najm-ul-Hind*, 8 May 1897, SVN 1897, pp. 367-8, 342. In general, however, newspapers in the NWP supported the government's handling of the plague menace once it had showed its sympathy for Indian prejudices. After the alteration of the plague regulations most complaints were reserved for the actions of the executive rather than the policy of the administration. Cf. Sajjan Vinod, 15 June 1897, *Hindustani*, 19 May 1897, *ibid.*, pp. 410, 353.

house their income from the *melas* had plummeted, and so they pooled their resources and paid for Pandit Gopinath of Lahore to return to Hardwar in his well-rehearsed role as defender of Hinduism.¹²⁸ Gopinath exhibited a fortuitous sense of timing: his arrival in mid-July coincided with the lifting of the ban on ticket sales to Hardwar and the announcement that plague had been eradicated. Nevertheless he stayed to found a Sanatan Dharm Sabha amongst the *pandas*, declaring an intention to improve their moral and intellectual abilities.¹²⁹ Although the government believed that it was Gopinath who was leading the *pandas* and not vice-versa, it was the *pandas* who had taken the initiative: they recognized Gopinath's political skills and were prepared to pay for them. The Sabha, like the *panchayats* in Hardwar in 1892, seems to have been an attempt by the *pandas* to reassert their position in the local community at a time when they felt that the government was intent on cutting them off from their supporters. Underlying all their actions and complaints was the very strong suspicion that the government was intent upon doing them harm.

In spite of the *pandas*' unhappiness, other Hindus expressed themselves pleased with the government's anti-plague measures and the municipal board passed a vote of thanks to the officers engaged in the plague eradication.¹³⁰

In September plague victims were discovered at Kankhal, a mile distant from Hardwar. Although the Union had been thoroughly disinfected in the preceding months the disease had survived. This second outbreak was worse than the first and the measures adopted were correspondingly severe. Because the guiding principle was to keep Hardwar open to the pilgrims a cordon was placed around Kankhal, and free egress and ingress prohibited. Of the five hundred *pandas* who lived in Kankhal two hundred were instructed to move to Hardwar if they wished to continue servicing their pilgrims. The remaining *pandas*, less frequent visitors to Hardwar, were advised to depute their business to men not resident in Kankhal. Several 'respectable native gentlemen' were exempted from the travel prohibitions

¹²⁸ E.F.L. Winter, Magte Saharanpur, to W.H.L. Impey, Secy to Govt NWP&O, 12 Nov. 1897, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation P/5126, A progs Dec. 1897, no. 141. Winter believed that the *pandas* had bought Gopinath's services with a gift of Rs.2500 that they had received from the Jammu state. A gift of the same amount had been received at the end of June from the Kapurthala state, the Jammu one following shortly thereafter. Usually the gifts were divided up equally, Re.1 to each *panda*.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* Winter, who was no fan of the *pandas*, insisted that the other Brahmans of the three towns, the *mahants*, the *mahajans* and the landowners all distrusted the *pandas* and rejected the Sabha's attempts at association.

¹³⁰ Copy of paragraph no. 21 of proceedings of an Ordinary Meeting held by the Hardwar Union Municipal Board on 7 Aug. 1897, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation P/5126, A progs Dec. 1897, no. 4.

in recognition of their assistance to the government in these difficult times.¹³¹ As each *muhalla* reported a case of plague it was evacuated, the people shutting up their houses and moving to temporary plague camps on the town's outskirts. By 4 November 1897 all of the town's 6-7000 people had been moved out. There had been 51 reported cases of plague and 38 deaths.¹³²

If not exactly happy, the people of Kankhal did not flout the government's orders.¹³³ Again it was the *pandas* who did not hesitate to show their irritation. They had been coaxed into the drastic anti-plague measures on the understanding that by their sacrifice Hardwar would remain accessible to pilgrims. But, with the approach of the *somvati amawas* and *kartik purnmashi melas* on 25 October and 9 November respectively, the government again stopped railway booking to Hardwar and surrounding stations. The *pandas* angrily accused the government of breaking its promise to keep Hardwar open and Gopinath dashed off a telegram to MacDonnell warning of widespread disaffection amongst the Hindus.¹³⁴ The telegram frightened the local authorities. They did not think that Gopinath accurately reported Hindu sentiment but they dreaded his abilities as a religious activist and they wanted him silenced. The Magistrate, E.F.L. Winter, wrote to Gopinath at Lahore and warned

¹³¹ They included Lala Govind Jas, the leading *mahajan* of Kankhal and a municipal commissioner, two well-known *hakims*, the leading *chaudhari* of the bazaar and several 'learned *pandits*'. E.F.L. Winter, Magte Saharanpur, to G.R.C. Williams, Comr Meerut, 30 Sept. 1897, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation P/5126, A progs Dec. 1897, no. 87.

¹³² Nathan, *The plague in India*, I, pp. 276-9. At this time although scientists could identify the plague microbe in rats and humans they did not understand the means of its transference from one species to the other. The discovery of the rat flea's crucial role as plague vector was still a few years away. Without this piece of the disease jigsaw puzzle attempts to control the spread of plague were necessarily experimental. Plague microbes appeared to survive in clothes and bedding, so that all of these were subjected to thorough disinfection in a solution of perchloride of mercury, often ruinous in the case of fine silks, *pashmina* woollens and delicate embroideries. Grain and sugar were exposed to long hours in the sun. There was disagreement about the efficacy of the removal of thatched rooves and the limewashing of houses, but the government preferred to err on the side of caution and in Kankhal these measures were vigorously pursued. As every scientist accepted the value of evacuation in beating the disease it formed the cornerstone of the government's anti-plague efforts.

For the role of rats, rat fleas and rail-transportation in the spread of plague in India, see I.J. Catanach, 'Plague and the Indian village, 1896-1914', in Peter Robb (ed.), *Rural India: land, power and society under British rule* (London, 1983), pp. 216-43.

¹³³ Magistrate Winter was happy with the level of cooperation he received. He thought it particularly significant that the townspeople volunteered to surrender their Ramlila celebrations. E.F.L. Winter, Magte Saharanpur, to W.H.L. Impey, Secy to Govt NWP&O, 28 Sept. 1897, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation P/5126, A progs Dec. 1897, no. 85. However there is some evidence that the people pursued what petty evasion of the rules that they could. In mid-December, just before the proposed re-occupation of Kankhal, the Joint Magistrate discovered that inner rooms in 39 houses had been stuffed with bedding, clothing, jewellery and household utensils from many houses, bricked up and then plastered over in an elaborate attempt to avoid the unwanted attentions of the disinfecting teams. E.F.L. Winter, Magte Saharanpur, to W.H.L. Impey, Secy to Govt NWP&O, 19 Dec. 1897, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation P/5362, A progs Aug. 1898, no. 11. In view of the people's many hardships - they were not to return to their houses until 15 February 1898 - the government decided not to prosecute anybody for attempting to frustrate the work of the plague officers.

¹³⁴ Telegram from President Hardwar Hindu Sabha to Private Secy to Lt Govr NWP&O, 6 Nov. 1897, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation P/5126, A progs Dec. 1897, no. 134.

him to keep out of Hardwar. Then he went to the *pandas* on the Sabha's committee and advised them to put aside Gopinath as their leader if they ever wished to regain the government's trust.¹³⁵

As much as the government wanted to believe that Gopinath's was a lone voice of discontent, the evidence suggested otherwise. Winter put it to the *pandas* that they had been duped by him, an interpretation they readily accepted. The Commissioner, G.R.C. Williams, was less sanguine: faced with an angry Magistrate of course the *pandas* would profess ignorance of the telegram and blame the absent Gopinath.¹³⁶ Even Winter had found that in spite of lengthy talks with the Kankhal people there were some who could not be persuaded of the good sense of closing rail traffic to Hardwar. The 'more respectable and better educated classes' accepted Winter's arguments, but others insisted that the government was deliberately reducing their income by depriving them of patrons. At Jawalapur the *pandas* observed that 'though the railway was opened when there was no fair, it had been closed during the last four fairs of any importance, and from this they gathered that in future all fairs would be stopped if there were any excuses of illness anywhere.'¹³⁷ Winter dismissed these complaints because they were inspired by concerns about income and not religion. But in Hardwar whose very livelihood was religion the two were hardly separable and it was not just the *pandas* who depended upon the pilgrims. It was unwise to treat the grievances of the *pandas* as selfish and unrepresentative; as at the *mela dispersal* inquiry in 1892 they were voicing worries that others shared but dared not express.

This was amply borne out at Jawalapur, by far the largest of the three towns, when plague appeared there in February 1898. This time the people bucked at the anti-plague measures. They had seen the sufferings of the people in Kankhal and Hardwar and were determined to avoid as much unpleasantness as possible. Cases of plague were not reported until all the neighbours had had a chance to shift their property into uninfected localities. At night people crept away from Jawalapur across the fields. By day women and children wearing two or three sets of clothes carried out discreet amounts of household property to nearby villages. They returned empty-handed and dressed lightly so that after several days enough property had accumulated outside for the whole family to leave as if on a daytrip

¹³⁵ Pandit Gopinath to Private Secy to Lt Govr NWP&O, 1 Apr. 1898, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation, P/5362, A progs Aug. 1898, no. 126; E.F.L. Winter, Magte Saharanpur, to W.H.L. Impey, Secy to Govt NWP&O, 12 Nov. 1897, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation P/5126, A progs Dec. 1897, no. 141.

¹³⁶ G.R.C. Williams, Comr Meerut, to W.H.L. Impey, Secy to Govt NWP&O, 'Confidential', 12 Nov. 1897, *ibid.*, no. 142.

¹³⁷ E.F.L. Winter, Magte Saharanpur, to W.H.L. Impey, Secy to Govt NWP&O, 12 Nov. 1897, *ibid.*, no. 141.

thus avoiding the regulation twelve days in an observation camp.¹³⁸ In this way Jawalapur's population of about 17,000 quickly dropped to about 12-13,000. Of these, by the end of March 9,000 had voluntarily moved into camps (built at their own cost) and 2,000 from infected *muhallas* were living in government camps. Five hundred butchers and a few other groups of labourers were the only people still in the town.¹³⁹

The government knew that the people's patience was running out and it was anxious that the town be reoccupied as soon as possible.¹⁴⁰ For all but a very few in the Union normal life and income had been suspended for almost a year. Relief works had helped some of the labourers but the 'respectable poor' had suffered badly. Moreover, the people had had to bear the costs of whitewashing their houses and, if they did not want to use the government's facilities, of building private camps and hospitals. In a very tangible way the anti-plague measures were felt to be worse than the disease itself, especially when they did not seem to work. For all their privations people in the camps still fell sick and they still died.

On 30 March 1898, the frustration at one camp culminated in an attack on a Joint Magistrate and a Surgeon as they tried to remove a sick Brahman to a government plague hospital. The two men escaped the angry crowd unharmed, but the incident marked the beginning of the end of the severe plague regulations. This time the agitation could not be blamed simply on selfish *pandas*. One of the principals in the assault was the brother of Parmanand, *sardar* of the Brahmans and one of the government's acknowledged community leaders. The closest Gopinath had got to the scene was a telegram sent from Saharanpur in which he begged to be allowed to come and represent the grievances of the Hindus.¹⁴¹ The Lieutenant Governor sampled for himself the simmering discontent when he visited Hardwar the day after the 'riot':

[T]he railway on both sides was lined up by a very excited mass of people, some of whom, although it was 7 o'clock in the morning, bore lighted torches as symbolical of the darkness of the administration of the local officers.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ E.F.L. Winter, Magte Saharanpur, to Comr Meerut, no. 154, 11 Feb. 1898, IOR, NWP&O Sanitation P/5362, A progs Aug. 1898, no. 62.

¹³⁹ Surgeon-Lt Colonel S.J. Thomson, Sanitary Comr NWP&O, to Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 1297, 21 Mar. 1898, *ibid.*, no. 107.

¹⁴⁰ The government did not stop trains to Hardwar for the Varuni and Dikhauti Melas (20 March and 11-12 April respectively); only people from other infected localities in the Punjab and Bombay were prohibited from buying tickets to the *melas*. Minutes of a Conference held at Government House on 5 Mar. 1898, *ibid.*, no. 92.

¹⁴¹ Pandit Gopinath to Private Secy to Lt Govr NWP&O, 1 Apr. 1898, *ibid.*, no. 126.

¹⁴² Minute by A.P. MacDonnell, Lt Govr NWP&O, 1 Apr. 1898, *ibid.*, no. 123.

The 'leading men' of the Union were bullied by Winter into surrendering fifteen men implicated in the assault, two of whom were sentenced to terms of rigorous imprisonment, but this was more of a face-saving gesture by the government than an indication of things to come. A month later Jawalapur was reoccupied and with the onset of the hot weather the plague subsided. It returned to the Union in the cold weather of 1902-03 and thereafter each succeeding winter for almost a decade. Each time it was seen off by the summer heat, for the government never again attempted to forestall its progress with the vigour of its first anti-plague campaign. There was an implicit recognition that the occasional reappearance of the disease was less of a threat to the region's stability than the popular resentment spawned by harsh anti-plague measures. In 1909 the Saharanpur Gazetteer regretted the government's abandonment of the initial attack:

Preventive operations have been confined to voluntary evacuation and disinfection, together with the destruction of rats, but the people have yet to learn that evacuation to be effective must be complete and that half-measures are merely futile.¹⁴³

It was a churlish acknowledgement that the people of Hardwar had won the right to choose for themselves between the risks of disease and the disadvantages of a prolonged disruption to their ordinary life.

Accommodation and resistance: long-term pilgrim reactions to sanitary reform

By the early twentieth century sanitary procedures at pilgrimage sites were well practised. Many permanent improvements at *mela* sites had been effected and a lot of the initial hostility to sanitary reform seemed to have mellowed. There is some evidence, however, which suggests that the hostility did not disappear, but that the pilgrims developed subtler forms of resistance. In the last quarter of the century Hardwar's Dikhauti Mela attracted ever decreasing numbers of pilgrims, even though the extraordinary *melas*, such as the Kumbh, continued to be hugely attended. Over the same period the annual number of visitors to Hardwar increased steadily.¹⁴⁴ Local officers concluded that a) the railways gave pilgrims a better opportunity to come to Hardwar at any time of the year, and b) the stringent conservancy controls at the Dikhauti Melas were encouraging pilgrims to attend the many

¹⁴³ H.R. Nevill, *Saharanpur: A Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909), p. 40.

¹⁴⁴ W. Holmes, Magte Saharanpur, to Comr Meerut, no. 221/XVII, 7 Mar. 1893, IOR, NWP Misc. (General) P/4296, A progs July 1893, no. 41. In 1890 trains brought a quarter of a million visitors to Hardwar, and yet the Dikhauti Fair only registered 38,000 visitors. In 1891, however, a Kumbh Mela year, of the 367,000 rail visitors to Hardwar, 167,000 went at the time of the Kumbh Mela.

smaller bathing festivals throughout the year that remained relatively unpoliced. But special fairs like the Kumbh Melas still had the ability to draw the crowds no matter what the conditions. In 1883 the Saharanpur Magistrate voiced his opinion that there was

no doubt that the diminishing attendance is due to the people's dislike of our sanitary precautions and of the taxation necessary to pay for them, and to their growing perception that bathing at the minor festivals is more easy and equally efficacious.¹⁴⁵

In the previous year the Commissioner of Meerut had come to a similar conclusion and he thought it a change for the better: 'So long as the religious feeling is satisfied, the distribution, instead of the concentration of the visitors to Hardwar, is undoubtedly an advantage to the public from a sanitary point of view.'¹⁴⁶

Often officers based in Hardwar relayed to government rumours that they had heard predicting an end to the Ganga's sanctity or the demise of the Kumbh Melas, finding in them an explanation for the changes occurring at Hardwar.¹⁴⁷ Whilst these rumours were not new their incidence does seem to have increased towards the end of the century. It is unlikely that they initiated changes in pilgrim behaviour but they did reflect the anxieties of pilgrims and priests as their grand religious occasions were subjected to ever more intrusions from an unsympathetic state. Overt resistance secured little long-term relief, especially as the state was prepared to back its policies of intervention with the police, the judiciary and the army. More effective resistance lay in the pragmatic side-stepping of the controls: the selection of bathing times when there would be less interference from secular authorities in the relations between pilgrim, priest and sacred river.

Other evasive behaviour included the hiding of evidence of disease, the avoidance of fairs where strict quarantine regulations were in place, and the constant subversion of conservancy rules.¹⁴⁸ There

¹⁴⁵ A.H. Harington, Offg Magte Saharanpur, to Comr Meerut, no. 89/XVII, 22 Apr. 1883, IOR, NWP&O General, A progs Aug. 1883, no. 20, 4 Aug. 1883.

¹⁴⁶ E. Colvin, Offg Comr Meerut, to Offg Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 19C/XVII, 15 July 1882, IOR, NWP&O General P/1812, A progs Aug. 1882, no. 16, 12 Aug. 1882.

