

RITUALS OF EMPIRE: DELHI DURBARS OF COLONIAL ERA

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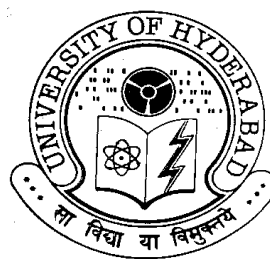
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
HISTORY**

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The British rule in India was not entirely based on mere physical force. It was also dependent on rituals of political nature which had a coherent and explicit ideological content. They form a vital part of the British political culture. This thesis is an attempt to understand the ceremonial manifestation of this political culture by studying the Delhi Durbars of 1877, 1903 and 1911. Many ceremonial gatherings have occurred in the history of British rule in India, both in pre-revolt and post-Revolt periods. But this study particularly concentrates only on the three Delhi Durbars that were summoned by the British, for this reason that no other pageants as extensive with meticulous preparation at a pan-India level were summoned in the history of British India. The three Durbars had their own reasons and justifications to be convoked at different intervals. Through an evaluation of the various ceremonies observed in the Durbars, I investigate the ideological and political underpinnings on which the Durbars were planted, choreographed and executed; how those ideological contours went a long in fashioning the British interaction with the native princes of India and the rest of the natives.

The Durbar of 1877 was summoned to announce to the world, the assumption of the new title 'Empress of India' by Queen Victoria. The Durbar of 1903 was called to declare the coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra as Emperor and Empress of India and the Durbar of 1911 was for the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary. For the third Durbar, the reigning monarch and his spouse personally arrived in India for their coronation. The three Durbars were called under the viceroyalty of Lord Lytton, Lord Curzon and Lord Hardinge respectively. The word Darbar or Durbar (as the British spelled) is a Persian word which was introduced and used by the Mughals. It meant a ruler's court. Mughal sovereigns held Durbars on different occasions like accession to the throne, birthdays, new year and so on. The British used the same word for the gatherings or assemblies held by them during their period of rule. The gathering summoned by Lord Canning to reward the princes who stood firm in their loyalty to the British during the revolt was also called Durbar. The usage of the term 'Durbar' by Mughals and the native princes had made it popular and the British, thus understanding the symbolic receptivity of the term used it extensively.

The concept of Durbar was quite familiar in the Indian context. Even before the rise of the Mughals, holding of royal assemblages was in practice to celebrate the establishment of a new kingdom or mark the coronation of a new sovereign. Wheeler finds its earlier references in the two epics. “The story of such gatherings is told in the earliest traditions of the two famous Hindu epics,-the Ramayana and Mahabharata...In the age of Rajput sovereignty such meetings were known as Rajasuyas and Aswamedhas. In the age of Muhammadan rule they were known by the name of Durbars”.¹

Delhi was chosen as the venue of the three all-India Durbars. The British knew the importance attached to the city as it had always been the seat of power from earlier times. Delhi in itself stood as the symbol of imperial grandeur and royalty that no one was regarded as the rightful sovereign to the Indian throne until he had been coronated at Delhi. The British, when they summoned the Durbars, chose Delhi as the convenient spot rather than the capital Calcutta to give a Mughal past to it. They wanted the faintest of memories of Mughals attached to the city of Delhi to be erased and wanted to install themselves as the legitimate rulers of India.

As mentioned before, rituals form an important part of the British political culture. The Delhi Durbars can also be seen as part of this political culture. It would be appropriate to mention here the meaning of the term ‘ritual’. Rituals are part of religious convention and ceremonies of royalty. They are apparent in well formulated customs and practices in the sacred and non-sacred walks of lives. They have played an important role in the lives of humans and continue to occupy a dominant role in their lives. They help in assigning meanings to the nature and quality of relationship. Repetitiveness, observance, fulfilment and adherence to the rules of performance make their significance amplified. Rituals, specially the political rituals play a vital role in the articulation of power, group solidarity or political authority. Renowned anthropologist S.J.Tambiah defines rituals as an ideological and aesthetic social construction implicated in the expression, realization and exercise of power. Ray.B.Browne says, “Rituals and ceremonies are codifications and statements of attitudes. Ideas create rituals and rituals spawn ideas. They are codes of and methods of behaviour. Rituals are to ceremonies what myths are to mythology”.²

¹ James Talboys Wheeler, *The History of Imperial Assemblage at Delhi*, Delhi, 1982, (First published in 1877), p. 1.

² Ray.B.Browne, *Rituals and Ceremonies in Popular Culture*, Bowling Green, 1980, p. 1.

For any political entity to remain in power, it is fundamental to have a well formulated ideology. The British also had a well articulated ideology which was determinant for the continuance of their power in an alien land. This ideologically driven rule was very much supplemented by ostentatious political rituals and ceremonies which created an imperial grandeur and an idea of 'Britishness' in the eyes of the natives. Political rituals, ceremonies and the symbolic representation of power and government have played a dominant role in the history of the British administration of India. The taking over of rituals also implies taking over legitimate power to rule. It formally puts the subjects in a direct and subordinate position to the British. The conception of maintaining exalted position through pompous pageantry and splendid durbars went a long way in ruling one-third of India indirectly through the princes. The use of these ceremonies can also be seen as an affirmation of the medieval feudal vision where the monarchy was surrounded by his loyal feudatories. In the Delhi Durbars these elements are combined to acquire the desired effect of eliciting native support which would further consolidate the British rule in India.

India from ancient times had the practice of acknowledging the service of distinction by granting symbols or other marks of honour in public ceremonies which gave the recipient recognition and marked his separation from the rest of his peers. It is this old practice which the British uses as part of their process of legitimization and winning supporters from the native side. The British believed that ceremonies and display retain a powerful hold on the popular imagination. The grandeur and splendour by which these ceremonies were conducted asserted what the British wanted everyone in India to believe; the British rule was glorious and just. It is interesting to note that while using this particular strategy, the British took care not to grant uniform symbols which otherwise would have led to the rise of solidarity among the natives as symbols play a role in identifying oneself with them. The British created rank determined symbols, other marks of honour like salutes, titles and decorations and disseminated those in these public events. The British contribution to princely protocol was the gun-salutes that reinforced a ruler's public standing. By relating to the specific and varied political milieu, one understands that each Durbar reaffirmed British paramountcy over princely India.

Military rule was central to the British rule in India. It can be said that force had an important role in maintaining the British rule and was essential for its survival in an alien land. D. George Boyce in his article says that this centrality of military for the maintenance

of British rule in India was put forward by Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington.³ He found an interesting link between military and political events. It was not mere force that counted, but the authority behind it; force implied authority and authority was strengthened and given credibility by force by the fact that force represented the British state in India in all its might, majesty and justice. Every effort was taken by the British to portray and show themselves as sovereign rulers after the Mughals.