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, E.G. Jenkinson, Magte Saharanpur, to Comr Meerut, no. 63, 20 June 1874, IOR, NWP General P/53, A progs July 1874, no. 53, 18 July 1874. Jenkinson also puts great importance on the new choice that the railway offered the pilgrims; throughout the year he observed a constant flow of pilgrims to Hardwar. Same to same, no. 81, 9 July 1873, IOR, NWP General P/52, A progs Sept. 1873, no. 22, 6 Sept. 1873.

¹⁴⁸ For evidence of evasive behaviour at *melas* outside of Hardwar, see the section below on the Batesar *kartik purnmashi mela* which includes details of the fair managers' attempts to combat the unpopularity of the latrines. During the plague years both the Batesar and the Garhmuktesar *melas* recorded low attendances when rumours were circulating about the anti-plague measures to be encountered by the pilgrims attending them. People arriving at a *mela* never volunteered themselves as coming from a cholera or plague-infected locality. Sometimes rail pilgrims would travel via two or three unlikely junctions to be able to avoid presenting the authorities at a *mela* with a tell-tale ticket of origin. At the 1897 Garhmuktesar *mela* people coming from plague-infected Hardwar had to be sought out for medical scrutiny. The Joint Magistrate praised the *tahsildar*

was a sort of uneasy truce between the administration and the pilgrims. If compelled the pilgrims would abide by the rules but opportunities for evasion of the less popular innovations were eagerly seized. It shows that the cotenure of the pilgrims and the administration at pilgrimage sites was a feasible relationship, but not one of empathy.



Gul Hayat Institute

THE COST OF REFORM

Fund-raising at *melas* and pilgrimage sites

As the sanitary and safety precautions at fairs increased in sophistication the question of how to pay for them pressed more insistently. It was a problem that beset chiefly the very large fairs. Smaller 'private' fairs, hosted by a *zamindar* and lasting only one or two days, did not merit expensive conservancy and policing work. The landholder raised sufficient funds - and any profit for himself - from modest fees on stallholders. These were known as *baithaki* fees, i.e., fees for sitting room, and could range from a few pice per stall upto several annas. Only occasionally did landholders in the NWP collect any other form of income from fairs on their land.¹⁴⁹ Nor were they likely to raise the fees to exorbitant levels. Confectioners and trinket-sellers were essential to any fair's success and if a landholder asked too much of his traders he was likely to see them move off to any of the similar fairs dotted about the locality.

For many years stall fees served as the backbone of funding for the larger fairs also. They were sanctioned by custom and, as they taxed the men who made a profit from the pilgrims, many government officers saw them as inherently just. The collection of these fees varied from site to site. At some fairs it was a loose assessment of a trader's relative value, so that a silversmith paid much more than an ironseller. Elsewhere there was a charge per foot of frontage, perhaps several rates of charges, reflecting the desirability of a certain position within the fair. Some stalls were let on tender whilst others were auctioned.¹⁵⁰

The growth of these stall fees was a haphazard process, rarely sanctioned by the correct authority.¹⁵¹ Additional income was raised from charges on other forms of land use. The *mela*

¹⁴⁹ At one village fair in Mirzapur the *zamindar* used to collect the head of every goat sacrificed to the Devi, and at a fair in Azamgarh district the *zamindars* took a cess on the articles sold as a *zamindari* perquisite. I have found no other instances of landholders using anything other than *baithaki* fees to raise income at their fairs. Precis of replies to Govt. order no. 1911C, 4 Aug. 1890, calling for a list of fairs in each district with details of any imposts or taxes there levied and the authority for levying of such, UPSA, NWP&O Municipal, file 458A, box 42.

¹⁵⁰ At a well-settled site like Allahabad, where many of the *mela* traders had outlets in the city proper, the auctioning of sites proved very lucrative for the fair managers. But the local government disapproved of the practice; it was unhappy that its agency should be caught profiteering at the pilgrims' expense. From 1882 the *mela* managers were instructed to let all stalls on tender and only to persons of respectable character. Even so the practice of auctioning the most desirable shop frontages periodically crept back into the *mela* management. R. Smeaton, Secy to Govt NWP&O, to Comr Allahabad, no. 857, 3 July 1886, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs July 1886, no. 19, file 372.

¹⁵¹ The replies sent to the NWP Government's 1890 circular about *mela* taxation showed that very few stall taxes, tolls on animals and carts, etc., the surplus funds of which were credited to various municipalities, town improvement funds and *nazul* funds, had any written authority to back them. In cases where the proper

administrations at Garhmuktesar and Allahabad both levied fees on private latrines. At these sites and at Ajudhia and at Kakora in Budaon district priests paid large sums for the land that they took up to provide temporary housing for their wealthy patrons at the river's edge.¹⁵²

All of these measures stopped short of direct taxation of pilgrims; despite their imperfections the NWP authorities preferred them to this obvious alternative. Once again it was the 1867 Kumbh Mela at Hardwar that opened up the debate. The Government of India was not yet ready to introduce legislation that would empower magistrates to levy pilgrim taxes at any site,¹⁵³ but it argued that wherever municipalities existed and therefore already possessed the means to tax pilgrims they ought to be encouraged in this by their local government. The Government of India believed that pilgrim taxes were the only equitable way of raising adequate funds to meet the costs of the long-term improvements and maintenance of a site like Hardwar.¹⁵⁴ Already in Bombay Presidency pilgrims were paying tolls of one to two annas at the famed *tirths* of Pandharpur and Jejuri, and by 1869 nearly every Bombay Collector who had large *melas* to oversee favoured the extension of pilgrim taxes to his domain.¹⁵⁵ But the NWP Government flatly rejected the suggestion. The enquiries that had been made in 1867-68 of Hindu gentlemen convinced the Lieutenant Governor that the reintroduction of a poll tax on pilgrims would be impolitic. Several informants had been quoted as saying that the 1840 abolition of the old taxes at Gaya, Allahabad, and Jagannath was one of the most enlightened acts of the British Government and many officers had reported that a direct tax on pilgrims would be widely misinterpreted

sanction had been obtained, the monies collected often exceeded that specified by the order. Precis of replies to G.O. 1911C, 4 Aug. 1890, UPSA, NWP&O Municipal, file 458A, box 42.

¹⁵² At Allahabad the Prayagwals took up a lot of land near the confluence for huts in which to house their most valued clients but they paid heavily for the privilege. The government leased the land for the duration of the fair at a cost of Re.1/2/- to Re.1/4/- per *bigha* and then let it out to the Prayagwals at Rs.80 to Rs.150 per *bigha*, an enormous profit for the government and one heartily resented by the Prayagwals. In 1886, with the support of Sardar Lachhman Singh, the *mela* manager, the Prayagwals petitioned Magistrate Porter on the matter, promising to charge no rent from the pilgrims if the government agreed to reduce the charges on the land to Rs.15 or Rs.20 per *bigha*. Porter was not unsympathetic to the Prayagwals' case but he doubted they could be trusted to observe the spirit of their undertaking. F.W. Porter, Collr and Magte Allahabad, to Comr Allahabad, no. 403, 22 Mar. 1886, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs July 1886, no. 12, file 372. Apparently the Prayagwals did not win any reduction in the rates, for at the 1894 Kumbh Mela they were paying upto Rs.250 per *bigha* for land near the confluence. Memo. by H.W. Pike, Jt Magte in charge of Magh Mela, 16 Mar. 1894, UPSA, NWP&O General, A progs Aug. 1894, no. 2c, file 372.

¹⁵³ E.C. Bayley, Secy to Govt India, to Actg Chief Secy to Govt Bombay, no. 1510, 19 Mar. 1870, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs 15 Mar. 1870, no. 186.

¹⁵⁴ E.C. Bayley, Secy to Govt India, to R. Simson, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 55/3767, 21 Aug. 1867, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file 31/1868, no. 75.

¹⁵⁵ A.F. Bellasis, Offg Comr Police ND, to Chief Secy to Govt Bombay, no. 1501, 2 Nov. 1869; W.H. Havelock, Revenue Comr SD, to Chief Secy to Govt Bombay, no. 152, 27 Jan. 1870, NAI, India Home (Public), A progs 15 Mar. 1870, nos. 184-5.

as an infringement of the 1858 declaration of religious tolerance. The Lieutenant Governor therefore ruled out the adoption of 'any uniform scheme of taxation' in favour of the existing mish-mash of funding. He directed that each *mela* be provided for according to its local peculiarities, although he showed a distinct preference for land use charges.¹⁵⁶

This rejection of pilgrim taxes produced some funding anomalies. In the following years many *melas* developed fund-raising schemes which were capitation taxes in all but name. For example, at Hardwar in 1871 each pilgrim crossing the bridge to Rauri Island had to pay a toll of one anna. As it had been decided to permit the pilgrims to camp only on the island, and not all about Hardwar as in former years, every pilgrim should have had to pay the tax. In spite of this the government persisted in calling the tax an 'Accommodation Tax' rather than a capitation tax. In 1873 a new magistrate's careless reference to it as a pilgrim tax provoked an immediate response from the NWP Government; although the difference was one of labelling and not substance, he was reminded that an accommodation tax had been sanctioned, not a poll tax.¹⁵⁷

The *kartik purnmashi mela* at Batesar in Agra district witnessed similar inconsistencies. Batesar was on the south side of the Jumna, a bridge-of-boats enabling fair-goers from the east and north to approach the *mela* without difficulty. For many years the tolls levied at the bridge had provided for the *mela's* administration and the upkeep of the road that led into the fair from the south. In the 1870s local officers began agitating for a fairer distribution of the *mela's* costs: a road toll on visitors from the south was suggested.¹⁵⁸ But the government always refused to sanction a road tax. Although the road cost more to maintain than the bridge, the government insisted that the bridge toll was not a pilgrim tax but simply a reasonable charge for the provision of the bridge.¹⁵⁹ Given the

¹⁵⁶ R. Simson, Secy to Govt NWP, to Secy to Govt India (Home), no. 1212, 13 Mar. 1868, IOR, NWP General P/438/32, A progs 1 Aug. 1868, no. 144, 14 Mar. 1868.

¹⁵⁷ J. Sladen, Magte Saharanpur, to Offg Comr Meerut, no. 70, 29 May 1877, IOR, NWP&O General P/838, A progs Sept. 1877, no. 81, 4 Aug. 1877; C.A. Elliott, Secy to Govt NWP, to Comr Meerut, no. 2154A, 3 Sept. 1873, IOR, NWP General P/52, A progs Sept. 1873, no. 26, 6 Sept. 1873.

¹⁵⁸ A.J. Lawrence, Magte Agra, to Comr Agra, no. 11, 18 Jan. 1878; C. Currie, Comr Agra, to Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 12, 30 Jan. 1878, IOR, NWP&O General P/1136, A progs Apr. 1878, nos. 57, 58, 16 Mar. 1878.

¹⁵⁹ Offg Secy to Govt NWP&O to Comr Agra, no. 1156, 2 May 1881, IOR, NWP&O General P/1605, A progs May 1881, no. 42, 2 May 1881. One officer had long since pointed out the unreasonableness of the government's position. Of the 1878 *mela* Joint Magistrate McMinn had complained that: 'The animals, vehicles, and men who came along the Agra road also paid nothing, although they received similar protection and accommodation, and the said road cost infinitely more to cut and make than the bridge whose transit was charged four annas.' C. McMinn, Jt Magte in charge of Batesar Fair, to Magte and Collr Agra, 24 Jan. 1879, IOR, NWP&O General P/1279, A progs Apr. 1879, no. 13, 19 Apr. 1879.

government's fears about the political impact of direct pilgrim taxation it was an advantage to have a system whereby some pilgrims at a *mela* were not taxed.

Direct taxation: the pilgrims' response

In the last two decades of the century the bulk of fair taxation was levied directly from pilgrims - with the notable exception of the monies raised at Allahabad's Magh Mela - but the NWP Government never overcame its squeamishness on the issue. Taxes on people travelling by rail to pilgrimage sites, collected by means of a small surcharge on the ordinary ticket price, were officially designated 'passenger' or 'visitor' taxes even though they were expressly designed to catch pilgrim traffic.¹⁶⁰

Was the NWP Government right to be wary of overt taxation of pilgrims? Even though none of the taxes levied in the late nineteenth-century were anywhere near as high as the ones that the British had inherited from the indigenous governments, there is no doubt that capitation taxes were unpopular. This in itself is an indication that, one hundred years on, a large part of the pilgrim population was much less wealthy than it had been in earlier times. A pilgrim tax of half an anna imposed at Ajudhia in 1870 met with strong opposition from some of the town's prominent Hindus, including several of the municipal commissioners. In the following year the tax was slashed to one pie per head, almost too low to make its collection worthwhile, and then in 1875 it was abolished at the instance of a

¹⁶⁰ The Government of India was long opposed to this sort of taxation as, of course, were the railway companies. The NWP Government only won sanction for any scheme of this sort if there were also provisions for the taxation of pilgrims entering a site by road. Where the local government preferred to levy a tax unevenly so as to avoid the charge that it was taxing pilgrims, the imperial government insisted that taxes be shared equally amongst all pilgrims. A visitors' tax was collected at Hardwar from March 1895 by an enhancement of one anna on the price of an Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway adult ticket to Hardwar and Jawalpur stations. The tax on children aged between three and twelve years was half an anna. This was to complement the existing road tax of one anna per person. Both the road and the rail taxes had provisions for exempting locals who went in and out of the neighbourhood on business. UPSA, NWP&O Municipal, B progs Apr. 1895, no. 28, file 890A, box 25. The Municipal Union and the NWP Government would have preferred to scrap the road taxation as it raised little income compared with the rail tax and its collection costs were high, about thirty percent of the money taken. *Report of the Municipal Taxation Committee*, pp. 35-6, 116. Benares briefly tried a similar scheme in the mid-1890s but it was vetoed by the Government of India. A modified version was again operating at Benares from the early 1900s. In neither form did it generate the amount of revenue that the municipal authorities were seeking. W.H. Cobb, Chairman Benares Munlty, to Comr Benares, no. 1076, 31 Mar. 1896, UPSA, NWP&O Municipal, A progs Dec. 1896, no. 1a, file 179B, box 37. *Report of the Municipal Taxation Committee*, pp. 36-7, 117. The Faizabad Municipality attempted for many years to win sanction for a tax on rail passengers, the proceeds to fund water-works in Ajudhia, but not until the early 1900s when the Municipality agreed to tax all road and steamer visitors to Ajudhia as well, and only during the days of the three big fairs held there every year, was official approval forthcoming. UPSA, UP Municipal, A progs Nov. 1904, nos. 36-46, file 198B. The resultant system of taxation was condemned by the 1908-09 Municipal Taxation Committee as unwieldy, costly and unjust. Numerous openings existed for bribery and peculation. *Report of the Municipal Taxation Committee*, p. 36.

petition from the Maharaja of Balrampur.¹⁶¹ However, there is almost no evidence to suggest that pilgrims favoured one form of direct taxation over another, bridge tolls rather than capitation taxes, for example.

Wherever possible there was large scale tax evasion. In unusually dry years when the river was low at Batesar, pilgrims would ford the Jumna some distance from the fair site and thus escape paying the bridge tolls.¹⁶² Most fairs had bottle-necks at their collection points; pilgrims often rushed the barriers and many would get through without paying any tax. At Hardwar in 1885, an Ardh Kumbh Mela, it was estimated that almost a quarter of the 345,000 pilgrims evaded the one anna tax.¹⁶³ At the much larger Kumbh Mela of 1879 half of the five or six *lakhs* of pilgrims were thought to have escaped payment. The Magistrate was at a loss to explain the discrepancy between tax receipts and pilgrim numbers. According to his figures a quarter of a million pilgrims must have pushed past the police, skipped under the barriers, or clambered down into the site by unorthodox routes.¹⁶⁴ When the tax on rail tickets to Benares was introduced in 1895 the railway authorities noticed an immediate increase in the number of passengers buying tickets for the nearby, but untaxed, destination of Mughal Serai. They would alight at this station and then walk the couple of miles into Benares, thus avoiding the tax.¹⁶⁵

Several things contributed to the unpopularity of direct taxation. Advocates of pilgrim taxation did not believe that the amount of tax was in itself a grievance. They argued that an anna was a very small proportion of the average pilgrim's total outlay on presents to priests and the deity, food and household purchases, and travelling expenses. In 1868 the Commissioner of Meerut insisted that

¹⁶¹ Comr Faizabad to Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 6066, 10 June 1896, UPSA, NWP&O Municipal, B progs June 1896, no. 26, file 198B, box 38.

¹⁶² J.R. Pearson, Asst Collr Agra, to Collr Agra, Report on the Batesar Fair, 1896, UPSA, NWP&O Miscellaneous, A progs July 1897, no. 4b, file 258, box 8; C.A. Sherring, Officer in charge of Batesar Fair, to Magte Agra, Report on the Batesar Fair, 1893, IOR, NWP&O Miscellaneous P/4506, A progs July 1894, file 258, no. 1b.

¹⁶³ A.H. Harington, Magte Saharanpur, to Comr Meerut, no. 102, 15 Sept. 1885, UPSA, NWP&O Miscellaneous, A progs Jan. 1886, no. 2, file 283, box 9.

¹⁶⁴ Memorandum *in re* Hardwar Fair, 1879, J. Sladen, Magte Saharanpur, 30 Apr. 1879, IOR, NWP&O General P/1458, A progs Feb. 1880, no. 64, 7 Feb. 1880.

¹⁶⁵ 'Notes and Orders', UPSA, NWP&O Municipal, A progs Dec. 1896, nos. 1-9, file 179B, box 37. As late as the 1930s similar tactics were adopted by pilgrims travelling to Mathura and Brindavan. Pilgrims would buy tickets to untaxed stations *en route* to either destination and then walk or take buses for the remainder of the journey. Chairman, Municipal Board Brindavan, to Secy to Railway Board, Simla, no. 313, 11 May 1933; Agent, East India Railway Company, to Secy to Govt UP, Local Self Govt, 20 Oct. 1933, UPSA, UP Municipal, file 421E, 'Taxation of pilgrims at pilgrims centres', box 328.

half an anna could not be considered a heavy impost when, in his estimation, 'the poorest person that attends a great bathing fair pays from 12 annas to Rs.1/4/- to the Brahmins.'¹⁶⁶ However, other evidence suggests that the Commissioner had not met the poorest of pilgrims. In 1880 the NWP Government ruled out the possibility of year-round taxation of one anna on foot pilgrims going to Hardwar precisely because it 'would...virtually...make Hardwar inaccessible to the very poor.'¹⁶⁷ In the 1880s J.C. Oman, a professor at the Government College of Lahore, wrote of a visit his *chaprasi* made to the Bhadrakali Mela, the largest fair held within the neighbourhood of Lahore. The *chaprasi* took with him a small purse containing four four-anna pieces, in all a rupee, and with this he expected to propitiate the Devi, buy his food and partake of a few amusements. He walked the seven miles from Lahore to the fair and returned the same way, thus sparing any unnecessary expense. Oman, who himself went to a subsequent Bhadrakali Mela, found that one could obtain sugar-water for free from the stands set up along the route and within the fair by charitable persons. Merry-go-round rides could be had for about one pie. Entry to a theatre-cum-opera cost an anna, and some paintings on moral themes could be purchased for half an anna each.¹⁶⁸ In other words, there was plenty of scope for a person to experience the flavour of a *mela* without spending many annas. For anyone on this sort of budget a government tax of one anna would bite heavily into his spending money.¹⁶⁹

Mendicants, many of whom had taken vows not to touch metal, were often troubled by pilgrim taxes and had to rely upon the charity of other pilgrims to get them through the toll barriers. The plight of these pilgrims and the very poor at Ajudhia was vividly represented to the 1909 Municipal Taxation Committee:

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¹⁶⁶ Comr Meerut to R. Simson, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 30, 31 Jan. 1868, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Records, dept XVII, file 31/1868, no. 75.

¹⁶⁷ C. Robertson, Secy to Govt NWP&O, to Comr Meerut, no. 2241, 19 July 1880, IOR, NWP&O General P/1458, A progs July 1880, no. 8, 24 July 1880. This of course was a tacit admission on the Government's part that the taxation already in place was keeping very poor pilgrims away from the Dikhauti Melas in April and the extraordinary fairs such as the Kumbh and Ardh Kumbh Melas.

¹⁶⁸ J.C. Oman, *Cults, customs and superstitions of India* (Delhi, 1972 reprint), pp. 202-7.

¹⁶⁹ In 1907 the Deputy Commissioner of Garhwal would have sanctioned a tax on the pilgrims who had the money to travel to the Himalayan shrines, a journey requiring no less than thirty or forty rupees in his estimation. But he thought it indefensible to tax pilgrims at Ajudhia and Benares 'where thousands of villagers come in to bathe with only a few annas in their pockets.' V.A. Stowell, Depy Comr Garhwal, to Comr Kumaon, no. 2907, 8 May 1907, UPSA, UP Sanitation, A progs Aug. 1907, no. 6, file 293B, box 3.

We had unanimous evidence of the strongest description from all the witnesses in Fyzabad, to the effect that thousands of pilgrims have been compelled, during the bathing fairs of the past year, to remain on the other side of the river, as they have been unable to pass the Lakarmandi bridge barrier.¹⁷⁰

The imperfection of collection methods added to the unpopularity of direct taxation. When arriving at a site most pilgrims would not eat or rest until they had performed some preliminary rituals and bathed. These activities were often delayed for several hours as impatient pilgrims crowded at the collection barriers waiting to pay their tolls and to be allowed to proceed to the fair site. Invariably too there were problems with the collection staff, many of whom were hired only for the duration of a fair and could afford to demand extra money from credulous and weary outsiders with little fear of their corruption being detected by permanent government employees. Ajudhia's collection system was notoriously slack, admitting numerous opportunities for extortion by the temporary collection staff.¹⁷¹ In 1881 the Saharanpur Magistrate gave up taxing vehicles and animals at Hardwar's smaller religious gatherings when he found that 'in the absence of a proper supervising establishment...too much opportunity is thereby afforded for peculation.'¹⁷²

Material considerations aside, however, extracts from the NWP's vernacular newspapers provide evidence of a more deep-rooted dislike of taxation at pilgrimage sites. Two principles were commonly invoked: there was a distinct dislike of direct taxation, and a preference for land-use charges, much as the NWP Government had discerned in the 1860s; and there was resentment of excess profit-making from any form of taxation at *melas*, especially when those profits were seen to accrue to the government.

Although the contributors to the newspapers often differed in their appreciation of government intervention at pilgrimage sites, unmistakable themes surface in all of the Hindu papers.¹⁷³ There was

¹⁷⁰ *Report of the Municipal Taxation Committee*, p. 36. The committee concluded that in this respect rail taxation was preferable; it could be safely assumed that a pilgrim who could afford a train ticket could also afford an extra anna in pilgrim tax. Although, as we have seen above, even these pilgrims were prepared to put themselves to considerable inconvenience to avoid paying a surcharge on their tickets.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² J. Sladen, Magte Saharanpur, to Comr Meerut, no. 71/XVII, 7 June 1881, IOR, NWP&O General P/1605, A progs July 1881, no. 39, 9 July 1881. Similarly a scheme to fund a mobile conservancy staff in the Himalayas with bridge tolls on all the main pilgrim routes was repeatedly denied government approval because of fears that the collection staff would cheat the pilgrims and pocket a good deal of the legitimate proceeds as well. UPSA, NWP&O Sanitation, file 293B, box 3. This file includes the Kumaon correspondence on the issue from 1894 to 1907.

¹⁷³ It goes almost without saying that newspapers with Muslim proprietors agreed far more readily with government efforts to control internal pilgrimage activity than did Hindu publications. For example, in 1879 Sheikh Alimullah's *Aligarh Institute Gazette* lamented that the government carried its excellent policy of religious toleration too far at times. It should have banned the Hardwar *mela* that year because of the risk posed by cholera; as it did not, lots of people were now suffering unduly. However the *Gazette* did not

a ready acceptance of the state's duty to protect the pilgrims, to afford him every means to perform his pilgrimage in comfort and safety. From this premise the state was morally bound to stamp out the unscrupulous practices of priests, traders, and mendicants.¹⁷⁴ However, as the state discovered to its cost, when it did attempt to control the professionals at the pilgrimage sites, such as the lodging-house keepers, there was an angry rejection of its intervention between pilgrim and pilgrim servicer. This was not mere perversity. For while the state had a duty to protect pilgrims its agencies of protection, especially the police, were invariably seen as more corrupt than the men whose activities they were supposed to be regulating. Thus the concept of a benevolent state survived, and was often invoked, but attempts to translate that into reality were often greeted with hostility. Whatever the criticism of the priests more accusations were always levelled against the police. One example should suffice to illustrate the government's dilemma. In the early 1880s, after many years of complaints, the Magistrate of Allahabad, Mr Robertson, forbade Prayagwals from standing on the platforms at Allahabad's railway station and fighting over the pilgrims as they got off their trains. The police were instructed to block their entry to the station. But a local newspaper, *Sahas*, was soon complaining of the uselessness of the reform: the police were only too ready to accept bribes from the Prayagwals, it alleged, so that not only did the original evil still exist but a new one had been added to it.¹⁷⁵ It is not

recommend banning pilgrimage to Mecca, instead suggesting a lesser control of ensuring that all of the pilgrims had sufficient funds to support themselves on their journey. *Aligarh Institute Gazette* 3 May 1879, SVN 1879, pp. 358-9.

¹⁷⁴ In 1870 the *Mufid-ul-Anam* of Fategarh complained that the police at the Batesar *mela* did nothing to stop either traders from selling adulterated food or *aghorpanthis* from begging offensively. *Mufid-ul-Anam*, 17 Nov. 1870, SVN 1870, p. 441. In 1872 a Benares newspaper complained of the extortion practised by Allahabad's Prayagwals, who were said to grab bewildered pilgrims at the railway station and keep them under their control for the rest of their time in the city. The writer wanted the government to control the access of the Prayagwals to the station and to place a European officer at the *ghats* to receive the pilgrims' complaints. *Kavi Vachan Sudha*, 23 Apr. 1872, SVN 1872, p. 219. Complaints against the Prayagwals were particularly common. See *Roznamcha*, 9 Jan. 1873, SVN 1873, p. 17; *Hindustan*, 8 Feb. 1890, SVN, 1890, pp. 80-1; *Prayag Samachar*, 9 July 1896, SVN 1896, p. 374. For more general complaints about the abuse of pilgrims at *melas* by their fellow Hindus see: *Benares Akhbar*, 27 Mar. 1873, SVN 1873, p. 225; *Sahas*, 30 Aug. 1882, SVN 1882, p. 563; *Prayag Samachar*, 28 Jan. 1885, SVN 1885, pp. 76-7; *Ram Patika*, 1 Dec. 1893, SVN 1893, pp. 548-9; *Rahbar*, 8 Nov. 1896, SVN 1896, p. 642; *Natya Patra*, Jan. 1897, SVN 1897, p. 34.

¹⁷⁵ *Sahas*, 6 Sept. 1882, SVN 1882, p. 588. For general complaints about the police, chiefly their readiness to accept bribes and their 'over-enthusiasm' in crowd control see: *Roznamcha*, 12 Apr. 1873, SVN 1873, p. 279; *Sudarshan Samachar*, 10 Feb. 1876, SVN 1876, p. 280; *Mashir-i-Qaisar*, 2 Dec. 1877, SVN 1877, p. 845; *Almora Akhbar*, 1 May and 1 June 1879, SVN 1879, pp. 362, 431-2; *Kavi Vachan Sudha*, 26 Jan. 1880, SVN 1880, p. 79; *Hindi Pradip*, Feb. 1880, SVN 1880, p. 108; *Sahas*, 28 Jan. 1882, SVN 1882, p. 79; *Tutiya-i-Hind*, 13 Apr. 1883, SVN 1883, p. 354; *Rahbar-i-Hind*, 26 Aug. 1886, SVN 1886, p. 618; *Nasim-i-Agra*, 7 Nov. 1890, SVN 1890, p. 720; *Tohfa-i-Hind*, 27 Apr. 1894, SVN 1894, p. 183. An article in *Prayag Samachar*, 19 May 1890, is typical of the tone of many of the charges made against the police. The prohibition on retiring on the plain near the Allahabad confluence was said to be 'an engine of oppression' in the hands of the police; people were having to bribe the police to avoid being prosecuted for sanitary offences that they had not committed. SVN 1890, p. 289.

difficult to see the extent of the government's problems in attempting to achieve the ideal combination of patronage and protection.¹⁷⁶

Direct taxation of pilgrims earned the government few plaudits, especially as the blame was seen to lie primarily with the policy-makers and not the flawed executive. Not all of the contributors to the newspapers were aware of the previous existence of pilgrim taxation at Gaya, Allahabad and Jagannath. But it is ironic that those who did know of the 1840 abolition of these taxes did not see Act X as the result of illiberal evangelicalism, but as a product of the enlightenment of an earlier age, a time in which wiser Britons had admitted that it was unjust to tax men for performing their religious duty.¹⁷⁷ It was widely felt that it was wrong to tax people engaged in their spiritual betterment. A further practical objection was that pilgrim taxation became an 'engine of extortion' in the hands of the government's agents, adding another layer of oppression to the pilgrim's lot, which, as we have just seen, it was the state's duty to mitigate, not to exacerbate. Thus objections were raised against the taxation of pilgrims at Hardwar,¹⁷⁸ at the Bhadrakali Mela near Lahore,¹⁷⁹ at Ajudhia,¹⁸⁰ at the Batesar mela in Agra district,¹⁸¹ and at Benares, on visitors entering by rail.¹⁸² The rail tax at Benares provoked the most scathing criticism. In 1893 its rumoured introduction prompted the *Hindustan* to portray taxation as a powerful demon, boasting of its strength and forcing people to bow down to it rather than to Ram Chandra. The writer lamented that even though the demon was 'levying

¹⁷⁶ The Hindus' suspicions about the integrity of the police are partly borne out by the observations of European officers serving at pilgrimage sites. In 1885 the Commissioner of Allahabad argued cogently for the replacement of the current police manager of the Magh Mela with a civilian officer: 'a thorough separation of the police and executive arrangements will of itself go far to conciliate the crowd of pilgrims. They are said to look upon the police, who give out the contracts, as aids and abettors of the contractors [who were charging exorbitant prices for necessities in the fair]. It is not an unnatural idea.' A.J. Lawrence, Comr Allahabad, to Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 3898/213, 5 June 1885, IOR, NWP&O Miscellaneous (General) P/2450, A progs July 1885, no. 6, file 372.

¹⁷⁷ For papers which denied that pilgrims had ever been taxed see: *Rohilkhand Akhbar*, 7 Dec. 1867, SVN 1868, p. 10; and *Nusseem Jounpore*, 28 Apr. 1868, SVN 1868, p. 226. In 1872 an Allahabad paper, the *Nur-ul-Absar*, complained that the taxation levied at the Magh Mela was an infringement of both Act X of 1840, which ruled that it was improper to levy an impost on religious ceremonies, and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 which forbade interference with religious practices. *Nur-ul-Absar*, 15 Jan. 1872, SVN 1872, pp. 29-31. In April 1874 the same paper attacked the tax of one pie taken from pilgrims at Ajudhia's big Ramnaumi mela. Ajudhia, it argued, came within the spirit if not the letter of Act X of 1840. *Nur-ul-Absar*, 1 Apr. 1874, SVN 1874, p. 130.

¹⁷⁸ *Rohilkhand Akhbar*, 15 Apr. 1871, SVN 1871, p. 181; *Lawrence Gazette*, 1 May 1874, SVN 1874, p. 176; *Hindustan*, 19 Apr. 1889, SVN 1889, p. 252.

¹⁷⁹ *Koh-i-Nur*, 20 May 1871, SVN 1871, p. 252.

¹⁸⁰ *Nur-ul-Absar*, 1 Apr. 1874, SVN 1874, p. 130.

¹⁸¹ *Benares Akhbar*, 21 Nov. 1877, SVN 1877, p. 831.

¹⁸² *Bharat Jiwan*, 29 May 1893, *Anis-i-Hind*, 24 June 1893, *Rahbar*, 24 June 1893, SVN 1893, pp. 221, 249; *Anis-i-Hind*, 8 Apr. 1896, SVN 1896, p. 204.

blackmail' from every pilgrim going to Benares, Lord Shiva and his followers did not rise up against him.¹⁸³

Indirect taxation: Allahabad's Magh Mela as a symbol of the state's cupidity

Protests against the taxation of traders at pilgrimage sites were less frequent and there seems to have been no objection to this in principle.¹⁸⁴ However many objections were registered against the collection of excess profits from traders and in the case of the taxation at Allahabad's Magh Mela it was to this that many of the evils that the government sought to control by regulation were said to owe their origin. If the government did not charge such high prices for stall space, so the argument went, then the traders would not be forced to recoup the money by adulterating their supplies and short-weighting their customers. Or, if the Prayagwals could hire the land for their pilgrim huts at reasonable rates then they would not need to charge the pilgrims high rents.¹⁸⁵

The accusation that the government used the Magh Mela as a source of income was correct. Only towards the end of the century with the advent of expensive projects such as the provision of piped water to the *mela* site and elaborate anti-plague precautions did the pilgrims seem to be getting value for money. Before this some of the surplus funds were distributed amongst a number of worthy municipal causes - the museum, the library, the dispensary and Alfred Park - whilst the remainder, often amounting to thousands of rupees, accrued to provincial revenues.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ *Hindustan*, 28 Sept. 1893, SVN 1893, p. 420. In 1896 the passenger tax was likened by the *Anjuman-i-Hind* of Lucknow to the *jizya* of former Muslim emperors. The writer warned that persistence with this form of religious oppression would cost the British their empire as it had Aurangzeb. *Anjuman-i-Hind*, 25 Apr. 1896, SVN 1896, p. 230.