Force was always used by the British when they found their authority under threat. The Revolt of 1857 is an example for this where we find the use of military force by the British to suppress the rebels. This convinced Indians that the British can use force against attackers. The British believed that the use of force creates a sufficient moral effect and firmly believed that the sword (force) was necessary and its swift and appropriate was essential to keep order. The British government's troops which were displayed in the military review of all the three Durbars superimposed the fact that the British rule did rest on force which would be used if opposing elements posed a threat to it. From a military point of view, the march past and the attendance of the military officials produced sufficient moral effect. It showed to the people of India the sophisticated and powerful weapons of the British and made them realize its orderly fashion and discipline when compared to the march past presented by the native troops. The general review of troops was conducted in a steady manner. This was preceded by a procession of native troops and retinues assembled at Delhi. The review included artillery, cavalry and infantry. The artillery consisted of important batteries and cavalry under the command of different major generals. The infantry, again, was under the command of commanding officers. Durbars were held in each British province and native state so that the event stayed not just in the memories of the people of Delhi, but throughout the whole Indian sub-continent. The British vindicated the idea that a dormant attitude of the government devoid of any action, force, or display of force would prove the government to be paralyzed and weak. They found force to be the utmost necessary element to maintain its authority. George Boyce says, "Authority must therefore be backed by the most drastic use of force- not arbitrary use of force, but nonetheless drastic use of force".⁴ Thus, in the three Delhi Durbars, one

³ D.George Boyce, 'From Assaye to the Assaye: Reflections on British Government, Force, and Moral Authority in India', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 63, No. 3, July, 1999, pp. 643-668.

⁴ Ibid., p. 662.

finds a well crafted juxtaposition of political ritual culture of the British and the message of use of force, when found themselves under threat.

In other words, it can be said that the British government was an absolute government which rested on conquest and not on consent. In every possible way, the British tried to imply their superiority through their ideas, institutions, opinions and principles. They went on influencing various facets of administration and firmly believed that force in some form was required for the sustenance of authority. In other words, it is force which gives the idea that the British government is to be respected and obeyed and if violation of this takes place coercive force can be used to implement order. They wanted to create the notion that the British Raj was to be looked upon with fear and respect.

Though the Delhi Durbars were peaceful events celebrated in pomp and merry-making, it had this subtle message in it. It conveyed to the natives the message that the British had not only the determination, but also the capability to sustain their paramountcy in India over and against all rebelling forces. The display of troops and ceremonies underlines the character of British rule in India which rested on the use of force which further upheld and supported that rule. The Marxist thesis says that political authority routinizes the domination of one part of society over another through the application of coercive force and the transmission of a public ideology.

1.1. Importance of the Study of Political Rituals

A political ritual could vary from a Durbar, visit of a high official or a member of royal family, funeral and a royal wedding. Due to its complex ramifications and hidden ideological contours, political rituals cannot be studied in isolation. It has attached, in fact, to itself the question of power and its sustenance. The ideologically driven rule of British realized that the Durbars were the most efficacious tools of application of power. David Cannadine says, “Power is like the wind: we cannot see it, but we feel its force. Ceremonial is like the snow: an insubstantial pageant, soon melted into thin air. The invisible and the ephemeral are, by definition, not the easiest of subjects for scholars to study. But this conceals, more than it indicates, their real importance”.⁵ Political rituals or the choreographed Durbars (in India’s context) were the places where power got a space or

⁵ David Cannadine & Simon Price (eds), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional societies*, Cambridge, 1987, p. 1.

theatre for its visual manifestation. The study of political rituals is not just the study of pomp and pageantry. It is a study of the relation between the group in power and the group not in power. In other words, the study of political rituals examines the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, understands the pre-conceived notion of inequality and the ceremonial demeanour of the ruled which emphasise their relative position in the power structure

Rituals are always an answer or response to the prevalent political situations. Whenever a ritual was presented before the public, it always had a reminder of the past. The ceremonies observed acted as a kind of reminder of past incidents - fortunate or unfortunate. This was clearly evident in all the ceremonies that were enacted in the three Durbars. That is being discussed in subsequent chapters. The one who is in charge or the one who is the central part of the ceremonies had always an aura of one responsible for carrying forward legacy received from times immemorial. The ceremonies and their interpretations may vary in their actual performance. But, the ritualistic significance attached to it remained constant.

As we trace the history of rituals of both Britain and India, we find that both nations have a long history of rituals of their own. The British had their own rituals which revolved around royalty. They had numerous elaborately performed spectacles to catch public attention and the British monarchy was the focus of all these ceremonies. The British imported the same ritualistic culture to India, which again had its own ritual background. Thus, there occurs a convenient adaptation and purpose-specific restructuring and reinterpretation of rituals addressing the peculiar culture, social and political background of India. This innovation is itself a characteristic feature of political rituals. The same strategy was followed wherever they had colonies.⁶ David Cannadine in his article portrays two streams of British public attitude towards rituals during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century. The first stream shows that as the people became educated, they would realize the rituals as 'nothing more than primitive magic, a hollow sham'.⁷ The second stream puts forward the view that rituals of royalty are obvious for its worthlessness than its splendour. Cannadine traces two streams which are more or less similar, highlighting the void nature of rituals.

⁶ This study is limited to political rituals performed in India.

⁷ David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c.1820-1977', Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983, p. 102.

Cannadine also reveals as to how the ritualistic aspects of monarchy had been studied so far. He opines that it was an enterprise mostly done by sociologists in two frameworks. The first is a Durkheimian, functionalist manner and the other which studies rituals as a means of ideological dominance of the ruling class. He classifies four stages in the development of rituals and ceremonies revolved around British monarchy.

1. 1820s to 1870s where rituals were performed in a localised manner and ineffectual manner.
2. 1877 to 1914 which was the apex period of invented traditions. Ceremonies got more structured with elaborate planning and new rituals were also created.
3. 1918 to 1953 where Britain tried to convince the world of its power with their rituals as this period saw the downfall of monarchy in other parts of Europe.
4. 1953 onwards when the world witnessed fall of Britain as a colonial power.

Cannadine claims that that there was a change in the image of British monarchy in the period between late 1870s and 1914. Monarchy had become weak by this time that it was becoming the central figure of ceremonies. The reason for this shift to elaborate ritual was the ‘gradual retirement of the monarchs from active politics’ in Britain.⁸ He argues that contrary to other European powers which utilized rituals to glorify royalty, Britain elaborated rituals due to the decaying royal power. And at the same time there was an increasing popularity of the royal house when compared to pre-1870s. The person of Victoria caught the attention of the popular mind which made the rituals further reasonable. She gained the image of a ‘matriarch of Europe’ and her son Edward VII was quite popular in Britain. This period also saw the position of ‘monarch’ becoming so popular that the reigning monarchs emerged as benevolent matriarchal/patriarchal figures. Certain economic and social changes in the last phase of the nineteenth century contributed to this. “In such an age of change, crisis, and dislocation, the ‘preservation of anachronism’, the deliberate, ceremonial presentation of an impotent but venerated monarch as a unifying symbol of permanence and national community became both possible and necessary”.⁹ In spite of developments in transport technology with the arrival

⁸ Ibid., p. 120.

⁹ Ibid., p. 122.

of motor vehicles, monarchy continued to use horse-driven carriages to create an anachronistic visual feeling. In the Durbar of 1911, Queen Mary arrived at the Durbar venue in a landau, though motor cars were prevalent in India at that time.

In the changed phase, every royal occasion became an imperial occasion. The period saw grand state pageants in England – golden and diamond jubilee of Victoria, funeral of Victoria, coronation and funeral of Edward VII, coronation of George V and visit of Prince of Wales to India. The change in the ceremonial presentation of monarchy had its own repercussions in India and other colonies. India's phase of the Delhi Darbars can also be inserted into the larger phase of change in the ceremonial manifestation of the British monarchy in Britain. There were also international competition where Austria, Germany, Italy, Russia and United States enacted their state and anniversary ceremonies with a revamp. In the wake of these developments, it was also necessary for the British monarchy to re-enact the rituals surrounding royalty. Even the changed attitude of the church provided encouragement, which itself was getting organized ritually.