¹⁸⁴ For example, in 1867 the *Rohilkhand Akhbar* opined that it was universally held to be proper to tax the people who profited from the fair rather than the pilgrims. *Rohilkhand Akhbar*, 7 Dec. 1867, SVN 1868, p. 10.

¹⁸⁵ *Nur-ul-Absar*, 15 Jan. and 15 Feb. 1872, SVN 1872, pp. 29-31, 96; *Sudarshan Samachar*, 10 Feb. 1876, SVN 1876, p. 280; *Hindi Pradip*, Feb. 1880, SVN 1880, p. 108; *Hindi Pradip*, Jan. 1882, SVN 1882, p. 77; *Sahas*, 28 Jan. 1882, *ibid.*, p. 79; *Hindustan*, 8 Feb. 1890, SVN 1890, pp. 80-1; *Prayag Samachar*, 17 Feb. 1890, SVN 1890, pp. 109-10.

¹⁸⁶ File 372 (box 46) in UPSA contains Magh Mela reports for the years 1885-1906. The balances of the fair's funds fluctuated considerably over these years, sometimes upto Rs.30,000 or more. In 1899 the expense of plague precautions saw the surplus drop to Rs.3,000 and in the following year there was a debit of Rs.11,639. At the Kumbh Mela of 1906 huge efforts to prevent a cholera outbreak produced a shortfall of Rs.27,524 in receipts over expenditure.

Local officers occasionally suggested that the fair's income need not be greater than the money expended on sanitary and policing measures, but they usually received a frosty reply from the government. In 1885 Secretary Smeaton observed of one such suggestion that 'there appears to be no good reason for entertaining Mr Macmillan's view - that the income derived from the mela should not be more than is needed to cover the expenses. So long as the fair is not in anyway discouraged or hindered, the rates levied are, in His Honor's opinion, a legitimate source of public income.' R. Smeaton, Secy to Govt NWP&O, to Comr Allahabad, no.

Some of the complaints registered in the native press were eventually heeded. The granting of monopolies to traders who bid for the sole right to provide a certain commodity in the fair was stopped in 1883.¹⁸⁷ After representations from local Hindus a few small licence fees were abolished in 1886, viz., those on *pinda*-sellers and *lotah*- and bottle-closers.¹⁸⁸ However some of the more far-reaching demands, such as the abolition of fees on barbers, and the direction of the surplus funds towards Hindu institutions were never met. In spite of the government's attempts to clean up its *mela* administration a residual suspicion of its intentions lingered. In 1886 the *Prayag Samachar* complained that the fair's surplus went to the government's pet projects, amongst them the Church.¹⁸⁹ The claim seems absurd, but it shows that the government's actions were perceived as insensitive. There was a readiness to believe that the government wished Hinduism ill and was set about its demise.¹⁹⁰

In the 1880s and '90s the dissatisfaction with the taxation at the Magh Mela and the disbursement of its surplus funds seems to have fed upon and fuelled other concerns about the *mela*'s management. Increasingly there were complaints about the 'corruption' of the *mela* although there is little evidence to suggest a burgeoning of immoral or irreligious behaviour in these years. There was a tendency to identify as 'evils' long established features of the fair and to blame Muslims for their introduction. Gambling, begging, prostitution, and even the display of five-legged cows (sometimes six!) were attributed to a novel, malevolent Muslim influence. Muslims were accused of disguising themselves as Hindu barbers, ascetics and *lotah*-sellers, and of inflicting awful pollution on unsuspecting pilgrims. By implication the British were at fault for not preventing the Muslim infiltration. In spite of the fact that from about the mid-1880s the government attempted to reduce the

978/XII-372-2, 13 July 1885, IOR, NWP&O Miscellaneous (General) P/2450, A progs July 1885, no. 14, file 372.

¹⁸⁷ T. Benson, Offg Magte Allahabad, to Offg Comr Allahabad, no. 221/L.F.-43, 25 May 1883, IOR, NWP&O General P/1996, A progs July 1883, no. 4, 28 July 1883. Articles in *Sahas* and *Hindi Pradip* in the previous years had correctly reported that the monopolies gave the successful bidders the right to set the prices within the fair at any level they liked and to exact a fee from other people bringing the same goods to the site. *Sahas*, 21 Jan. 1882, *Hindi Pradip*, Jan. 1882, SVN 1882, pp. 48-9, 77-8. The monopolies were replaced with a licence fee on all petty traders.

¹⁸⁸ F.W. Porter, Collr and Magte Allahabad, to Comr Allahabad, no. 403, 22 Mar. 1886, UPSA, NWP&O Miscellaneous (General), A progs July 1886, no. 12, file 372, box 46.

¹⁸⁹ *Prayag Samachar*, 17 Feb. 1886, SVN 1886, p. 156. The newspaper correctly identified the other recipients of the fair's surplus.

¹⁹⁰ A similarly fantastic claim was made about the Batesar *mela* upon the introduction of stall taxes there in 1877. The innovation was condemned as pressing heavily upon poor traders and because the government was said to be taking a fourth part of all the offerings at the Shiva temple. The latter claim was false but the writer, who claimed to have attended the *mela*, clearly believed that it was within the government's likely range of activities. *Benares Akhbar*, 21 Nov. 1877, SVN 1877, p. 831.

numbers of Muslim policemen on duty at the Magh Mela and to curtail the peripatetic proselytization of Christian missionaries the agitation on these issues escalated.¹⁹¹ The more Hindu participation there was in the *mela's* management, either in an advisory or an executive capacity, the more numerous were the calls for a greater Hindu say. With relatively little change in the content of the *mela*, a pervasive Hinduization of its 'spirit' or reputation was underway, given voice to by the numerous advocates of Hindu causes who visited the *mela* in these years. Cow-protection *upadeshaks*, Aryas, *sanatan dharmis*, and supporters of Hindi and the Nagri script frequented the *mela*, often arguing amongst themselves or with the missionaries, but always serving to lift the profile of the *mela* as a Hindu event.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ In 1886 the management of the Magh Mela was transferred from Allahabad's *kotwal*, then a Muslim, to a Hindu *tahsildar*. This was partly in response to a long campaign waged by the Hindu traders and priests to get rid of the Muslim, but it also reflected the government's wish to separate the policing from the *mela's* management. At the same time the Commissioner attempted to ensure that there was not a preponderance of Muslims amongst the serving officers: 'The officials employed this year, even the police, were almost entirely Hindus, so that a fruitful cause of complaint has been removed....More attention must in future years be paid to the police deputed here, and it does not seem necessary that they should all be Hindus. Those employed at the bathing-ghats should be...but a sufficient number could probably not be got if Musalmans are rigorously excluded.' A.J. Lawrence, Comr Allahabad, to Secy to Govt NWP&O, no. 3286/85, 7 May 1886, IOR, NWP&O Miscellaneous (General) P/2677, A progs July 1886, no. 11, file 372. In 1897 a local newspaper complained that the Government of India's 'ban' on Muslim and Christian officers at the fair was being broken with increasing frequency to the great distress of the Hindus. *Natya Patra*, Feb. 1897, SVN 1897, p. 111. This paper repeated the complaint in 1901 and again in 1902, SVN 1901, pp. 45-6 and SVN 1902, pp. 226, 379. In 1890 the Joint Magistrate in charge of the Magh Mela reported that, although he was unhappy with the presence of Christian missionaries at the fair, as their right to be there had for so many years gone unchallenged he did not think that they could now be removed. However, he stressed that their activities had to be confined to their tents (stall space for them and other religious groups was free) and that if they attempted to preach outside of their compounds then the authorities would interfere. P. Gray, Jt Magte Allahabad, to Magte Allahabad, 31 Mar. 1890, UPSA, NWP&O Miscellaneous (General), A progs May 1890, no. 10, file 372. Complaints about missionary activity are to be found in: *Prayag Samachar*, 4 Feb. 1889, SVN 1889, p. 94; *Prayag Samachar*, 17 Feb. 1890, SVN 1890, pp. 109-10; *Ram Pataka*, 1 Dec. 1893, SVN 1893, pp. 548-9; *Natya Patra*, Jan. 1897, SVN 1897, p. 34; *Natya Patra Extraordinary*, Feb. 1897, SVN 1897, p. 129; *Natya Patra*, Feb. 1899, SVN 1899, p. 81; *Natya Patra Extraordinary*, 22 Jan. 1901, SVN 1901, pp. 45-6; *Prayag Samachar*, 23 Jan. 1902, SVN 1902, p. 77; *Natya Patra*, Feb. 1902, *ibid.*, pp. 111-12. See also *Rahbar*, 28 June 1891, SVN 1891, p. 461, for a complaint about the missionary presence at fairs other than the Magh Mela.

¹⁹² Swami Ala Ram, a ubiquitous cow-protection preacher, attended several Magh Melas from the late 1880s, addressing crowds of pilgrims with the fiery speeches that were his hallmark. *Hindi Pradip*, Sept. 1888, SVN 1888, p. 631; *Hindustan*, 19 Apr. 1889, SVN 1889, p. 252; P. Gray, Jt Magte Allahabad, to Magte Allahabad, 31 Mar. 1890, UPSA, NWP&O Misc. (General), A progs May 1890, no. 10, file 372, box 46. An 1894 edition of *Prayag Samachar* observed that Ala Ram had first lectured for the Arya Samaj but 'five or six years ago' had gone over to the Dharm Sabha taking the cow-protection cause with him. He was said to have founded several *gaurakshini sabhas*, including the one at Allahabad, and was seen lecturing at the 1894 Kumbh Mela in the tent of the Dharm Sabha in support of cow-protection, orthodox Hinduism and the National Congress. He was the recipient of numerous writs for libel, slander and abusive language. *Prayag Samachar*, 25 Jan. 1894, SVN 1894, p. 53. Other cow-protection speakers present that year were Pandit Shiva Sahai Datta of Shahjahanpur, Pandit Jagat Ujagar of Benares and Babu Sadhu Saran Singh of Gorakhpur. *Godharm Prakash*, Feb. 1894, SVN 1894, p. 132. Of the 1901 *mela* Joint Magistrate Campbell observed that 'as usual' the Arya Samaj, the Vidya Dharm Vardhini Sabha, and the Gorakshini Sabha were given free sites to put up tents. Both they and the local papers complained of their poor position. W.E.M. Campbell, Jt Magte in charge of the Magh Mela, Report on the Magh Mela of 1901, n.d., UPSA, NWP&O Misc. (General), A progs Dec. 1901, no. 26, file 372, box 46; *Natya Patra Extraordinary*, 22 Jan. 1901, SVN 1901, pp. 45-6.

Nita Kumar has found that in twentieth-century Benares there have been frequent and repetitive calls for the moral reform of the city's *melas* and festivals, and that these calls have often served as the prologue for the introduction of wider, contemporary concerns into the celebrations. This, she argues, is an unextraordinary reflection of a festival's ability to be 'currently meaningful'.¹⁹³ For example, in the 1920s and '30s Benares's Holi celebrations saw the customary obscenities replaced by nationalist slogans and the processions of role-reversal replaced by nationalist processions.¹⁹⁴ From the 1890s, just as in Allahabad, typical elements of many Benares festivals, such as gambling, intermingling of the sexes, raucous singing and crude satirical displays of the ills of society, were identified as proof of the degeneration of the Hindus and were targeted for reform by politically-active locals. In Kumar's setting and period of investigation these calls for reform seem to have prepared the way first for the introduction of nationalist concerns into Benares's festivals and then later, in the era of Independence, concerns about class divisions. In our slightly earlier period and in politically-mature Allahabad, calls for reform of the Magh Mela appear instead to have heralded a contemporary preoccupation with the nature of Hindu identity.

Most of the complaints about the Magh Mela's corruption came from papers based in Allahabad. Their proprietors were local politicians, alive to the wrangles of the municipal board and its sub-committees, and their contents often reflected the concerns of the merchants and businessmen who traded at the *mela*. It is probable that their attacks on aspects of the *mela*'s administration did not mirror the opinions of the mass of pilgrims, and that they were made with a view to scoring points off their political rivals.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless it is significant that the Magh Mela was seen as fit territory for this sort of political competition which, like the arguments of the Hindu spokesmen at the *mela*, enhanced its status as an exclusively Hindu event. The *mela* reflected the diversity of the Hindu revivalist movement, capable of meaning different things to different Hindus, but always defining Hindus as a separate group. And in as much as the government was seen to permit 'anti-Hindu' features within the Magh Mela it was seen to oppose Hinduism *per se*. British officers would probably

¹⁹³ Nita Kumar, *The artisans of Banaras: popular culture and identity, 1880-1986* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 165-200.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 177-8.

¹⁹⁵ See Bayly, *The local roots of Indian politics*, pp. 145-76, for a detailed study of the politics of newspaper ownership in Allahabad during this period.

have preferred that the Magh Mela be seen in terms of its 'objective' needs - sanitation, policing and financing - rather than its nebulous religious character. But although they could hope to retain executive control they had no way of tying down the *mela's* spirit. The government's attempts to win Hindus over to unpalatable aspects of its administration with the offer of a consultative role to hand-picked 'Hindu gentlemen' ended with the surrender of its moral authority over the *mela's* management.



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MELA HISTORIES

The above evidence constructs a history of British intervention in fair management and the reactions of the Hindus to the changes. But the vitality of a fair depended very much upon its local circumstances as well as the overarching management policies of the state, and each fair responded differently to the colonial state's intervention, depending upon its individual characteristics and history. The following study of two fairs, the *kartik purnmashi melas* at Garhmuktesar and Batesar, in Meerut and Agra districts respectively, makes this point clearly. It also shows how the nineteenth-century decline in royal patronage and the rise in middle-class patronage varied in its impact on different religious celebrations. One did not necessarily compensate for the loss of the other. The Batesar *mela*, long a recipient of aristocratic patronage, languished in the late-nineteenth century, heavily reliant on government support to keep its traditional trade in horses alive and its temples and *ghats* in repair. In contrast, the Garhmuktesar *mela* flourished, buoyed up by a prosperous peasantry, improved communications and enthusiastic participation by the commercial classes of the surrounding sites.

The Garhmuktesar *kartik purnmashi mela*

Garhmuktesar stands high on the right bank of the Ganga in Meerut district, four miles below the Ganga's confluence with the Burhganga. In the mid-nineteenth century its population fluctuated between seven and eight thousand people, many of them Brahmans.¹⁹⁶ In spite of its lack of manufactures and trade and its indifferent agriculture the town was prosperous. Many of its two and a half thousand houses were brick built and in good repair and by the 1870s it was connected by metal roads with Meerut, Hapur, Delhi and Moradabad.¹⁹⁷ Garhmuktesar thrived because of its reputation as a site of worship of the Ganga. The four main temples in the town were all dedicated to the river and one, Mukteswara Mahadeo, gave the town its name. In the eighteenth century Maratha royals had often worshipped at Garhmuktesar and its holy waters had been carried to every corner of the continent. In British times it was famed chiefly for its *kartik purnmashi mela*, the biggest of its many fairs, which

¹⁹⁶ In 1847 the population was calculated at 7,168, rising to 8,781 in 1852. In 1872 the census recorded 7,962 people, dropping slightly to 7,616 in 1901. Of these over five thousand were Hindus, mostly Brahmans, and over two thousand were Muslims. The Muslims were not an insignificant community nor a poor one. H.R. Nevill, *Meerut: A Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1904), p. 225.

¹⁹⁷ E.T. Atkinson, *Statistical, descriptive and historical account of the North-Western Provinces of India, III, Meerut Division* (Allahabad, 1876), pp. 218-19.

drew several hundred thousand pilgrims, most of them from the districts and cities of Bulandshahr, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Delhi.¹⁹⁸

The *mela* saw little exotic trade or epidemic sickness so that the Meerut authorities seem almost to have ignored it until the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1840 it was still customary to police the *mela* with *sowars* provided by two *talukdars* of neighbouring Bulandshahr, Rai Bahadur Singh and Abdullah Khan.¹⁹⁹ But only a few years later it had become 'usual' to employ either a company of Native Infantry or men from the Police Battalion to preserve the peace.²⁰⁰ British estimates of crowd size during these years are vague. However, there was a recognition of annual fluctuations in the *mela* population. This was normal for all the *kartik purnmashi melas*; it reflected the timing of the full moon in relation to the agricultural season. When the full moon fell before the middle of November the fair was considered an early one and it was understood that attendance would be light because many agriculturists were either still harvesting the *kharif* crop or else sowing the *rabi* crop. They had neither the time nor the cash to attend. Conversely a late Kartik full moon, one at the end of November, raised expectations of a bumper fair in terms of attendance and trade. An early fair was also a much shorter event, with those peasants who could spare the time coming for a day or two at the most.