Even now, English royalty continues to revolve around complex ceremonies. Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, and her diamond jubilee celebrations in 2012, her son Prince Charles' wedding in 1981 (which got a global viewership in TV), her grandson Prince Williams' marriage in 2011 show the relevance of rituals still attached to British monarchy and royal family even after the end of the British Empire.

There has been a change in the approach and style that historians undertake in studying political rituals. Rituals were always considered or studied as part of 'invented traditions'. Eric Hobsbawm defines invented tradition as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past".¹⁰ Placing rituals in the framework of invented tradition, he draws out three features of rituals; they are invented, repeated and adapted. "Inventing traditions...is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past".¹¹ He classifies invented traditions as falling into three types. 1) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, 2) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations

¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983, p. 1.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 4.

of authority, and 3) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour.¹² Even the Delhi Durbars fall within this framework of invention of traditions. Rituals, in the course of their performance, undergo changes like addition and cutting off of various ceremonies according to the changing contexts. The British also twisted rituals to adapt them to the new land, its people and their history. Ritual idioms and their meanings always underwent changes. Thus, it is of importance and relevance to study political rituals due to their close affinity to society, culture and history. A study of political rituals helps in investigating all those hidden unsaid motives that lay subtle behind the gaiety, music and hue of ceremonies.

1.2. Rituals in Pre-Colonial India

The Mughals had their own political rituals which drew their roots from Islamic traditions in the Persian Empire. Nevertheless, the court rituals in the Mughal courts underwent changes, breaking links from the former traditions and evolving their own specificities adapting to the Indian culture and life style. Yet, the necessity of rituals was not rejected. “Court rituals had a central place in Mughal politics and society”.¹³ An important ritual practised during the Mughal period was the *Jharokha darshan*.¹⁴ The writings of Abu-al-Fazl bear testimony to this. This practice was performed by Akbar who personally appeared in the balcony of the fort to give a view of himself to the people. This was followed by Jahangir as well. When the Emperor was at the balcony, the people gathered reciprocated and acknowledged his visual countenance through a *Kurnish*.¹⁵ The next important space where an important ritual session happened was *Diwan-i-Khas* (Hall of Private Audience) where the Emperor met his officials, discussed matters of public importance and settled civil disputes and criminal offences. He also rewarded and honoured his officials and *mansabdars* in this space. The attendance of this space by the Emperor and his officials was called a *Darbār*. The British spelled it as *Durbar*. Each person was assigned a particular place in a *darbar*, the supreme position being held by the Mughal Emperor. Everyone who attended the *Durbar* was obliged to stand or sit according

¹² Ibid., p. 9.

¹³ Douglas. E. Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 123.

¹⁴ Jharokha is a protruding enclosed balcony in Mughal architecture.

¹⁵ Kurnish was a salutary gesture whereby the subject bent his head and brought his right palm to the forehead.

to the pre-fixed understanding. An important ritual which occurred in this Durbar was the garment - giving ceremony or gifting of robes of honour. This grant of clothing was called *khil'at* in the medieval Islamic world. Clothing symbolically legitimised authority. As one traces the history of grant of clothing, one finds that garment-giving as a ceremony existed in all societies in the medieval period. The relationship between the ruler and the subject was always affirmed through the grant of precious articles among which garments or robes of honour had great significance.

However, there was a difference in the way how this operated in the later phases when compared to its initial stage. In the initial days, when the authority of *caliphate* was established, the *Caliph* presented a part of his clothing to the subordinate persons. With this act, the recipients became his dependent. The recipient could be a soldier, member of the court, an artist, poet or a man of talent. The *Caliph* was the representative of God on earth, thus an aura of divinity was attached to his persona and clothing. When this clothing was gifted, it communicated to the recipient this element of God. This was how garment-giving operated within the *Abbasid* period. The *Caliph*, being the political and religious head, had utmost significance being both the ruler and religious head. Thus, the *baraka* which was present in his attire was transferred to the recipients as well. In this way, clothing had both divinity and authority attached to it. As the robing ceremony became more frequent, it was difficult to always gift a part of Caliph's clothing. Thus, a new practice was adopted whereby the touch of the *Caliph* or his name inscribed in the hem of the clothing was necessary to transfer the *baraka* to the clothing and thereby to the recipients. This practice was replicated by the governors of various provinces when the Islamic empire expanded and when they also started granting robes of honour to reward meritorious loyal service. Later on, with the passage of time, as it was not feasible to gift always parts of personal attire of the donor, large scale manufacturing began in the royal workshops. In the case of the Mughals, it was manufactured in the *karkhana* or was purchased or was part of war booty. Though the robing ceremony had its birth in the caliphal court, it underwent structural and functional changes. The ceremony acquired substantial political significance when new lands were attacked and conquered. The ceremonial robing was also accompanied by grant of ceremonial paraphernalia like banners, and swords; other royal insignia like cloak, turban and coin; humans and animals like slaves, concubines and horses.

To India, the practice of ceremonial robing was brought by the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids. With the establishment of the Mughal rule, “the Mughals brought with them into India indigenous Central Asian concepts of sovereignty and imperium, to which were assimilated elements of Irano-Islamic kingship and ceremonial reaching back to Sassanid Iran, as well as native Indian elements”.¹⁶ Robing ceremonies were quite frequent during Babur’s time. *Khil’at* ceremony was as indispensable part of the Mughal Durbar scenes and later it became part of the routine administration. *Khil’at* tied the ruler and the ruled in a close bond in various occasions. The happiness of the emperor at the service of a soldier, *mansabdar* or an artist, birthday celebration of a prince or any meeting of importance. All these occasions were marked with a robing ceremony making it an important act in the political context. As in other parts of the Islamic empire, the garment was or could be accompanied by bejewelled sword, money, gold dagger, horses, precious gems, turban, special perfumes, elephants and palanquins. There were also different kinds of *khil’at*. Attire or parts of attire used by the emperor was the one which was considered most significant and valuable. Apart from this, there existed set of garments—three-piece, five-piece and seven-piece set of garments. The first constituted of ‘a turban (*dastar*), a long coat with a full skirt (*jama*), and a waist-scarf (*kamarband*)’.¹⁷ In addition to the aforesaid items, a five-piece set had a jewelled turban ornament called *sarpench* and a band called *balaband*. The seven-piece set constituted of “headdress, long coat, close-fitting jacket, two pairs of trousers (*shalva*), two pairs of shirts (*kamis*), two girdles and a scarf”.¹⁸

In due course of time, religious significance attached to robes was partially shed by the Mughals in India. The ruler continued to be the representative of divine authority and robes of honour were awarded to non-Muslims as well. The reason for this could be that unlike other Islamic states, Mughal rulers had more non-Muslims as constituents of their subject population. Robing ceremony rewarded, honoured and bonded the recipients to the king and thereby to the Mughal state. Though the act was of immense political importance, inequality underlined this whole act as bonding was established between a superior and his dependent. Thus, well established and elaborate rituals reaffirmed the authority of the

¹⁶ Gavin. R. G. Hambly, ‘The Emperor’s Clothes: Robing and ‘Robes of Honour’ in Mughal India’, Stewart Gordon (ed), *Robes of Honour: Khil’at in Pre-Colonial and Colonial India*, New Delhi, 2003, p. 35.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 38-39.