By the 1850s local officers were convinced of the increasing importance of the *mela* and of Garhmuktesar as a religious resort. The Commissioner reported that the 1852 *mela* was the largest in many years and that it was 'yearly becoming of more interest to the people.'²⁰¹ In 1867 a settlement officer, W.A. Forbes, found that Garhmuktesar was attracting investments in sacred land. Voluntary land transfers had increased sharply since the 1835 settlement:

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¹⁹⁸ To the east there was always a smaller fair on the Moradabad side of the river. In 1868 this was estimated to be one sixth of the gathering of 150-200,000 on the Garhmuktesar side. C. Planck, Sany Comr NWP, to R. Simson, Secy to Govt NWP, no. 202, 9 Nov. 1868, in *Sanitary Arrangements at the Gurhmooktessur Fair of 1868* (Allahabad, 1869).

¹⁹⁹ Magte Meerut to Magte Bulandshahr, no. 128, 13 Nov. 1841, UPRAA, Meerut Collr, Pre-Mutiny Records, Judl Letters Issues, 1840-42, basta 11, no. 2.

²⁰⁰ Offg Magte Meerut to Comr Meerut, 28 Oct. 1845; Jt Magte Meerut to T.C. Plowden, Magte Meerut, no. 277, 18 Nov. 1845, *ibid*.

²⁰¹ S. Fraser, Comr Meerut, to W. Muir, Secy to Govt NWP, 23 June 1853, Preport on the Police Administration in Meerut Division for the Year 1852, IOR, NWP Criminal Judicial P/233/48, 21 July 1853, no. 123.

In the large estate of Gurhmookhtesur the land is of very little value for agricultural purposes, yet the sanctity of the neighbourhood has given the ravines and sandy nullahs about the town a fictitious value. Bankers, tradesmen, and men of all classes, from all the country round, are now eagerly buying up small plots, enclosing, levelling, sinking wells, planting gardens, and in some instances building small summer-houses, in order to have a footing on such holy ground.²⁰²

Moreover the interest in the site extended beyond that of traditional land-owning classes:

We find the lower classes coming forward as purchasers of land, and in my list I see entered blacksmiths, tailors, brick-makers, barbers, gardeners (malees), men who never by any chance in former days looked forward to becoming holders of land.²⁰³

Later again, in 1872, the Sanitary Commissioner of the NWP, Charles Planck, observed that the Brahmans had just completed 'a huge new shewala' in the town. This was a project presumably conceived and executed since his previous tour of inspection there in 1868.²⁰⁴

Statistical evidence, albeit of a very crude nature, also suggests that the *mela* was getting bigger. Reproduced below are the surviving statistics on attendance and the sums raised from shop rents and vehicle tolls, etc., at the *mela* for the last quarter of the nineteenth century.²⁰⁵ By 1900 the authorities were regularly expecting 350–400,000 pilgrims at the *mela* and, except for the bad years of the 1890s, shop rents and total receipts rose steadily in the latter part of the century.

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²⁰² *Settlement Report of the District of Meerut, 1865-1870* (Allahabad, 1874), p. 25.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ C. Planck, *Fifth Annual Report of the Sanitary Commissioner of the North-Western Provinces, 1872* (Allahabad, 1873), p. 39.

²⁰⁵ Garhmuktesar never had a pilgrim tax or a census establishment under the British; the attendance figures were necessarily very crude estimates.

Table VI: Garhmuktesar Fair statistics: 1867-74 and 1894-1904*

Year	Bathing Day	Crowd Estimate	Total Income (rs.)	Wheel Tax (rs.)	Ground Rents (rs.)	Rents for Ghatiya Huts (rs.)	Private Latrines (nos.)
1867	11 Nov.	150,000			507		
1868	30 Nov.	150-200,000					
1869	19 Nov.	>300,000					
1870							
1871							
1872		200,000	2,942				
1873	5 Nov.	200,000	3,737	2,575	1,068		102
1874	23 Nov.	275,000	5,041	3,468	1,485		87
1894	13 Nov.		8,016	4,335	2,324	368	320
1895	2 Nov.	>400,000	9,586	5,933	2,185	414	425
1896	20 Nov.	<200,000	4,946	3,102	1,465	no huts	147
1897	9 Nov.		7,500	4,986	2,121	no huts	316
1898	29 Nov.	>500,000	13,556	8,779	3,507	589	565
1899	17 Nov.	200,000	5,419	2,843	2,128	168	211
1900	6 Nov.	350,000	7,179	3,871	2,726	160	273
1901	25 Nov.	450,000	9,133	6,132	2,375	180	335
1902	14 Nov.	400,000	8,738	5,187	2,677	279	304
1903	5 Nov.	400,000	9,192	4,938	3,219	465	408
1904	23 Nov.	500,000	10,052	5,869	3,398	386	373

* 'Memo. regarding Gurhmookhtesar Fair held in 1867', sd. W.A. Forbes, Magte Meerut, 6 June 1868, UPRAA, Agra Comr, Post-Mutiny Record, dept XVII, file 31/1868, no. 75; C. Planck, Sany Comr NWP, to Secy to Govt NWP, No. 82A, 5 Dec. 1869, IOR, NWP General P/438/35, A progs 1 Jan. 1870, no. 1; H.B. Webster, Magte Meerut, to Comr Meerut, no. 133, 11 Nov. 1873, IOR, NWP General P/52, A progs Dec. 1873, no. 37; F.M. Lind, Comr Meerut, to Secy to Govt NWP, no. 412, 18 Dec. 1874, IOR, NWP General P/54, A progs 9 Jan. 1875, no. 38; Garhmuktesar Fair reports, 1895-1903, UPSEA, NWP&O Misc. (General), file 69B, box 8; W.H. Cobb, Magte Meerut, to Comr Meerut, no. 362, 24 Jan. 1905, UPSEA, UP Misc. (General), A progs Mar. 1905, file 89/1905, box 8.

The figures suggest that members of the urban middle class frequented the *mela* more numerous towards the end of the century. Both the increasing numbers of private latrines constructed

at the *mela* (people paid to have their own latrine to avoid having to use the public ones) and the healthy amount received in rents from the local priests, *ghatias*, who erected huts for their wealthier clients in the 'respectable suburbs' of the fair's layout, point to this. The addition of rail facilities at the turn of the century to an already extensive road network further facilitated the attendance of urban residents at the *mela*. The officers in charge of the fair had watched with some trepidation the introduction of rail to the region for they feared that their receipts from the fair's wheel tax would drop as the pilgrims opted to come by train.²⁰⁶ But after two years' experience, first in 1900 when the line approached Garhmuktesar and then in 1901 when it went right by the town *en route* from Ghaziabad to Moradabad, the Magistrate concluded that 'while the number of pilgrims is increased by the railway facilities, the number of persons who travel by bullock carts, &c., is not less than before.'²⁰⁷ In 1904 a Hapur-Meerut extension was opened in time for the fair and the numbers arriving by train rose from 27,000 to 35,000. Pilgrims from Meerut city probably accounted for the increase as the Magistrate observed that the [peasant] pilgrim 'still prefers to come in his own cart'.²⁰⁸

Although the trains seem to have catered mostly for urban fair-goers they did offer the prosperous peasant an increased flexibility of travel. The 1903 bathing day was a relatively early one, viz., 5 November, and a below average attendance was forecast because of the usual agricultural demands. But the authorities were pleasantly surprised. The Magistrate, H.V. Lovett, reported that:

The attendance was probably not less than on former years; but more people came by train and fewer by carts, for the winter sowings had just begun, and neither could the cattle be spared from farm work, nor could the people afford to spend a week or more on the road.²⁰⁹

There is little doubt that the *mela's* expansion was due to increased urban patronage and the general agricultural prosperity of the Upper Doab in the late-nineteenth century. Sugarcane cultivation in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts had created a substantial class of prosperous peasants who were able to produce and market their gur independently. Most of the profits of their enterprise remained in

²⁰⁶ R. Oakden, Jt Magte Meerut, to Magte Meerut, n.d., UPSA, UP Misc. (General), A progs July 1902, 1b, file 69B, box 8.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ W.H. Cobb, Magte and Chairman Dt Board Meerut, to Comr Meerut, no. 362, 24 Jan. 1905, UPSA, UP Misc., A progs Mar. 1905, no. 17a, file 89/1905, box 8.

²⁰⁹ H.V. Lovett, Magte and Chairman Dt Board Meerut, to Comr Meerut, no. 392, 16 Dec, 1903, UPSA, UP Misc., A progs Feb. 1904, no. 1a, file 69B, box 8. Although the total income was up for the year - due, according to Lovett, to the stricter supervision of shop and hut rents - the receipts from the tolls on vehicles were down by some Rs. 250.

their own hands.²¹⁰ Both Ghaziabad and Hapur, trading towns to the west of Garhmuktesar, were thriving on Meerut's prosperity. Canal irrigation guarded against the prospect of famine and in bad seasons Meerut growers were able to export their produce to other districts at substantial profits. Prices and the cost of agricultural labour rose steadily throughout the century leaving the urban poor as the only class of people not to benefit from some aspect of the region's wealth.²¹¹ The Garhmuktesar *mela* thus had a very healthy population from which to draw its pilgrims. Under these circumstances the government's patronage of the *mela* was probably not crucial to its survival and development.

The British taxed stalls at the *mela* from the mid-1850s. The fair was especially popular with Delhi traders - confectioners, jewellers, cloth-merchants and brass and ironware sellers - and in 1853 the Magistrate expected to raise about Rs.350 from a site tax to pay for basic conservancy and policing.²¹² In the late 1860s the administration of the *mela* was put on a more regular footing and utilitarian ideals were identified: improved sanitation and reliable sources of income. It was characteristic of the British administration of *melas* as a whole that officers rarely concerned themselves with the religious aspects of fair-going and pilgrimage.²¹³ In 1872 a wheel tax was imposed on vehicles entering the *mela*; it immediately displaced the shop rents as the main source of income for the fair's administration.

Unfortunately the extant fair reports are almost completely silent on the reactions of the pilgrims to the changes introduced by the British administration apart from the some predictable comments about the difficulty of getting people to use the latrines. However the details of one incident that have survived hint at the gulf between the government's perception of the *mela* and that of the fair-going population. In 1896 the Magistrate prohibited the erection of the *ghatias*' grass huts in the

²¹⁰ The contrast with sugar producers in Rohilkhand could not have been more marked. There the peasants were reduced to a position of dependency upon the *khandsari*, a usurious middleman who advanced cash each season in return for the sole right to peasants' raw produce. Shahid Amin writes of the Meerut situation: 'Most of the total marketed value of the sugarcane produced...reached the pockets of the average Meerut peasant without the gur trader or the sugar refiner being in a position to appropriate any substantial part of it.' Shahid Amin, *Sugarcane and sugar in Gorakhpur: an inquiry into peasant production for capitalist enterprise in colonial India* (Delhi, 1984), pp. 57-61. Sugarcane cultivation in Meerut district increased enormously over the nineteenth century, aided by the development of the Ganges canal system. In 1902 it accounted for over eleven per cent of the cultivated area and was the district's most important *kharif* crop. It was said to be the crop which paid the *zamindar's* revenue and the peasant's rent. Nevill, *Meerut: A Gazetteer*, pp. 40-1. See also Ian Stone, *Canal irrigation in British India: perspectives on technological change in a peasant economy* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 328-31.

²¹¹ Nevill, *Meerut: A Gazetteer*, pp. 60-3.

²¹² E.M. Wylly, Magte Meerut, to C.C. Jackson, Comr Meerut, no. 17, 16 Feb. 1854, UPRAA, Meerut Collr, Pre-Mutiny Records, Judicial Letters Issued, 1852-54, basta 10, no. 2. The *mela* stretched for two miles along the river bank. The site tax was charged at two annas per foot of bazaar frontage.

²¹³ See the section 'The consolidation of sanitary reform' above for details of the sanitary changes introduced at Garhmuktesar in the 1860s.

mela: the risk of fire was said to be too great. The *ghatias* were dismayed at this curb on their customary activities, but Police Superintendent Bramley was only too happy to see them lose out to the secular businessmen who imported tents to replace the huts:

At first there was much prevarication and every objection was raised to the erection of tents but the contractors did not allow their religious scruples to overcome their sense of business, and finally completely cut the Ghattias out by erecting an ample number of tents and were rewarded for their enterprise by being well patronised by visitors.²¹⁴

Bramley's celebration of the triumph of the profit motive over religious prejudice, although illuminating in its own right, was premature. The *ghatias* did not give in to the tents as he had predicted but carried their agitation to the Lieutenant Governor. The government, mindful of the apprehensions about the new plague regulations, preferred to avoid further inflammation of religious sensibilities and allowed the huts back into the *mela* from 1898.²¹⁵

The *ghatias*' stubbornness was not out of keeping with the local officers' opinion of them, but there is some evidence that shows that it was part of the broader development of the *mela* as a more consciously Hindu event. As at Allahabad, the *mela* became a favourite preaching ground for exponents of the diverse strands of Hindu revivalism. In 1896 it was noted that 'the local Sabhas and Samajs' had each had their tents at the fair and had delivered their customary lectures and recitations. The Special Branch was informed of their activities.²¹⁶ In 1892 a complaint appeared in Meerut's *Devanagri Gazette* that Pandit Bishambar Nath of the local Devanagri Pracharni Sabha had not been allowed to lecture on the association's behalf at the *mela*.²¹⁷ In 1901 the *Arya Mitra* published a letter about the *mela* from Kunwar Sen Sharma, Secretary of the Moradabad branch of the Arya Samaj, illustrating the interest that the Aryas took in the *mela*.²¹⁸ Organizations such as these depended upon urban middle-class support and as this element was increasing at the *mela* it is understandable that the *mela* should have proved attractive to all types of proselytizers.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ Percy Bramley, Dt Supt Police Meerut, to Magte Meerut, no. 3468, 30 Nov. 1896, UPSA, NWP&O Misc. (General), A progs Aug. 1897, no. 1a, file 69B, box 8.

²¹⁵ G.A. Dampier, Jt Magte Meerut, to Magte Meerut, 20 Jan. 1898, IOR, NWP&O General P/5361, A progs Mar. 1898, no. 29b, file 69B.

²¹⁶ Percy Bramley, Dt Supt Police Meerut, to Magte Meerut, no. 3468, 30 Nov. 1896, UPSA, NWP&O Misc. (General), A progs Aug. 1897, no. 1a, file 69B, box 8.

²¹⁷ *Devanagri Gazette*, Nov. 1892, SVN 1892, pp. 449-50.

²¹⁸ *Arya Mitra*, 1 Dec. 1901, SVN 1901, p. 795.

²¹⁹ The *Devanagri Gazette*, in complaining of the unjustness of the ban on the speeches of a Hindi-language promoter at the *mela*, hastened to point out that the Devanagri Pracharni Sabha received monthly grants from

In the late 1890s Muslim management of the *mela* came under attack. In 1901 the Joint Magistrate, Mr Oakden, asked a new Hindu Deputy Collector to select the exact site for the *mela* in spite of Munshi Mushtaq Ahmad's several years of experience at precisely this task, 'on it being represented to me that a Muhammadan Tahsildar was apt to forget the real object of the gathering.'²²⁰ Complaints about the management of the *mela* by a Muslim officer had been circulating for some years. In 1900, in an article remarkably similar in tone to those which had twenty years earlier railed against a Muslim's management of the Allahabad's Magh Mela, the *Devanagri Gazette* called for a Hindu officer to be put in charge of the Garhmuktesar *mela*. It would be his responsibility to stamp out the imperfections that currently marred the occasion: gambling, corrupt officialdom, and poor facilities for the pilgrims.²²¹

Throughout the 1890s the local priests were in some conflict with the *mela* authorities. In 1896, in addition to the dispute about the huts, the priests, backed by many of the larger Brahman community, launched an attack on the presence of kebab shops in the fair. There was a strong Muslim element in the *mela* - many of the Delhi traders and the mule merchants were Muslim - but the authorities denied the existence of any kebab shops in the fair proper, observing that the ones along the road to fair site were attached to the rear of the substantial Muslim quarter of the town and had always been there.²²² The issue of cow-killing and beef sales was again agitated in 1901 when some Hindus were arrested for rioting in the market place over Muslim taking a cow for Bakr Id sacrifice. Several of the local priests hired a barrister who was well-known for his skills in anti-cow-killing cases to draw up a petition on behalf of their detained fellows, protesting that previously cow sacrifice had been unknown in the town.²²³ The Magistrate, H.W.W. Reynolds, decided that cow sacrifice was not an innovation, but that the decision of the Hindus to agitate against it was. He believed that the Hindus,

the government and the municipality to help it with its educational work and also Rs.50 per month in subscriptions from well-to-do citizens of Meerut.

²²⁰ R. Oakden, Jt Magte Meerut, to Magte Meerut, n.d., UPSA, UP General, A progs July 1902, no. 1b, file 69B, box 8.

²²¹ *Devanagri Gazette*, 25 Nov. 1900, SVN 1900, p. 596. See also *Arya Mitra*, 1 Dec. 1901, and *Oudh Samachar*, 7 Dec. 1901, SVN 1901, pp. 795, 809, for less strongly-worded comments about the management of the *mela* by a Muslim officer.