Mughal emperor and the most efficacious one was *khil'at* ceremony which “constituted the central act of public political bonding at a court in which old friends and adversaries or potential rivals were affirmed by ties which, for the moment, bound them to the principal actor of this theatre of kingship”.¹⁹ The other ingredients of Mughal gift exchange were *nazar* and *peshkash*. *Nazar* meant vow, “but in the Mughal Empire it came to mean a gift of gold coins (*muhrs*), which did not generally circulate”.²⁰ It was presented directly to the emperor. *Peshkash* was a gift given to the Mughal emperor and though this act the donor admitted his subordinate position to the emperor. It was not mandatory for the donor to be personally present to give the *peshkash*, it could be sent through another person. A *peshkash* could be animals like elephants or horses or could be a share of booty which was sent to the emperor by provincial governors and mansabdars. “The transmission of booty to court as *pishkash* stated and demonstrated the relationship of ruler and officer. The failure to send it meant disruption of the relationship which the gift exchange stated.”²¹ Each ceremony performed had a great significance in the maintenance of goodwill and friendly political ties.

Mughals took authority and rituals surrounding it to a higher plane distinct from the ceremonial traditions of the Delhi Sultanate. *Jharokha darshan*, weighing ceremony and gifting of robes affirmed the superior status of the ruler and demonstrated the inferior status of officials serving him. The gifting of robes of honour made the subordinate officials an extension of the ruler's body or in other words, through *khil'at* ceremony, they were incorporated into the body of the ruler symbolically. Other than this, another practice which bonded relationship between the king and his subordinate officials was *khanazadi*. It meant ‘son of house’ indicating loyal service to the Mughal ruling house generation after generation. This ensured not just personal submission to the king, but also family's which proudly rendered their service and life to the emperor. The Mughal court had specialists who were appointed from the “Islamicized service elite which dominated the

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 37.

²⁰ Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire*, p. 140.

²¹ Ibid., p. 144.

administrative and diplomatic world of India for centuries before the intrusion of the British”.²²

Elaborate rituals were followed by various forms of entertainment like elephant, camel and ram fighting, wrestling, dance and acrobatic performances. It implies that the architects of the rituals wanted the effect of the significant bonding to be not just restricted to the donor and the recipient, but also to the people so that it lived in their memories. This was the same pattern that the British followed when the Durbars were summoned at Delhi. The main Durbar days concluded with shows of this kind for the general entertainment of people.

1.3. Rituals in Colonial India

The British in India did innovate, improvise, develop and elaborate rituals marking their superior status as rulers. The days of the East India Company showed more willingness from the side of the British to be part of the Mughal rituals in a dependent manner. The direct administration period saw an opposite picture where British made every effort to show their superior position clearly in political rituals and were not ready to accept any position less than this. But this reluctance did not happen all of a sudden with the post-Revolt proclamation. The mature phase of Company administration showed disinclination from the British to be part of any rituals marking them inferior. But a clear-cut chronological division cannot be made as to when onwards this reluctance began. But it can be concluded that it began with the ascendancy of the British in the political map of India.

1.3.1. Period of East India Company

The existing ritual idiom did not undergo any immediate changes with the arrival of the British. The transformation of the British from subordinate to ruler was not abrupt. In the initial trading days of the Company, when Company officials remained less powerful, they participated in the Mughal rituals in the capacity of a subordinate acknowledging the Mughal authority. They also received titles and other marks of honour and favour from the emperor. Robert Clive was granted the long title of *Zabdat ul-Mulk, Nasir ud-Daukah, Colonel Clive Sabat Jang Bahadur*. He also received land as *jagir*. The

²² Michael. H. Fisher, ‘The Resident in Court Ritual, 1764-1858’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, July 1990, p. 427.

first traces of reluctance were shown by Robert Clive himself. It was necessary according to the Mughal norms of rituals that the recipient of the title be present at the ritual space to receive the honour. But, challenging the established norms, Clive did not arrive in person to receive the honour. He, instead, sent a *nazar* through a representative. This in itself shows the British attitude of not accepting and not ready to co-operate with any ritual treating them inferior right from the beginning days. We find re-occurrence of such incidents towards the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century which would be discussed later.

The insertion of British into the court rituals began with the appointment of Residents in the courts of princely states. The appointment of Residents in Indian courts can be traced back to the Subsidiary Alliance system. The inclusion of Residents into the courts of states was altogether a different experience for the princely states. Thus, it became necessary to incorporate Resident into the ritual tradition of the Mughal court and the Indian courts, though they did not fall into any of the Mughal diplomatic definitions. The Residents acted as full time political agents overseeing the activities of the states and also participated in the rituals of the court, which were within an Indian idiom. It was also necessary from the side of the British to maintain their hold over these states and thereby extract an impression that the “Indian Ruler continued to reign, admittedly with the advice of a British Resident”.²³ The British continued to participate in rituals which symbolically marked the superiority of the native princes. The British at first accepted these Indian ritual traditions as it was necessary on their part to maintain indirect rule through these rulers. “Most Residents accepted the court’s symbols, either personally as statements of value or cynically as means to manipulate the court”.²⁴ They also accepted Indian titles and honours bestowed on them and also enjoyed the lifestyle attached to the office of the Resident. Many even demanded extra luxuries that were attached to the ‘oriental’ pomp and glamour. *Dilawar Jang*, *Hashamat Jang* and *Sabit Jang* were some of the Indian titles bestowed on British. The Resident himself had his own officials and staff. Gradually, a ritual culture started weaving around his office. Due to the Company’s officials accepting and enjoying an Indian way of life and ritual idiom, the notion of a fictional character called *nabob* began to develop who had the qualities of both British and Indian. A *nabob*

²³ Ibid., p. 421.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 431.

was a company official who led the life of an Indian prince or *Nawab*. *Nabob* was a variation of the latter term. The physical representation of a *nabob* was this —A white man with an elaborate wardrobe, an umbrella, a *hookah* to smoke and who enjoys *nautch*. The creation of this image could be an imaginary outcome. Yet, the lifestyle that Company's officials followed while in India was no less than that of luxury. E.M. Collingham suggests that this actually led to the creation of a new Indian aristocracy.²⁵ I maintain a position of divergence from her opinion of creation of new Indian aristocracy. Yet, there is no doubt about the fact that the British did adopt a wide array of ritual practices for their unperturbed rule, sustenance of indirect rule and to accrue acceptance in an alien land. The British also realized that it was not easy to acquire legitimatisation to their rule if they imported their own ritual idiom to India. But, the purpose, use and efficacy of ceremonies were never repudiated. "An important aspect of rule in an Indian idiom was the use of magnificent ceremony by the British".²⁶

The attitude of the British towards the Indian ritual idiom was not uniform. It was complex with various attitudes of understanding, ignorance and rejection. The British, though, they participated in the rituals, did not accept or understand the significance of rituals as Indian rulers and spectators understood. They belittled the significance attached to them, though they did not outrightly reject the symbolic importance of the native prince as the ruling power. "As a result, even those Residents who learned- at least in part- the meanings of these symbols tended to regard them as having no 'natural' significance in 'real' terms".²⁷

Another development during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the interest that India invoked in the minds of British which led to the study of Indian texts, languages and religion. The British realized the religious way of life or system followed in India as something distinct from Christian and Judaist and yet capable of having the status of a religion in its own capacity. Texts were re-read and reinterpreted and Hinduism as a religion was shaped. In spite of varying ideologies of orientalist and utilitarians, India was always observed as a stagnant society where British saw a reflection of their own past. Hence, Indian belief system and rituals were observed as anachronistic. Even the court

²⁵ E. M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800-1947*, Cambridge, 2001.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁷ Fisher, 'The Resident', p. 423.

rituals were envisaged as part of this anachronism. The fact that the British themselves had their own rituals of royalty which were being redefined was conveniently forgotten. Indian rituals were declared as oriental remnants, anachronistic and primitive when compared to the cultural superiority of the British. Yet, the British did not totally dismiss nor made any conspicuous efforts to distort the meaning of rituals at this point of time as they had full understanding of the significance of these rituals in oriental imagination.

The meetings between the ruler and Resident were also symbolically significant underlining the nature of relationship between the two. The Resident had a role as an actor and also as a spectator in these rituals. He also had the power to shape new ritual or redefine it according to the existing power relations. “As a result, there were often extensive preliminary negotiations between the Residency and the court to try to reach a consensus among the parties as to the symbols to be demonstrated by the principals”.²⁸ The presence of a Resident announced overtly that the particular state had the support of the East India Company and it acted as a warning to other states. Thus, it was necessary on the part of the rulers to assign significant role to the Resident in court rituals and also essential on the part of the Resident to make sure that he got the rightful position as an agent of the Company and as indirect controller of the state activities. He was also duty bound to report the court activities to the Governor-General. The Resident, who participated in the ritual enactment of the court, himself entered the court in grandeur. In the beginning, the Company depended on the services of Indian officials to understand the ritual language of the court, prominent among them being *munshi*. “The Company identified knowledge of the symbolic language of court ritual with Muslims primarily, although it also recognized that some Hindus also had developed mastery over it”.²⁹ Thus, in Indian courts, there were two groups of men in power, British Residents and their staff on one side and the native rulers and their courtiers on the other.

More than Residents, the office of the Governor-General had great symbolic significance. It was naturally expected of this office to maintain grandeur and a ceremonial atmosphere. By the end of the eighteenth century, the ‘pomp and ceremony of early British rule reached its height’.³⁰ The Governor-General of India was no less than a royal figure in

²⁸ Ibid., p. 434.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 441.

³⁰ Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, p. 15.

terms of ceremonial accoutrements. He was seen in public with symbols of royalty and was accompanied by silver stick bearers, club bearers and sentries. The residencies, office and residence buildings of Governor-General and other high officials also were by now grand buildings maintaining the dignity of their positions. Thus, ceremony and display were an integral part of the British life in India. An apt commixture of Indian and British ritual traditions was innovated for the Indian ceremonial space and culture. It is to be noted that this insertion of British ritual traditions happens only with the consolidation of British rule in India, and not during its initial phase. The construction of *nabob*'s image was also an upshot of this blending. "This combination of oriental and occidental magnificence constructed the body of the nabob as its centre as a hybrid of East and West".³¹ The *nabob* also used an umbrella which was a royal symbol. This was carried by a man called *chattah* bearer. Palanquin, which was an Indian royal insignia, was also used by him. This phenomenon of choosing and accepting Indian practices and symbols were an effort to picture the British as the rightful successors of the Mughals or rather as people competent and capable to rule. All the aforesaid accessories helped the British in accentuating their status as a ruling community. Thus, one finds more adherence to the Indian tradition, not just in ritual space but also in the body of the official. E.M. Collingam terms this as 'Indianized body'. This distinct display of pomp and grandeur was not limited to high officials alone. Civilians and their families also displayed showiness as they believed themselves to be socially and racially superior to Indians. This was reflected in the houses that they built in neo-classical style distinct from Indian houses. The large number of servants employed also showed the luxurious lifestyle followed equal to that of an Indian *nawab*.

As the nineteenth century advanced, one finds a considerable change in the attitude of British with their rising prominence. The tendencies to challenge the Indian ritual idiom existed even before, but overt discontent began to be shown as the nineteenth century progressed. The British had, by now, grown to be more than mere traders. Through annexations and various arrangements with princely states, the territories under the East India Company expanded and it grew as a dominant authority able to influence the fate of the Indian subcontinent. As their status changed in the political sphere, they started refusing to be part of any rituals that marked them lower. The Resident, who already had a

³¹ Ibid., p. 17.

right to redefine court rituals, started demanding treatment on an equal footing with other dignitaries of the court. He became more assertive demanding the importance of his office to be exhibited more evidently in rituals in accordance to the changed nature of the relationship between the British and the princely states. By now, the British had also consolidated their position in India and replaced the Mughals as the real source of power. The exchange of gifts was considered equivalent to bribery. Hence, the practice of presenting *nazar* to the Mughal ruler and receiving robe of honour was terminated, 'as they no longer wished to offer even symbolic obeisance'.³² They put forward the demand or bargained to be treated as equal. Any sort of gift exchange between the officials of the Company and native rulers was also restricted. "Where the exchange of *nazrs* for *khil'ats* was unavoidable, they established a strict scale of equivalence, so that instead of being a ritual of incorporation, the practice was reduced to a commercial transaction".³³ Thus Mughal rituals of authority were fundamentally changed. When a person offered *nazar* or *peshkash* to the emperor, he in turn, received a *khil'at*. In Mughal ritual tradition, this was not just an exchange of goods. It had deeper ideological significance. Through the medium of clothing, a bond was established between the ruler and the dependent whereby the latter accepted the allegiance and loyalty to the former. But this ritual meaning was completely altered in terms of monetary value of the goods exchanged. The objects or items that were utilized for the robing ceremony were envisaged as objects of utility which constituted trade merchandise for the British. Thus, they could not comprehend the symbolic act of being part of the emperor's persona through these robes. In Indian imagination, an object received from a person of authority had more value and significance that goes beyond its market value. It was also a fact that Indians attached much importance to the items received as gift that they preserved it as family heirlooms. The British never attached any such implications to the items they received. They either sold or circulated it. They did not preserve the gifts, instead endowed those to others when they received items of equivalent price. *Nazar* and *khil'at* were all mere items or commodities to accrue favours. The items that they received were either immediately circulated or stored in *toshakhana*, the treasury that dealt with receiving and preserving these items for further dissemination. Commodities were also auctioned and the money received from it was utilized for buying

³² Gail Minault, 'The Emperor's Old Clothes: Robing and Sovereignty in Late Mughal and Early British India', Stewart Gordon (ed), *Robes of Honour: Khil'at in Pre-Colonial and Colonial India*, p. 129.

³³ Ibid., p. 135.

more items to be gifted. Thus, the British never regarded these items in the same way as Indians considered it. It was just an economic exchange for the British with a clear scheme of returning the equivalent priced item for the favour received.

Simultaneously, the Company began implementing prohibitions on the practice of conferring titles on the Company officials by the Mughal king. When the Company officials started amassing enormous wealth through private trade and exchange of favours and honours, the Parliament and directors of the Company intervened to check corruption among the Company officials. The British had already declared receipt of gift items as bribery and yet the British gave an interesting twist to this ceremonial exchange. Though it was declared bribery, they did not completely withdraw from this ritual practice. Now they started receiving *nazar* and *peshkash* and in return started bestowing *khil'ats* in formal arrangement which was more or less similar to the Durbars in a restricted manner. Eventually, "in 1843, the practice of offering *nazrs* and *khil'ats* was also forbidden".³⁴ The Mughal emperor was reduced to the state of a king who had no sovereign power. Yet, he was retained as 'the symbolic centre of Indian political order'.³⁵ This is the image that the British broke in the post-Revolt period by humiliating and deporting this 'symbolic centre' to Burma. In due course of time, even before the advent of the nineteenth century, the British gradually withdrew from this tendency of depending on Indian subordinate *munshi* and belittled his importance intentionally. His roles as ritual consultant and administrative supporter were purposely restrained. This also coincided with that phase of the British regime when British gained ascendancy in the Indian political scenario. It can be rightly said that curbing the influence of an Indian subordinate was within the agenda of racial superiority and also that the British did not want to create an Indian support base around the influential office of *munshi*. Consequently, the British Residents themselves took charge of the court rituals towards nineteenth century. Rituals were created, modified or prohibited which bolstered their position in the court. This redesigned rituals had elements from European traditions with new symbols and ceremonies which satisfied him as well as the Company. However, not always these improvements were endorsed by the native rulers. In such cases of conflicts, the protesting voice of princes was always muffled.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 134.