²²² Percy Bramley, Dt Supt Police Meerut, to Magte Meerut, no. 3468, 30 Nov. 1896, UPSA, NWP&O Misc. (General), A progs Aug. 1897, no. 1a, file 69B, box 8.

²²³ Pandit Bishan Narayan Das, B.L., for Pandas Basmat Rori, Shunker Misra, Jaggan Nath Joshi and Kuragpal Shukul of Garhmuktesar, 16 Sept. 1901, UPSA, NWP&O General, B progs Jan. 1902, no. 8, file 171, box 61. This appears to have been the same man who acted for the Hindus of Bareilly in the matter of Bakr Id sacrifices in 1893-94.

especially the priests who had been most forward in their complaints, were trying to extend the privileges that they enjoyed in the *mela*, 'a purely Hindu gathering', to the town itself, which he viewed as not especially sacred to Hindus.²²⁴ It is unlikely that the Hindus perceived such a clear difference between the fair and the town, but it does seem that the big increase in investment in religious expression in the locality was encouraging the priests to make their town's public character more obviously Hindu.

The *mela* at Garhmuktesar flourished in the last half of the nineteenth century. Administrators, traders and pilgrims would have all come to the same conclusion, in spite of their differing perspectives. What is most significant, especially when this *mela's* development is compared with that at Batesar, is the relative unimportance of the utilitarian nature of the British patronage of the *mela* given the presence of a prosperous host population. The development of the *mela's* political character along the lines of Allahabad's Magh Mela also points to the independence of the *mela's* participants.

The Batesar *kartik purnmashi mela*

The Garhmuktesar *mela* and its sister fair at Batesar in Agra shared many features. In the mid-nineteenth century Batesar was an agricultural village of some 2,500 people, most of whom were Brahmans. Its *kartiki mela* was the biggest for miles around and, as at Garhmuktesar, the pilgrims combined worship with the purchase of their household items for the coming year.²²⁵ Whereas the Garhmuktesar *mela* was famous for mules, Batesar was known throughout the sub-continent for its trade in horses. Further to the west of Batesar there was the Pushkar *kartiki mela*, near Ajmere. This had a reputation as a good cattle market. Between them these three fairs divided up many of the *kartik purnmashi* pilgrims and a good deal of the livestock trade of the north-western United Provinces and Rajputana. Batesar drew most of its pilgrims from Agra, Etawah, and Mainpuri districts and the princely states of Gwalior, Dholpur and Bharatpur.

²²⁴ H.W.W. Reynolds, Collr Meerut, to Comr Meerut, no. 435, 18 Dec. 1901, *ibid.*, no. 10, enclosure. Reynolds pointed out that the Muslim population in Garhmuktesar was quite large and there was a regular slaughter house (presumably he meant for beef) and a quarter with butchers' shops.

²²⁵ In 1877 there were 1,274 shops at the *mela*, most of which were selling goods of a mundane nature, e.g., foodstuffs, blankets, *deshi* cloth, trinkets, brass vessels. Statemtn showing ships opened in 1877 Batesar Fair, IOR, NWP&O General P/1136, A progs Apr. 1878, no. 64, 16 Mar. 1878.

Although bathing on the full moon day was the chief religious act at all the *kartiki melas*, the principal deity at Batesar was not the goddess of the Ganga, but Shiva, here worshipped in the form of the *lingam*. A centre of Shaivite worship was unusual in this heavily Vaishnavite region and it owed its continued prominence to the patronage of the local *rajas* and, during the late-eighteenth century, Sindhia of Gwalior. The Bhadawar Rajas had a distinct history in the area from the early 1600s. Badan Sinh (d. 1655), who is credited with founding the *mela*, built the shrine of Batesar Nath, dedicated to Lord Shiva, in 1646 and raised the embankment of *ghats* along the bank of the Jumna that protected the village from flooding.²²⁶ Most of the temples that grew up on the crescent of *ghats* were dedicated to Shiva.²²⁷ By the 1780s the Bhadawar Rajas held their lands only at the mercy of Sindhia, having been plundered repeatedly by Maratha and Jat armies. Conspicuous and costly loyalty to the British during the Maratha wars and in 1857 enabled the family to retain some of its villages and its prestige into the late-nineteenth century, so that in the 1870s and '80s Raja Mahendra Singh of the Bhadawar Estate was seen as the regular visitor of rank to the *mela*.²²⁸

The royal flavour of the *mela* extended beyond the Bhadawar Rajas and Gwalior. As a horse mart of note the *mela* had always attracted the Rajputana and Jat royalty who came to pick out the best horseflesh for their cavalry. In the eighteenth century mercenaries had also sought their horses there. By 1900 however the aristocratic element had disappeared completely. For several decades it had been a matter of some concern to the British that the native chiefs were more often absent than present. In 1878 one Joint Magistrate, having found 'not a single independent Raja or Nawab' at the fair, concluded gloomily:

²²⁶ H.R. Nevill, *Agra: A Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1905), p. 236.

²²⁷ In 1871 the Assistant Magistrate counted 41 temples on the embankment, 38 of which were sacred to Mahadeo. The embankment itself was said to be 'remarkable', 1,250 yards of flood barrier with 36 flights of steps leading down to the water's edge. F. Baker, Asst Magte and Colr Agra, 'Report on the Butesur Fair of 1871', *Selections from the Records of Government, North Western Provinces, Second Series*, VI 2 (Allahabad, 1872), p. 300.

²²⁸ Despite his very reduced fortunes the Raja retained some of his former glory and his place amongst the north Indian nobility. The 1884 Gazetteer observed that: 'the neighbouring chiefs [of Mainpuri and Partabner] allow the Bhadauria to sit higher than themselves; they receive from him, on their investiture, the impress of the frontal mark (*tilak*). They say that he alone can cover Shiva's phallus at Batesar with grain; that he succeeded in covering it with seven maunds weight when the rana of Gohad failed with twenty-one.' H.C. Conybeare, *Statistical, descriptive, and historical account of the North-Western Provinces of India, VIII, Farukhabad and Agra* (Allahabad, 1884), p. 482. On the *kartik purnmashi* bathing day Mahendra Singh was expected to offer to the image in his ancestor's temple five maunds of rice and Rs.25. This, along with all the other worshippers' offerings, said in 1871 to amount to Rs.1,500, was divided amongst the *yogis*, hereditary custodians of the Mahadeo shrines. A small share also went to a Brahman family. F. Baker, 'Report on the Butesur Fair of 1871', p. 303.

My own impression is that horse-breeding is not flourishing, people do not care to buy or breed horses, partly this is due to the decline of the martial spirit, partly to the higher price of food-grains, and partly to the impoverishment of the military class.²²⁹

The 1860s saw the last of the regular purchases by princely states and even these were usually effected by agents of the princes. Royalty did not turn out in state at the *mela* as it had once done.²³⁰

The changes were summed up by the officer in charge of the 1901 fair. Although the *mela* was very well attended, it was not what it had been:

People who have known the fair for years assure me that its character had completely changed: ten and fifteen years ago, the ruling Chiefs of Rajputana and the landed Magnates of these Provinces arrived with all their retinue and lived in state. This year there was no one of any mark: all the visitors were hardworking, business men come to drive a close bargain.²³¹

Curiously many of the local officers who lamented the decline of the horse mart seemed only half aware of the crippling influence of the purchasing policy of their colleagues in the army. It was in the interests of the military authorities that the best horses be brought to the fair: since the early-nineteenth century each Native Cavalry Regiment had sent officers to the *mela* to buy remounts. With the decrease in sales to aristocratic and mercenary interests the competition amongst the different regiments was necessary to preserve the fair's attractiveness to the horse dealers.²³² But the government was cheap. It resented the fact that its own internal competition pushed up the prices of the horses to the advantage of the sellers.²³³ With remarkable shortsightedness it set about circumventing the element of competition. In 1885 the purchasers for separate regiments were replaced by a Remount Purchase Committee which was to buy all of the horses needed for the Bengal and

²²⁹ C. McMinn, Jt Magte in charge of the Batesar Fair, to Magte and Collr Agra, 24 Jan. 1879, IOR, NWP&O General P/1279, A progs Apr. 1879, no. 13, 19 Apr. 1879.

²³⁰ In the 1880s occasional purchases of horses were made on behalf of the rulers of Bharatpur, Gwalior, Jaipur, Dholpur, Rampur, Dattia, Bhopal, Indore and Tonk. The Maharaja of Bharatpur attended the 1880 *mela* in person. T.J. Ryves, Dt Supt Police Agra, Report on the Batesar Fair of 1880, 25 Feb. 1881, IOR, NWP&O General P/1605, A progs May 1881, no. 30, 7 May 1881; R.S. Aikman, Officer in charge of the Batesar Fair, to A.J. Lawrence, Magte and Collr Agra, 4 Jan. 1882, IOR, NWP&O General P/1812, A progs Mar. 1882; R.E. Hamblin, Officer in charge of the Batesar Fair, to Collr Agra, 7 Feb. 1883, IOR, NWP&O General P/1996, A progs Apr. 1883, no. 33, 7 Apr. 1883.

²³¹ C.A. Mumford, Officer in charge of the Batesar Fair, to Chairman Dt Board Agra, n.d., UPSA, UP Misc., A progs June 1902, no. 4a, file 258, box 8. The Maharaja of Holkar had attended the fair in 1899, but he arrived unannounced and without the traditional trappings of royalty. Babu Chandu Lal, Depy Collr Agra, to Magte Agra, 2 Apr. 1900, UPSA, NWP&O Misc., A progs July 1900, no. 1b, file 258, box 8.

²³² F. Baker, 'Report on the Butesur Fair of 1871', p. 303.

²³³ Comments on this 'problem' appear frequently in the annual reports on the *mela*. See, for example, Magte Agra to Offg Comr Agra, no. 45, 20 Mar. 1875, IOR, NWP General P/54, A progs Aug. 1875, no. 26, 7 Aug. 1875.

Punjab cavalry units. The consequences of this were compounded by the Committee's preference for seeking out horses in the district before they were brought to the *mela*. At first the arrangement seemed to work well. At the 1885 *mela* there was a satisfactory decrease in the prices paid by the government.²³⁴ Sensibly, other large buyers of horse flesh, such as the tramway companies, also took to the districts in advance of the *mela* to avoid being done out of the best stock. But the negative effects upon the *mela* were soon apparent. The 1886 *mela* suffered a big reduction in the number of horses available for purchase.²³⁵ In 1890 it was observed that the horse fair part of the *mela* was very much shorter than it once had been and that the quality of the horses was generally poor. The buyers were now so few that the dealers, if they brought any horses at all, came only for a day or two.²³⁶ The disappointments of the Remount Agent at this fair were sufficient to send the military authorities in the following year back to their former system of purchasing the remounts through the individual regiments.²³⁷ But the change came too late and after too many other blows to the horse trade; the *mela* never recovered its reputation for excellent horseflesh. And the government had not proved a worthy successor to the patronage of the Indian aristocracy.

In 1903 the UP Government observed that the fair was no longer of any practical importance as a horse fair, but that instead it served the agriculturists of the region well.²³⁸ The trade in cattle (horned cattle, sheep, goats and pigs) had overtaken the horse fair. This is reflected in the extant statistics, which suggest a fair that was heavily agricultural in flavour, perhaps even more so than the Garhmuktesar *mela*. Batesar had fewer urban centres to draw upon than Garhmuktesar; with the royalty and gentry absent its *mela* population was remarkably homogeneous and very vulnerable to the vagaries of the season. The attendance figures in Table VII show a marked fluctuation according to the demands of the season and relative timing of the full moon. They also show that the *mela* was very

²³⁴ R.E. Hamblin, Asst Collr in charge of the Batesar Fair, to Collr Agra, 28 Jan. 1886, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/2902, A progs Apr. 1887, no. 12, file 258. Shortly after this the Remount Committee was replaced by a single Remount Agent.

²³⁵ Same to same, 2 Feb. 1887, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/2902, A progs Apr. 1887, no. 12, file 258.

²³⁶ Same to same, 20 Feb. 1891, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/3829, A progs Apr. 1891, no. 55, file 258.

²³⁷ A. Sabonadiere, Officer in charge of the Batesar Fair, to Collr Agra, Report on the Batesar Fair of 1891, n.d., IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/4601, A progs July 1892, no. 4, file 258.

²³⁸ J.M. Holmes, Secy to Govt UP, to Comr Agra, no. 1477, 24 June 1903, UPSA, UP Misc., A progs July 1903, no. 8, file 258, box 8.

badly hit by the run of bad seasons in the 1890s: 1896, 1897, and 1899. Expensive or scarce supplies of fodder could ruin the turnout of livestock at a *mela* populated by peasants.



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Table VII: Attendance at the Batesar Mela, 1873-1902*

Year	Bathing Day	Head Count	Year	Bathing Day	Head Count
1873	5 Nov.	104,209	1888	18 Nov.	112,029
1874	23 Nov.	183,503	1889	7 Nov.	120,517
1875		125,509	1890	26 Nov.	105,551
1876	1 Nov.	90,783	1891	15 Nov.	55,962
1877	20 Nov.	54,208	1892	14 Nov.	50,539
1878		44,255	1893	23 Nov.	184,258
1879	28 Nov.	35,937	1894	13 Nov.	155,396
1880	16 Nov.	109,090	1895	2 Nov.	157,513
1881	6 Nov.	89,396	1896	20 Nov.	70,537
1882	25 Nov.	126,579	1897	9 Nov.	52,145
1883	14 Nov.	104,934	1898	29 Nov.	107,021
1884	3 Nov.	70,293	1899	17 Nov.	78,002
1885	22 Nov.	149,856	1900	6 Nov.	103,258
1886	11 Nov.	132,216	1901	25 Nov.	151,705
1887	31 Oct.	97,089	1902	14 Nov.	90,188

* Magte Agra to Offg Comr Agra, no. 45, 20 Mar. 1875, IOR, NWP General P/54, A progs 7 Aug. 1875, no. 26; A.W. Cruickshank, Asst Magte Agra, to Magte Agra, 23 Dec. 1877, IOR, NWP&O General P/1136, A progs Apr. 1878, no. 59, 16 Mar. 1878; C. McMinn, Jt Magte Agra, to Magte Agra, 24 Jan. 1879, IOR, NWP&O General P/1279, A progs 19 Apr. 1879, no. 3; Pandit Kedarnath, Depy Collr Agra, to Magte Agra, 30 Jan. 1880, IOR, NWP&O General P/1458, A progs May 1880, no. 48, 24 Apr. 1880; T.J. Ryves, Dt Supt Police, Report on the Batesar Fair of 1880, 25 Feb. 1881, IOR, NWP&O General P/1605, A progs May 1881, no. 30, 7 May 1881; R.S. Aikman, to Magte Agra, 4 Jan. 1882, NWP&O General P/1812, A progs Mar. 1882, no. 9, 18 Mar. 1882; R.E. Hamblin, to Collr Agra, 7 Feb. 1883, IOR, NWP&O General P/1996, A progs Apr. 1883, no. 33, 7 Apr. 1883; Same to same, 23 Jan. 1884, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/2205, A progs Mar. 1884, no. 9; Same to same, 18 Mar. 1885, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/2450, A progs May 1885, no. 6; Same to same, 28 Jan. 1886, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/2677, A progs Mar. 1886, no. 40; Same to same, 2 Feb. 1887, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/2902, A progs Apr. 1887, no. 12; Same to same, 13 Feb. 1888, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/3140, A progs July 1888, no. 11; R. Hollingbery, Depy Collr Agra, to Collr Agra, 16 Mar. 1889, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/3372, A progs July 1889, no. 3; UPSA, NWP&O Misc. (General), file 258, box 8.

In spite of its unhelpful tinkering with the horse fair the colonial administration did do its best to encourage the *mela's* development. But, as at Garhmuktesar, official energies were concentrated on strictly utilitarian benefits.

In the late 1860s along with other large *melas* in the NWP it was subjected to a much stricter regime of sanitary management, the constant tussling over the use and evasion of public latrines being the most potent symbol of the government's intentions and the fair-goers' resistance. The latrines were never popular and the most experienced officers in charge of the fair recognized the necessity of allowing the pilgrims to resort to jungle beyond the fair's boundaries.²³⁹ Even with this concession there were still problems. Officers used to pride themselves upon the low number of 'nuisance' prosecutions at the *mela*, usually between ten and thirty, until it transpired that the police and the *chaukidars* were being paid by people not to report their offences. At the very beginning of the 1887 *mela* a constable was punished for taking a bribe from a 'conservancy offender'. The number of prosecutions that year leapt to 214, a more realistic indication of the popular dislike of the latrines.²⁴⁰

Other attempts by the local officers to improve the state of the fair met with less resistance. In 1871 the horse fair was for the first time laid out in regular blocks to prevent crowding and confusion and there was an attempt to count the number of animals and people attending the *mela*.²⁴¹ In 1878 a tax was introduced on stall-holders. This was meant to secure a more regular income for the fair which until then had depended solely upon the tolls collected from the traffic over the bridge-of-boats at the Jumna. Joint Magistrate McMinn recorded no protests from the traders about the new impost but he complained that he had been unable to relocate the traders so as to get as much money from them as possible:

The real difficulty in connection with the trade tax was in assigning suitable sites with good frontage, and in frequented thoroughfares, to men with valuable goods. In one case, owing to direct and wilful disobedience,...one entire street on the best quarter was occupied by men selling strings for the neck, who could not or would not pay more than 4 annas each.²⁴²

As an officer in charge of a previous *mela* had observed that each trader returned annually to the same site unless forced to change, McMinn's statement suggests that he behaved with less than the

²³⁹ F. Baker, 'Report on the Butesur Fair of 1871', p. 306; C. Donovan, Offg Jt Magte Agra, to A.J. Lawrence, Magte Agra, Report on the Batesar Fair of 1876', IOR, NWP&O General P/838, A progs May 1877, no. 4, 5 May 1877; T.J. Ryves, Dt Supt Police Agra, Report on the Batesar Fair of 1880, 25 Feb. 1881, IOR, NWP&O General P/1605, A progs May 1881, no. 30, 7 May 1881.

²⁴⁰ R.E. Hamblin, Officer in charge of the Batesar Fair, to Collr Agra, 13 Feb. 1888, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/1340, A progs July 1888, no. 11, file 258.

²⁴¹ F. Baker, 'Report on the Butesur Fair of 1871', p. 302.

²⁴² C. McMinn, Jt Magte in charge of the Batesar Fair, to Magte Agra, 24 Jan. 1879, IOR, NWP&O General P/1279, A progs Apr. 1879, no. 13, 19 Apr. 1879.

requisite sympathy in trying to shift the purveyors of religious items - the rosary sellers - to a less prominent site in the *mela*. It is unlikely that the other traders would have assisted him even for the prize of a better site for their own stalls.²⁴³ A suspicion that the levying of the stall tax was somewhat arbitrary is borne out by the report of the 1897 *mela*. The officer in charge wanted to change the rating system, having noted that the 'current arbitrary assessment' based on the appearance of a shop was 'undoubtedly open to abuse'.²⁴⁴

1878 also saw the introduction of a scheme of voluntary registration of bullock sales. For an anna each the buyer and the seller insured themselves against the charge of dealing in stolen cattle should it transpire that the beasts had not come legitimately to sale. This was a popular measure. In 1881 two-thirds of the fifteen thousand sales were registered.²⁴⁵

In the early 1880s the government consented to spend some of the fair's surplus funds on permanent improvements to the *mela* site. In particular need of attention were the steps of the bathing *ghats*. Yearly more crumbled away, increasing the danger to the pilgrims. In 1882 Rs.500 were allotted for *ghat* repairs, along with another Rs.675 for the building of a new well and two cattle troughs.²⁴⁶ More money for *ghat* repairs was sanctioned in 1883. Unfortunately the initial attempts to combat the erosion of the Jumna only worsened the problem. At the 1886 *mela* it was noticed that the current had been deflected from the damaged *ghats* onto the previously solid and much more important *ghats* upon which the chief temple of Mahadeo rested. It was feared that with another rainy

²⁴³ Of the 1871 *mela* it was noted that: 'Most of the shopkeepers keep to the same spot year after year, and nothing short of absolute necessity would induce them to change.' F. Baker, 'Report on the Butesur Fair of 1871', p. 301. It had been the intention of the officers in 1878 to put all the same sorts of stalls together in one area, thus creating metal bazaars, cloth bazaars, etc., within the *mela*. Shops selling valuable goods would have to pay more than shops selling common, cheap goods, and within a single bazaar shops in a better position would pay more than shops in a poorer position. Drapers and jewellers were classified as traders in valuables and were subject to a basic Rs.2 tax, whereas the rosary sellers who incurred McMinn's wrath came under the heading of 'petty shopkeepers' paying only four annas. McMinn had wanted to put the sellers of the secular valuables in the most prominent spot in the fair, thus permitting an enhancement of their Rs.2 rate, at the expense of the humble bead sellers. His failure to effect this suggests that there was a common appreciation amongst the traders of the right of the bead sellers to be at the forefront of the *mela*. See Magte Agra to Comr Agra, no. 121, 20 Aug. 1878; Classified list of shops proposed for taxation, sd. R.S. Aikman, Offg Magte Agra, 20 Aug. 1878, IOR, NWP&O General, P/1137, A progs Sept. 1878, nos. 18, 19, 21 Sept. 1878.

²⁴⁴ H.O.W. Roberts, Jt Magte Agra, to Collr Agra, Report on the Batesar Fair of 1897, UPSA, NWP&O Misc., A progs May 1898, no. 156, file 258, box 8.

²⁴⁵ T.J. Ryves, Dt Supt Police Agra, Report on the Batesar Fair of 1880, 25 Feb. 1881, IOR, NWP&O General P/1605, A progs May 1881, no. 30, 7 May 1881; R.S. Aikman, Officer in charge of the Batesar Fair, to A.J. Lawrence, Magte Agra, 4 Jan. 1882, IOR, NWP&O General P/1812, A progs Mar. 1882, no. 9, 18 Mar. 1882.

²⁴⁶ Offg Secy to Govt NWP&O to Comr Agra, no. 861, 16 Mar. 1882, *ibid*, no. 18. A well and some troughs had been built during the previous year as well.

season the river would split open the embankment and flood the fair ground.²⁴⁷ Money continued to be spent on the *ghats*, but apparently no major work was undertaken for by the early 1900s comments were filed annually on their state of disrepair. The government and the district board were reluctant to spend the amount necessary for major reconstruction of and for some years local officers hoped that the priests might be persuaded to undertake the repairs. It was generally believed that they collected enough money during the fair to be able to foot the bill.²⁴⁸ But the priests insisted that the work was beyond their means.²⁴⁹ Given the decline of the royal patronage of the *mela* and the dilapidated state of some of their shrines the priests' claim was probably not as hollow as the local officers thought. The priests probably had suffered a drop in their incomes, especially as there does not seem to have been any compensatory growth in pilgrim numbers. It was left to the Public Works Department to make the essential repairs to the *ghats*, although not any cosmetic ones to the temples.²⁵⁰

During the late 1890s and early 1900s the local officers worked strenuously to prevent the importation of plague into the *mela*. Similar methods to those in operation at Hardwar were employed, viz., the medical examination and segregation of pilgrims arriving from infected areas and the restriction on ticket sales to the nearby station of Shikobad. No *melas* were ever stopped. Rumours about the plague measures were effective deterrents to attendance and they resulted in several small turnouts around the turn of the century.²⁵¹

From this brief history of the *mela* it would be difficult to argue that it was in decline but it is possible to see how it might have appeared so to people who did not judge the success of a fair purely in terms of its size and stock sales. Local officers believed that the fair was flourishing. There was no obvious decrease in the numbers attending the fair and there was rarely any sickness. The horse trade had declined but in its place the cattle trade was booming. The site was better maintained with good

²⁴⁷ R.E. Hamblin, Asst Collr in charge of the Batesar Fair, to Collr Agra, 2 Feb. 1887, IOR, NWP&O Misc. (General) P/2902, A progs Apr. 1887, no. 12.

²⁴⁸ H.M.R. Hopkins, Chairman Dt Board Agra, to Comr Agra, no. 37, 2 May 1903, UPSA, UP Misc., A progs July 1903, no. 7a, file 258, box 7.

²⁴⁹ Same to same, no. 474, 1 Mar. 1904, UPSA, UP Misc., A progs May 1904, no. 1a, file 258, box 7.

²⁵⁰ Same to same, no. 512, 17 Feb. 1905, UPSA, UP Misc., A progs May 1905, no. 23b, file 132/1905, box 10.

²⁵¹ For fears and rumours about plague restrictions see: H.O.W. Robarts, Jt Magte Agra, to Collr Agra, Report on the Batesar Fair of 1897, UPSA, NWP&O Misc., A progs May 1898, no. 15b, file 258, box 8; H.M.R. Hopkins, Chairman Dt Board Agra, to Comr Agra, no. 37, 2 May 1903, UPSA, UP Misc., A progs July 1903, no. 7a, file 258, box 7; Same to same, no. 512, 17 Feb. 1905, UPSA, UP Misc., A progs Mar. 1905, no. 23b, file 132/1905, box 10.

wells, troughs and approach roads. The fair's income was secure. But the pilgrims and traders may have had a different picture. The British had introduced many elements of control to their *mela* without a corresponding increase in broad-minded patronage. Their improvements were functional ones and did not include grants to priests or maintenance of the shrines. The disappearance of the aristocratic element had reduced the *mela's* grandeur and the circulation of money in it; in this respect the British were poor substitutes for the Rajputana and Maratha royalty. The British administration was not harsh but it was unsympathetic to the history of the *mela* in leaving the religious interests to fend for themselves without state assistance. Whereas at Garhmuktesar this does not seem to have caused many problems because of the availability of urban and agricultural wealth to fill the patronage void, at Batesar it led to an apparent decline in the glory of the religious institutions. It is significant that the surviving reports of Batesar's *mela* make no mention of it as a preaching ground for the defenders that populated many of the NWP's other *melas*. Presumably occasional appearances were made by various organizations but it was unlikely to have proved the source of many funds or new supporters.

CONCLUSION

Hinduism in the nineteenth century:

many patrons, many defenders



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Hinduism, as one of the world's oldest religions, is more easily characterized by references to its timelessness than to any innovations in practice. However, the diversity and range of material gathered here should enable us to draw some general, if tentative, conclusions about the changing nature of north Indian Hinduism during the late-eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The primary conclusion is that there was much greater participation in, for want of a better term, 'Big Hinduism': in pilgrimages to pan-Hindu sites, such as Hardwar, Ajudhia, Allahabad, Benares and Gaya;¹ in the public and communal celebrations of Hindu festivals, especially Ramaite ones; and in the exploitation of the cow as a symbol of Hinduism. This was not simply a case of upwardly-mobile Hindus tapping onto a Brahmanic 'Sanskritic' or 'Great Tradition' of Hinduism, because not all of the elements can be traced to Sanskritic Hinduism. Much of the inspiration behind the new public festivity derived from vernacular Vaishnavite devotionism, tolerant of low-casteism and in some cases determinedly anti-esoteric. In this way it is possible to talk of the *creation* of a Big Tradition of Hinduism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, welded together from old Sanskritic traditions of pilgrimage, the re-invigoration of existing symbols such as the cow, and the appearance of a new, enthusiastic veneration of Ram. Taken as a whole, therefore, this was not a 'renaissance' of Hindu celebration after centuries of Muslim oppression, but a fundamentally new expression of Hinduism in a public setting.

The novelty lay not just in the combination of the different elements of public worship but also in the type and number of participants. In most instances, the initial acts of inspiration came from elite groups: at the state level, from *rajas*, administrators and military leaders. The religious patronage of these groups was often aimed at establishing their legitimacy as rulers independently of the Mughal system of royal honours and appointments. It was no accident that the greatest patrons of

¹ It is unlikely that the other pan-Hindu sites missed out on this increase in pilgrims. Even the inhospitable Himalayan shrines of Badrinath and Kedarnath, unlinked by rail with any major urban centre and accessible only to pilgrims in the summer months, recorded a big increase in the number of patrons visiting them in the nineteenth century. One hundred years earlier it appears that most of the pilgrims had been professional ascetics, often in the pay of a royal sponsor, or very aged Hindus who half-expected not to survive their arduous trek through the melting snows. In 1907, however, an average of 3000 pilgrims a week was travelling to the shrines at the height of the summer, for the most part pilgrims of considerable financial resources. Each year the government netted several hundred rupees worth of *lawaris'* property, *lawaris* being pilgrims who had died intestate. V.A. Stowell, Depy Comr Garhwal, to Comr Kumaon, no. 2907, 8 May 1907, UPSA, UP Sanitation, A progs Aug. 1907, no. 6, file 293 B, box 3. The pilgrim traffic had produced a thriving community of religious specialists in addition to the existing priestly communities at the shrines: there were *chattiwala banyas* who combined the role of victualler and hostel-keeper, *jhampanwalas* who carried pilgrims in litters, *dandiwalas* who carried pilgrims on their back in a basket, and, of course, *pandas* or pilgrim guides. *Jhampanwalas* and *dandiwalas* were relatively well paid for their strenuous services, receiving between Rs.40 and Rs.60 per pilgrim for a journey to the most important shrines. Dharmanand Joshi, Depy Collr Garhwal. 'Note on the sanitary condition of the pilgrim route from Lachmanjhula to Badrinath', n.d., 71895, UPSA, NWP&O Sanitation, A progs Nov. 1895, no. 3, *ibid*.

Hindu religious activity in the eighteenth century in north India were the Marathas and the Benares Rajas; neither group rose to power via the customary Mughal routes (although once established the Marathas certainly sought Mughal legitimation of their rule), and neither was ideal Hindu kingship material in terms of caste or heritage. Their patronage of Hinduism included pilgrimage to distant holy sites, the maintenance of ascetics, temple-building and *ghat*-building at home and abroad, and the support of local celebrations and festivals. Locally, the Brahman Peshwas gave an enormous boost to the Vaishnavite *bhakti* cult of Vithoba at Pandharpur and the Holkars virtually recreated the cult of Khandoba, a Shaivite deity, at Jejuri. In their capital of Ramnagar the Benares Rajas set up a year-round industry for scores of people involved in their Ramlila extravaganza. With this sort of patronage the openings in religious occupations in the eighteenth century were many and lucrative; the employment available in servicing pilgrims alone was sizable. Add to this the number of ascetics involved in trade and warfare in the eighteenth century and, as Bayly has shown, Hinduism was a big 'industry'.²

What is striking about this religious patronage and the occupations it spawned, however, is the extent to which it was tied firmly to the politics of the day. Hindu warrior ascetics fought for Muslim *nawabs* as well as for Hindu *rajas*. Other ascetics traded and amassed fortunes: a vow of poverty was no part of their asceticism. Sikh ascetics gathered at Hardwar or Amritsar before moving off in war bands to plunder neighbouring states. At Hardwar, Shaivite ascetics fought off rival Bairagis and Nirmalas (Sikhs) to claim the right to tax traders and vehicles at the big *melas*. Religious fairs in general combined worship with trade and interstate diplomacy. At the big pilgrimage sites governments, Muslim and Hindu alike, saw fit to tax the pilgrims, the priests, the barbers and the traders. And a pilgrim, upon arrival, was greeted not just by a priestly embodiment of religious authority, but by the tax-collector, the customs officer and the government sealer of *lotahs* of holy water.³ The politics of pilgrim tax collection and exemption were based upon contemporary notions of wealth and status and were able to reflect the host government's relations with other states.

With the decline of the indigenous states and the rise of the British many of these ties between religion and state were severed. This was particularly noticeable at pilgrimage sites where the British

² C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars: north Indian society in the age of British expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 126-7.

³ Mrs N. Kindersley, *Letters from the Island of Teneriffe, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope, and the East Indies* (London, 1777), p. 262.

took on the role of administration but increasingly opted out of the responsibilities of patronage. In a process which culminated in the 1840s, 50s and 60s, they stopped pilgrim taxation, they withdrew from the management of temples, they ceased to grant religious pensions, and they resumed many revenue-free grants. Where they could not stop grants to temples because of guarantees given at the time they came to power, they commuted them into revenue-holdings, on the understanding that the temple authorities would have to manage them themselves. However, much to the chagrin of many Evangelicals, the withdrawal of state support from Hindu religious institutions did not bring about the collapse of the religion. In many areas new patrons sprang up to replace the old ones. They were not the grand, royal patrons of before, but they had sufficient resources to maintain many of the existing institutions and, in the case of public festivity, to patronize it on a much grander scale than before. As we have seen, the priests at Allahabad, Benares, Gaya and Ajudhia had a field-day in the nineteenth century as ever-increasing numbers of pilgrims flocked to these *tirths*. Temple-building went on apace, the result of the rise of strong commercial groups in the urban centres of the north. There were, however, some institutions to which state patronage had been crucial, such as the Batesar *mela* in Agra district. Here the decline in aristocratic patronage produced a lack-lustre fair, underscored by the reduced circumstances of the local priests and the decay of the temples and *ghats*. Nita Kumar notes that in Benares the withdrawal of elite support, particularly that of the Benares Raja, from the Burhwa Mangal fair was the decisive factor in the fair's demise in the 1920s.⁴ And Hindu ascetics were on the losing end of the rise of the colonial state. Although some of the most skilled of Benares's Gosains hung on as traders and bankers well into the colonial era, many ascetics in trade and commerce and many more who had served the northern and central Indian states as mercenaries lost their 'secular' occupations by the 1820s and 30s. There is no evidence that the population of ascetics, many of whom were Vaishnavite Bairagis, decreased in this period; if anything their numbers probably increased given the absence of employment under the Company Raj. But almost certainly they pursued a more overtly religious lifestyle from this date, with perhaps a greater reliance on alms collection and the donations of disciples and more emphasis on their identity as itinerant men of religion.⁵ They personify the severance of the relations between the state and religion.