³⁵ Bernard. S. Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, p. 171.

The changed mood and attitude were also reflected in other spheres as well. The image of *nabob* began to be reprimanded as the adoption of the Indian practices was condemned by Britons at home. Heavy indulgence was condemned as effeminate and lowly. As the nineteenth century progressed, this image of an ‘oriental nabob’ consciously eroded away. Now a reverse project began whereby intentional efforts were made to increase the British influence in all spheres of the lives of Company officials. The political, social and cultural images of British were redefined, this time more in a British fashion, contrary to the oriental manners and style. “The open body of the nabob was made obsolete as the boundaries delineating how far India and Indians might encroach upon the British body were defined”.³⁶ It was noted that that adherence to Indian practices was affecting British virtues. Now, the shift was more towards anglicization so that the British values and virtues could be retained without being polluted by Indian practices. The reasons for this can be traced to various developments in Britain and as well as in the British community of India. The phenomenon of Victorianism brought a change in the British perception and it was reflected in India due to the frequent interactions between India and home. By now, the orientalist admiration of India and its ancient past gave way to a utilitarian approach with a rising pride in the British way of life and civilization. “The rise of middle-class liberalism in Britain brought evangelicalism, free trade and utilitarianism to the forefront of the political agenda, none of which demonstrated the respect for Indian culture and institutions which had guided orientalism.”³⁷ In this changed environment, it was utmost necessary to re-draw the image of British in India and it had to begin with a rejection of adoption of Indian practices. The figure of a British in India had to be portrayed as the epitome of British virtues and ‘as carriers of western civilization to India’.³⁸ In the context of rising supremacy of the British, they expressed their unwillingness to admit that they accrued their right to rule from the Mughal emperor. Thus, a new expression of authority was getting formulated where the officials and diplomats of the Mughal court started declining in prominence. The Residents who used to demand Indian titles and lead a *nawab* style of life became reluctant towards Indian titles. The privilege of the native rulers to grant titles to anyone – British or Indian was also restricted. The flamboyant *nabob* gave way to a British man in British outfits and habits.

³⁶ Collingam, *Imperial Bodies*, p. 50.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

The refusal of the British to accept the Indian rituals and practices coincided with the developing social distance between the British and the Indians. Thus, the British embarked on a conscious effort to replace the Indian idiom with a British idiom. This was also reflected in the position of the Resident when the British began “to assert their own influence in reformulating court rituals and redefining the role of the Resident with them”.³⁹ Nevertheless, the British did not completely alter or replace Indian rituals or the Mughal authority. The coins of the Company continued to have Mughal imprint till 1835. The Mughal emperor continued to live in Delhi, the imperial capital. A re-interpretation of rituals did happen whereby new meanings were given to various ceremonial practices. However, this project got a final shape and direction in the post-Revolt period when the crown took over the charge of India from the Company.

1.3.2. Period of Direct Administration

The vagueness that existed in the relationship between India and Britain was cleared with the Revolt of 1857 or the changes that followed it cleared this uncertainty. The ambiguity was in this form that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British had become the foremost power in India relegating the Mughals to the background. They administered and ruled India with a new legal system. Yet, the monarch of Britain was not the monarch of India. India was ruled by the officials of a chartered company with the British parliament wielding the crucial authority. This ambiguity was cleared with the outbreak of the revolt and the developments that followed it. The revolt brought changes in every aspect of British rule in India, the first fundamental change being the replacement of the East India Company. The administration of India was transferred to the Crown. Thus, India’s subjects became the subjects of the British monarch. “India became part of the empire in constitutional terms”.⁴⁰ Now the monarch of Britain would decide the fate of India as the direct authority. This change had further ramifications influencing the way how the British viewed India.

A new ritual idiom was inaugurated. New orders of knighthood were created with specific insignia. ‘Star of India’ was formulated in 1861 and gun salutes were regulated by the 1870s. With the establishment of ‘Star of India’, an attempt was made to initiate an order of knighthood in India with three ranks devised later - Knight Grand Commander

³⁹ Fisher, p. 452.

⁴⁰ Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Princeton, 1996, p. 119.

(KGCSI), Knight Commander (KCSI) and Companion (CSI). The Indian symbols and ritual traditions were replaced by robes, insignia, collar and pendant which were exclusively European in style and pattern. The Indian practice of preserving the gifts as items of pride was reversed. The mantle and accessories of 'Star of India' were to be returned to the government when the recipient expired. Thus, the British made it very clear that the mantles and other insignia were not hereditary. Knighthood was attached to the native prince during his life expectancy and it was not to be passed on as a family heirloom. The Indian princes were not happy with the new knighthood pattern and the conditions set forth, but as they were not powerful enough to question the British, accepted the regalia on the condition that it would be returned after their death. On every occasion of ceremonial importance, the native princes displayed these insignia. The photographs of native princes show them decorated in all symbols of 'Star of India'. *Nazar* and *khil'at* were replaced by an elaborate investiture ceremony which generated an image of the medieval feudal past. The question arises why it was necessary for British to create an ordered hierarchy. David Cannadine argues that the British wanted their own society's hierarchical pattern to be replicated in India.

The British believed and spread the notion that Indians were incapable of administration of their own. If they can be brought to the threshold of modernity, it would be possible only with the support and guidance of the British. Indian society was stagnant and a sudden introduction to modernity would lead to rebellious behaviour and disrupt the balance of society and polity. The Revolt was an example for this. Thus, it was necessary for the British to train Indians first. As a preliminary step towards this, it was essential to please their 'oriental' fantasies. Cohn calls this project as 'Orientalizing India'. Thus, together with the changed attitude after the Revolt, retaining the feudal image of India was an intentional agenda of the British. The creation of knighthood and regulation of gun salutes can be seen as part of this new policy. The Delhi Durbars summoned during the direct administration period of the British rule were venues where hierarchy and inequality were manifested. Attempts to interfere into the religion and society of India were also withdrawn. The inequality and differences that existed before the Revolt were further accentuated in the post-Revolt period. This period also witnessed the visits of the members of the royal family to India. When the Prince of Wales visited India in 1876, one year before the first Durbar was called at Delhi, the native princes of India welcomed him ceremonially. The British wanted them to be present in their exotic Indian attire. Durbars,

jubilee and birthday celebrations were occasions where the British came in their western wear and the Indian princes, in their Indian attire. When one studies the Delhi Durbars, it is interesting to note that not even one native prince came in western wear, not even in the third Durbar (1911) which was summoned in the twentieth century. Thus, the British had made it mandatory that in such choreographed pageants, it was essential to come in traditional royal attire with all royal insignia and jewellery to create an anachronistic feudal ambience. Western attire was also not approved to avoid ideas of equality between the British and the native princes. Thus, the princes were encouraged to arrive as flamboyantly as they could with a stipulated number of retinue fixed by the government according to their rank. The British allowed native princes to carry badges and banners bestowed by them. In these Durbars, the clear difference between the ruler and the ruled was also demonstrated through demeanour. The British, the one in power, had an authoritative code of conduct and the princes and other Indians had a subordinate code of conduct. The bodily demeanour of an Indian was supposed to demonstrate his dependent position in the hierarchical structure. It can be concluded that the British authority had a pre-conceived notion of inequality and tried maintain this inequality in its spheres of operation. The various segments of the Durbars that showed the Indian princes' subordinate position are discussed in the chapters that focus on each Durbar.