⁴ Nita Kumar, *Artisans of Banaras: popular culture and identity, 1880-1986* (Princeton, 1988), p.

⁵ Some of the changes inflicted on ascetic communities can be glimpsed in a memorial submitted to the Government of India in 1875 by two Shaivite Naga *akharas*, protesting at a ban on their bathing naked at the Trimbak Kumbh Mela. The Nagas had been famed as mercenary warriors and much of what underlay this

Arguably the most important effect of the failure of the British as religious patrons was the freeing of many religious specialists from state control and the consequent transference of responsibility for the management of religious institutions to individuals. It created an independent priesthood and a patronage network that was not tied to the state's ideals and it increased internal organizational ability. The rise of smaller patrons also opened up new arenas of religious activity and new opportunities for the religious professions, as shown by the upstart groups of riverside priests in Ajudhia and Benares, rivals to the more established *tirthpurohits*. Nor were such changes confined to pilgrimage sites; at a slightly later stage the pattern of change in pilgrimage was repeated with Ramaite festivity in many towns and cities of the North-Western Provinces. A move from elite, landed sponsorship to sponsorship by commercial groups, traders and artisans, involved more broad-based patronage and necessitated more internal organization and cooperation amongst the patrons. One of the clearest examples of this sort of change comes from Agra where, in 1889, it was reported that there had been no Ramlila *tamasha* for the last four years and that the insignificance of its celebration was likely to render an overlap with Muharram untroublesome.⁶ Twenty-one years later, in 1910, the Ramlila performances in Agra city ran from 18 September until 23 October and made prominent use of the bazaar and a special Ramlila enclosure. There was a Ramlila Committee which organized everything, including the subscriptions for the *tamasha*, the actors, the props, the stalls and the business hoardings. There was a printed programme, running to several pages, which detailed each day's action and called upon the public to 'grace the performance regularly'.⁷

A report made at the same time by the Criminal Investigation department on 'political innovations' in Ramlila celebrations in the urban centres of the United Provinces regretted that in most places 'it is long since the laymen have taken over the management of the *Ramlila* from the priests,

specific complaint was their decline in importance to the government of the country. Before the arrival of the British, they pointed out, they had been courted by the indigenous governments for their military skills and supported by them. Now they no longer received allowances from the territories under British rule - Nagpur had been the patron to fall most recently to the British - and they had to rely upon the support of the Rajputana royalty only. Although one of the *akharas*, that of the Niranjunis, was based in Allahabad, most of the ascetics preferred to live in the independent states and only went into British territory for the Kumbh Melas. Memorial of the Naga Goshains to Lord Northbrook, Governor-General, 31 Dec. 1874, NAI, India Home (Public), B Progs Feb. 1875, no. 16.

⁶ List of Hindu Religious Festivals which may synchronize with the Muharram, UPSA, NWP&O General, 'Notes and Orders', file 540A, box 33, p. 6.

⁷ 'The great Ramlila fair, Agra', IOR, UP General Administration P/8649, A progs July 1911, 'Confidential', no. 6.

which of course did away with what was a strong conservative influence'.⁸ In spite of this, there is little evidence that there had been a shift from priestly control of public festivity to lay control. Instead the change seems to have been from conservative, *rais* sponsorship to joint sponsorship between the businessmen of the towns and artisans and petty traders, who generally pursued a more vigorous and internally-competitive celebration than the older sponsors. In the above report the men listed as making anti-British innovations in the Ramlila processions included a railway clerk, an agent of a *vakil*, a son of a rich merchant and *zamindar* of Allahabad, several goldsmiths, a Bengali employee of the Transport department, a salesman on a street stall, potters, a *kalwar* and a *halwai*. Although the Muharram celebrations in India seem to have had a long tradition of sponsorship by lower-class Muslims, particularly weavers, this appears to have been a new development for Hinduism and indeed may have owed something to the older Muslim practices.

The British contribution to an independent Hindu tradition was not just a negative one. They enhanced the process with their methods of communal dispute-solving and their tendency to strengthen, through their judicial administration, supra-local religious identities. The definition of rights of public religious activity was meant to maintain the colonial administrator's independence so that his solutions would be seen to be impartial. But this further element of the separation of the state from religion, via the documentation of a community's rights and privileges, gave each dispute an independent historical life of its own. We see this definition of community rights at its most extreme in the Allahabad High Court's 1887 ruling that a cow was not an 'object' in the context of section 295 of the Indian Penal Code which ruled it an offence to destroy 'an object held sacred by any class of persons'. There is no doubt that this ruling materially lessened the grounds on which Hindus could hope to see Muslims convicted for cow-killing, and several scholars have stressed the impetus that it gave to organized cow-protection activities.⁹ As I have tried to show in Chapter 2, however, the British practice of establishing rights of public religious activity dated back to the very first days of their administration in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces. Far from being novel, the High Court's decision was the logical, if spectacular, outcome of the British approach to solving communal disputes: the apogee of

⁸ 'Report on the innovations in the Ramlila processions in various districts', sd H. deL. Ross, Deputy Inspector General of police, C.I.D., UP, 24 May 1911, *ibid*.

⁹ C.A. Bayly, *The local roots of Indian politics: Allahabad, 1880-1920* (Oxford, 1975), pp.111-12; J.R. McLane, *Indian nationalism and the early Congress* (Princeton, 1977), pp. 292-4; Sandra B. Freitag, *Collective action and community: public arenas and the emergence of communalism in north India* (Berkeley, 1989), p.150.

the codification of religious rights. What has not perhaps been emphasized sufficiently about the decision and the judicial procedure behind it, is the rapidity with which a dispute originating in Shahjahanpur district acquired provincial ramifications. This was a marked departure from pre-Rebellion practice. Once the British abandoned their insistence on local custom, the codification of religious rights and the consequent definition of community identity at a supra-local level proceeded apace.

Ironically, the British, having been largely responsible for the creation of a free-standing class of religious specialists and patrons, then resented and feared such independence and demanded that it bow to state authority. Remarkably, although the independence of priests and patrons alike was so young, everybody was prepared to testify to its antiquity and resist 'unprecedented' government encroachments upon their authority. Already in the 1820s and 30s there were *tirthpurohits* who would insist that none of their order had ever been taxed, even though half a century before they had been paying dues to pre-British governments. In the 1860s and 70s there were even Hindus who protested that taxes had never before been levied on pilgrims, although their abolition was a mere quarter of a century old. Perhaps the biggest irony of all is that the priests, beneficiaries in terms of independence, wealth and numbers of patrons from the upheavals of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, should, in the late-nineteenth century, be seen as the repository of unchanging religious tradition. With every attempt of the government to re-insert secular concerns back into religious experience the priests were at the forefront of the opposition. Given this very obvious creation of dual authorities, the one secular and the other religious, it is not surprising that the mass of Hindus rejected as religious guides the government's preferred candidates for community leadership: landed, loyal, conservative *raises*. Men such as this may have retained their power in a strictly secular environment, but their authority diminished sharply once they stepped into the increasingly independent and well-defined world of public Hinduism. At the pilgrimage and the *mela* site, and - one suspects - elsewhere also, the priest came into his own as an embodiment of religious and moral independence.

These trends towards a more broad-based patronage of and participation in Hinduism were not of course all-embracing. The very act of pulling some people into a group excluded others, most obviously Muslims, but also Jains and Sikhs. And presumably this was not a one-way process, but one which, from their side, Muslims, Jains and Sikhs were augmenting. Some steps on the road to community definition of the Hindus and the Jains are to be found in the Hindu-Jain riots that cropped

up in the towns and cities of the western NWP in the 1860s, '70s and '80s, when wealthy Jains vigorously pursued equal rights of procession and public display with Muslims and the wider Hindu community. In nearly all of these riots the Hindu protagonists were not defined, either by themselves or the reporting officers, as 'Hindus'; rather they were Vaishnavites, commonly 'Bishnoees'. This reflected the contemporary perception of the Jains as a Hindu sect, not a separate religious order. But, at the same time, the fact that Jain processions and Jain temples were seen to offend Vaishnavites suggests how much narrower and more intolerant the definition of mainstream, urban Hinduism was becoming.¹⁰

If we look forward to the nationalist era and the exploitation of religious symbols in political propaganda it is possible to see how an argument about the growing autonomy of religious expression and ideology could be used to explain manipulation of simple believers by cynical elites. I do not think that it was quite as crude as that. I prefer to think that, over the nineteenth century, the component of religion in community and individual identity was magnified until it was large enough to stand alone for considerable periods as an indicator of identity. And that this, when combined with the adoption by lower-class Hindus of public religious display and religious symbols as markers of their independence from the economic and social elites in their own community, made religious identity an ideal vehicle for both celebration and protest.

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¹⁰ I would think that one could find evidence of similar defining processes going on between Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab. Richard Fox's work throws considerable light on the creation of a Sikh/Singh identity in the late-nineteenth century but I suspect that he places too much emphasis on the role of the British in this process and does not allow for longer-term developments, such as the changes in patronage and religious organization that accompanied the decline of indigenous state authority and which I think were crucial to the creation of 'big' religious traditions. See Fox's *Lions of the Punjab: culture in the making* (Berkeley, 1985).

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Glossary of Indian words used frequently in the text

<i>ahir</i>	a member of a Hindu sub-caste whose customary occupations are tending cows and selling milk
<i>akhara</i>	a Hindu monastic order; a gymnasium or club, esp. one which promotes wrestling
<i>alam</i>	a military banner or standard; copies of the standards in Imam Husain's army on its ill-fated march to Karbala which are carried out at Muharram
<i>bagh</i>	a garden
Bakr Id	Muslim festival on the tenth day of the Islamic month Zil-Hijja, commemorating Hazrat Ibrahim's (Abraham) intended sacrifice of his son Ismail and Allah's substitution of a sheep for the youth; Muslim families observe this festival, one of great rejoicing, with the sacrifice of a goat or a sheep or, in pre-Independence India, a cow; the meat, when prepared, is sent as a gift to relations and neighbours
<i>baniya</i>	generally, a member of the trading community of the Hindus; <i>baniyas</i> belong to the third <i>varna</i> , of the caste ordering, the Vaishyas
Bharat Milap	a procession staged after the Ramlila drama, representing the return from exile of Ram and his family to Ajudhia
<i>chabutra</i>	a stand on which <i>taziyas</i> are displayed during Muharram
<i>chaprasi</i>	a courier or messenger; usually a public servant and often armed
<i>chaudhari</i>	a chieftain or headman, esp. of an occupational or professional group; sometimes also called <i>sardar</i>
<i>chauk</i>	a square, a central market place
<i>chaukidar</i>	a watchman, esp. one employed to guard a certain ward or locality in a town
<i>darshan</i>	a sight, a view; esp. in context of Hindus taking <i>darshan</i> of an idol
<i>dharm</i>	religious order, the correct observance of religion, religious duty
<i>dharmshala</i>	rest-house providing free accommodation for pilgrims
<i>idgah</i>	a place where congregational Id prayers are offered
Id-ul-Zuha	Bakr Id <i>q.v.</i>
<i>imambarah</i>	a place where congregational prayers are offered during Muharram; <i>taziyas</i> are often displayed there before burial on 10 Muharram
<i>imli</i>	a tamarind tree, <i>Tamarindus indica</i>

<i>gangajal</i>	water from the Ganga, holy water
<i>Gangaputra</i>	lit. son of the Ganga; a riverside priest at a northern pilgrimage site, esp. in Benares
<i>gau</i>	a cow
<i>gau kurbani</i>	cow-sacrifice
<i>gau kushi</i>	cow-slaughter
<i>gaurakshini sabha</i>	a cow-protection society
<i>ghat</i>	a flight of steps leading to a landing or bathing place on a river bank
<i>ghatiya</i>	a riverside priest at a pilgrimage site; often conducts ancestor rituals
<i>halwai</i>	a confectioner
<i>hundi</i>	a banker's note
<i>jajman</i>	a patron; in Hindu religious setting, patron of the sacrifice
<i>kachcha</i>	raw, unripe, crude, impermanent
<i>kanungo</i>	an official who maintains the records of production and revenue collection at the level of a <i>pargana</i>
<i>kasai</i>	a butcher
<i>kazi</i>	formerly, a Muslim law officer and registrar; a much-reduced position under the British
<i>kos</i>	a distance of approximately two miles
<i>kotwal</i>	chief officer of police for a city or town; superintendent of the markets
<i>kotwali</i>	chief police station in a city or town
<i>mahajan</i>	a Hindu moneylender or financier, esp. a large one
<i>mahant</i>	head priest of a Hindu monastery, <i>math</i> , or monastic order, <i>akhara</i>
<i>malguzar</i>	a farmer of the revenue
<i>mandir</i>	a temple
<i>masjid</i>	a mosque
<i>math</i>	a Hindu monastery
<i>maulvi</i>	a teacher of Islamic thought and principles, a Muslim scholar
<i>mela</i>	a fair, a gathering of many people

<i>muchalka</i>	a bond, personal surety
<i>muhabla</i>	a ward, a suburb
<i>mukhtar</i>	an agent, an attorney
<i>nadi</i>	a river, a stream
<i>nawab</i>	a Muslim ruler, a title of respect and authority for prominent Muslim gentlemen
<i>pakka</i>	strong, firm, solid; esp. with reference to a building
<i>palki</i>	a palanquin; idols in procession were often carried in <i>palkis</i> specially constructed and preserved for the sacred duty
<i>panchayat</i>	an independent court or committee of arbitration
<i>panda</i>	a Hindu priest, often a temple priest or a riverside priest at a pilgrimage site
<i>pandit</i>	a learned person or scholar, usually a Brahman; often used by the British as a generic label for Hindu priests
<i>pargana</i>	an area of revenue administration, one size below that of a <i>tahsil</i>
<i>pathshala</i>	a Hindu school in the indigenous style
<i>phal</i>	lit. fruit; benefits obtained by Hindus from correct worship, pilgrimage, etc.
<i>pinda</i>	a spherical cake of rice or grain used as an offering to one's ancestors
<i>pipal</i>	a large, long-lived fig tree, <i>Ficus religiosa</i> , sacred to the Hindus
<i>rais</i>	a member of the nobility; high-ranking, cultured people (either Hindu or Muslim)
Ramlila	lit. the play or pastime of Ram; the ten-day celebration in Asvin (September-October), culminating on Dasehra day, of the life of Ram as related in Tulsidas's <i>Ramcarit-manas</i> ; the celebrations involve public recitals and the staging of episodes from the epic, the most spectacular being that of the tenth day when Ram and the monkey general, Hanuman, are depicted defeating Ravan, the ten-headed king of Lanka and abductor of Ram's wife Sita
Ramnaumi (<i>ramanavami</i>)	the birthday of Ram on 9th lunar day in the waxing fortnight of Chaitra (March-April); Hindus mark the festival with fasting, readings of the <i>Ramayana</i> and <i>darshan</i> of the god, either in a temple, or in procession through the streets with Lakshman and Sita
<i>razinama</i>	an agreement, a compromise
<i>samaj</i>	a society or organization

<i>sarishtadar</i>	a registrar or record-keeper, esp. the head Indian officer of a court or collector's office who is in charge of the public records and official documents
<i>shankh</i>	a conch shell; often sounded during Hindu worship
<i>shikhar</i>	a peak, esp. a pinnacle on a Hindu temple
<i>shivala</i>	a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva
<i>sipahi</i>	an Indian soldier employed by a European power, <i>i.e.</i> , a 'sepoy'
<i>tahsil</i>	an area of revenue administration, one size below that of a district
<i>tahsildar</i>	an official in charge of a <i>tahsil</i> ; originally the principal local Indian official in charge of collecting the revenue
<i>tamasha</i>	a show, a spectacle; often refers to an enactment of an episode from the epic of Ram, especially that in which Hanuman's army storms the stronghold of Ravan and the paper giant is blown up
<i>taziya</i>	a highly-ornamented mock tomb of bamboo, paper and tinsel, made and carried out at Muharram in commemoration of Imam Husain's martyrdom
<i>taziadar</i>	one who oversees the construction of a <i>taziya</i> or carries a <i>taziya</i> out in procession, thence to be buried
<i>thanadar</i>	commonly an officer in charge of a small police or irregular force, intended to keep the peace in the <i>thana</i> and enforce payment of revenue
<i>thakardwara</i>	a temple
<i>tirth</i>	a pilgrimage site, a holy bathing place; from <i>tirth's</i> original meaning of ford or crossing place, <i>i.e.</i> , where one can cross between the mundane and divine worlds
<i>tirthpurohit</i>	a pilgrim's hereditary priest at a pilgrimage site
<i>tirthyatra</i>	a pilgrimage
<i>tirthyatri</i>	a pilgrim
<i>vakil</i>	a pleader, an advocate
<i>zamindar</i>	a landholder, usually with right of hereditary succession and the right to mortgage and to sell
<i>zarib</i> (<i>jarib</i>)	a land-measuring chain, approximately fifty-five yards