When the proclamation of 1858 cleared the ambiguity regarding the relationship between India and Britain, it also cleared the confusion regarding the status of the British in India. The British officials were not serving a trading company, instead they were representatives of the Queen and part of the larger imperial project. The changed nature of status was also manifested in the bodily presentation of the British officials. It has already been discussed in an early section of this chapter that that even before the dividing line of 1857, there were attempts by the British to establish their superior position as rulers of India by rejecting Indian ritual practices. However, this reluctant nature became more rigid in the post - Revolt period. The previous period already saw the image of *nabob* being criticized. This image is transmuted as *sahib* – the embodiment of British virtues in the post-Revolt period. Efforts were made to redefine and present the new *sahib* as a superior ruler. The rising pseudo-scientific theories of race further presented a racially superior *sahib*. The Revolt further widened the rift between the ruler and the ruled. Thus, a new political framework was inaugurated with the British, representing British virtues and values, at the apex and a racially inferior Indians at the base. This hierarchy, together with

the newly clarified superior consciousness created a new ritual idiom. By invoking a medieval past, the British tried to create colourful pompous ceremonies where this difference was highlighted. Restrictions on the bodily attire and demeanour were redefined as a way of bolstering their new status. When the new ritual idiom was innovated, many elements of the previous Indian ritual idiom were ignored. New dimensions were added to the bodily contact between the British and Indians. An embrace had its own significance in the Indian ritual idiom. Through the bodily contact of embrace, a mystical bond was established between the two engaged in an embrace. This kind of body contact showed reverence and egalitarian relationship between the two. But towards the end of the nineteenth century, especially after the Revolt, the embrace between the Governor-General and native princes was averted. This demonstrated markedly the changed attitude of the British whereby they were not ready to give any impression of considering the native princes on an equal footing through any kind of unnecessary touch. The Governor-General and Viceroy of India was now the direct representative of the Crown. Thus, in all the Durbars he convened, he occupied the highest position. When the native princes bowed before the Viceroy, they were actually submitting themselves, acknowledging their allegiance and fealty to the British crown. "The new format transformed the physical performance of the Indian princes from one which symbolized incorporation, equality and respect, into one of homage".⁴¹

In the previous ritual idiom, the mystical bond was formed between the Governor-General and the native princes giving a personal touch to it. But in the altered ritual idiom, the bond formed is devoid of personal factors. The power relation was established between the Viceroy, as representative of the Crown and the Indian princes as subjects who avowed their unswerving loyalty to the Crown. The new picture had deeper symbolic dimensions which were established in a ceremonial space, mostly Durbars. Great significance was attached to these ritual enactments that the days assigned for the Durbars were proclaimed as government holidays. These days were entirely dedicated to state ceremonies, banquets and state dinners. This suggests that the British met native princes in a separate space away from the daily official space. It was of utmost importance that these were observed in an apt ambience suiting to the imperial grandeur of the British. The themes of decorations were carefully chosen according to the peculiar Indo-British relations of authority and submission. Neo-gothic designs festooned the Durbar of 1877. The Durbar of 1903

⁴¹ Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, p. 129.

maintained an Indo-saracenic design as Curzon wanted to give a Mughal flair to it. All the three Durbars called after 1857 fall within the agenda of theory of authority as propounded by Cohn including the small Durbars replicated across India. The post-Revolt period also saw purposely created public locales where elaborate ceremonies were conducted to show authority. Garden parties and elaborate welcomes at railway stations were ceremonial display of this authority. If the Viceroy arrived in train, the station would have complex arrangements like gun salutes. All the high officials and native princes with their retinue would wait to receive him. The Viceroy shook hands with the ones who were entitled to such a greeting. This was followed by a prolonged procession in the town, sometimes with the Viceroy mounted on elephants with *howdah*. Every effort was made to make the procession extravagant and elaborate.

The British attached great importance to ceremonies and insisted on a demonstration of submission of native princes through proper curtsy. Cohn points to a new colonial sociology whereby the British started perceiving India as different social groups relevant with regard to their relationship with British. By trying to maintain an aura of continuity and by consciously developing an anachronistic atmosphere, the British was actually trying to create a section of allies or collaborators from the Indian side in a feudal framework. Though democracy was not widely established across the world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British did have a democratic institution – Parliament. Still, the periodic evocation of the institution of monarchy in all the Durbars gave a sense of continuity of being under the benevolent rule of a king/queen. The British were particular to recreate this feeling, perhaps to divert the attention from the real fact that the actual administration of India was carried out without Indian participation. In a sense, it can be summed up that the British wanted Indian collaboration, but not Indian participation. The ceremonies followed and colonial sociology helped to a great extent, at least till 1915, in maintaining this feudal framework. At the same time, the British entertained and disseminated this idea that Indians had a great appetite for rituals and ceremonies. Through the Durbars summoned in India, they tried to strengthen their position in India and ward off other rivals like Russia and Germany. The Durbars helped the British in portraying themselves as a powerful imperial power. Simultaneously, the Durbars demonstrated that loyalty to the Crown would always be honoured and military might would be used against recalcitrant behaviour. Thus, rituals were the venues where the changed attitude and ideologies were revealed and the native princes got the assurance

that their rights and positions were not threatened. They were “probably most effective at persuading the British themselves of their own superiority, power and authority, and of the security of their position within India”.⁴²

When the British rule in India was going through a phase of Durbars, Britain was also undergoing a kind of revival of rituals, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. The rituals that were performed in Britain and India were more or less the same in terms of splendour and overall ceremonial framework. But the ingredient ceremonies varied. Many insignia associated with royalty in Britain were not used in colonial Indian rituals. When symbols of royalty were designed for ritual enactment in India, caution was taken to avoid any symbols that were objectionable to Indians. Items bearing the cross were avoided and Christian ceremonies were also avoided in a multi-religious Indian scenario. The ‘Star of India’, when initiated, came with a set of costumes without any Christian symbols. The Delhi Durbars also had church ceremonies, but those were restricted only to the Sunday service. The Durbar proceedings were completely devoid of religious ceremonies and state symbols of Great Britain like rose, shamrock and thistle.

The British attitude towards Indian symbols varied. Many Indian symbols of royalty were appropriated and substituted by the British. To some they maintained an attitude of neutrality. The most important royal insignia that invoked great respect and veneration was the royal throne (*gaddi*). Generally, the throne was placed at a distance from the courtiers in an Indian court. It could also be on a platform as well. It was not just a place or a spot to seat the king. Even in the absence of the king, the throne was venerated and not occupied even by the members of the royal family. The *gaddi* could be a chair or an elaborate platform with cushions. The peacock throne was the famous throne of the Mughal period. Not just in the Mughal court, but in the courts of other Hindu native princes, the throne was an important royal insignia. In some of their courts, thrones were made of solid gold and with attached nine gold steps. Other symbols of royalty were umbrella (*chatr*), gold-cased peacock feathers (*morchal*), golden handled tails of yak (*chanwar*), golden sun-face borne on a long pole, gold and silver maces, shield and palanquin. Gold mace was an emblem of royalty and it was believed that gold warded off bad spirits. The *sinha mukha* or lion faced club symbolised royalty and justice. The waving of fly whisk or *chowri* made from yak’s tail was to cast off evil spirits revolving around

⁴² Ibid., p. 134.

the king. Spears with tassels were another emblem of royalty. The waving of *punkah* or fan drove away depression from the royal persona. The eye in the middle of the *morchal* or peacock feather protected the king from evil eye. The Delhi Durbars were the venues where these symbols of royalty were used by both the native princes and the British.

Another royal insignia was elephant. Elephant symbolised magnificence and pride. There are many references to elephants in Hindu mythology where Indra, the lord of *devaloka* rides a white elephant called *airavata*. It had four tusks, seven trunks and was white in colour. Drawing inspiration from their Gods, princes of India also rode on elephants. Elephant with golden *howdah* was symbol of prestige. Royal celebrations were marked by elephant fights. This was one symbol which the British appropriated. The Viceroy also had their own state elephants with golden *howdah*. In the Durbars of 1877 and 1903, Lord Lytton and Curzon arrived on an elephant. Other royal accoutrements were umbrella, yak tail standards, stick and mace bearers, spear-men and peacock plumes, which were elaborately used by the native princes as well as British officials in the pre-Revolt times.

The authority and supremacy of the British monarch were also visually presented through many symbols. Crown was an important insignia both for Indian and British traditions. Indian crowns varied from metals to cloth studded with precious stones or plumes. British attached great importance to the state crown. As part of the coronation of King George V at the Delhi Durbar of 1911, a new crown was designed called the Imperial Crown of India. As it was not permissible for the state crown to depart Britain, this particular one was specially designed with diamonds, rubies, emeralds and sapphires. Sceptre and orb were the other important symbols of British monarchy which marked the monarch as the defender of faith. Crown jewels and regalia, Great Seal, Royal Standard and Coats of Arms were the other markers of royalty.

1.4. Princely States of India

A discussion on colonial Indian rituals would be incomplete without mentioning princely states of India - the main target in the ritual enactment. The native princes constituted a large number of Indian invitees to the Durbars. Sir William Lee-Warner defines, "Native state is a political community, occupying a territory in India of defined boundaries, and subject to a common and responsible ruler who has actually enjoyed and exercised, as belonging to him in his own right duly recognised by the supreme authority

of the British Government, any of the functions and attributes of imperial sovereignty”.⁴³ Article 311 of the Government of India Act of 1935 defines princely states as “any territory, whether described as a state, an estate, a jagir or otherwise belonging to or under the suzerainty of a ruler who is under the suzerainty of His Majesty and not being part of British India”.⁴⁴ The attitude of the British towards these states had not been uniform. In fact, it varied with the changing political contexts and also with the personal disposition of the Viceroy. Many a time, the existing relationship was amended and redefined according to the changing contexts and exigencies. The areas that constituted the princely states were said to be under ‘Indirect Rule’ and their ruling kings were labelled ‘Ruling Chiefs’ or ‘Native Princes’ who were loyal allies to the British. The peaceful colonial experience in directly ruled India depended on camaraderie with the indirectly ruled India. Nevertheless, this attitude was not something that came up abruptly. It was something that evolved after going through its own phase of trial and error of various political arrangements. In fact, it can be said that such a policy was propounded after realizing that the princely states of India cannot be completely absorbed into British India. These states were observed as stagnant entities of administration, anachronistic kingdoms with despotic rulers who were a constant threat to the existence of the British Raj in India. But, history has shown that they were a threat only when their rights were challenged. The Revolt of 1857 stands testimony to it. Thus, it was important on the part of the British to develop a genuine policy which sustained the princely states without affecting the foundations of the British rule. India, at the time of independence had 562 states whereas some government documents showed more than 600.

Interpretation Act of 1889 defines British India as “all territories and places within Her Majesty’s dominions which are for the time being governed by Her Majesty through the Governor-General of India.” The territories outside the jurisdiction of Governor-General were princely states. But this did not mean that the British government did not have any powers over the princely states or the native princes enjoyed sovereignty without any interference from the British. The British at regular intervals interfered in the day-to-day activities of the state and even deposed the ruling princes from the throne on grounds of misgovernment. The princely states were territories ruled by a king who had hereditary rights over the throne. This signifies that the right to rule was a privilege of his ruling

⁴³ Sir William Lee-Warner, *The Native States of India*, London, 1910, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Claude Markovits (ed), *History of Modern India: 1480-1950*, London, 2002, pp. 386-387.

house even after the reigning ruler's death. In his state, he enjoyed all rights and powers entitled to a ruling monarch. Yet they were subordinate to the British. They could never take any measure that would upset the British. They were not kings, but princes according to the British nomenclature. According to the existing political situation, the rulers of these numerous states did not have the privilege of being addressed as kings as the only queen/king was the one who wore the British crown. These princes ruled like typical monarchs with a court, council of ministers and even possessed a small army. The legal practices varied according to customary laws or rested with the discretion of the princes. Some princes who were influenced by western ideas tried to adopt western models as well. Yet the administration and political system were primordial. It was mandatory for the inhabitants of these states called 'subjects' to obey the king, give due respect, remain loyal to him and pay the taxes. The office of the 'Resident' existed in various princely states in the name of sharing the power. It was the privilege and right of the British to watch over the state for its own welfare.

The size of the princely states varied. Some were bigger than a modern European state. The boundaries of princely states shrank and expanded according to the annexation of these by the British. Thus, the geographical distribution of princely states was like patches of territories interspersed in British India. Many of the states were economically backward, with a monarchical political system, and varied administrative and legal frameworks. Cohn identifies four levels of political system that existed in the eighteenth century – the imperial, secondary, regional and local.⁴⁵ Imperial, obviously, referred to the Mughals with their own ideology, symbols of legitimacy and army. The secondary level referred to those states which were rising in power following the deterioration of Mughal power. They could also be called successor states. The regional states were those individuals or families who were granted authority to administer by the first two levels of political system. The fourth was the local level which was called 'little kingdom'. This could be led by a man of distinction who turned into a local leader or chief due to his merit. These individuals or families of these individuals had considerable influence over the local population and were held in high esteem and respect in their eyes. Some even collected cash or were entitled to a share of the harvest. Though Cohn was studying the Benaras region, one can find the existence of these four levels in many parts of India. And

⁴⁵ Bernard. S. Cohn, 'Political Systems in Eighteenth Century India: The Banaras Region', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 82, No. 3. July-September, 1962, pp. 312-320.

it was these four levels that were represented at each of the Durbar called at Delhi, with the exception of imperial level. The imperial position was now taken over and occupied by the British. It was necessary for the British to appease the next three levels to avoid a rebellion similar to the lines of Revolt of 1857.

1.5. Nature of British policy towards Princely India

There is a major change in the attitude of the British in the post-1857 period. Before examining the changed policies, it is crucial to look at the policies that led to the evolution of paramountcy. Essentially, these were the policies that eventually defined the relationship between the British and the princely states and also made the British realize the relevance of indirect rule and the importance of having the latter as political allies.

1.5.1. Attitude before 1857

In this section I briefly trace the different policies that the British innovated and attempted with regard to different Indian states. These policies laid the foundation stone on which later relations were built, shaped and consolidated.

1.5.1.1. Policy of Ring Fence (1765-1818)

This system was followed specially in the initial days of the Raj in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. The British tried to maintain an insular 'ring fence' between their zones of operation and the princely states. The Company did make its own annexation, but became alert whenever they realized they were numerically weak. Yet, major battles were fought during this period. This phase was more of establishing a foothold in India and staying within its own territories and possessions. It is to be noted that the Resident's influence in the Indian courts in this period was at a minimal level, with the Resident himself accepting and adhering to the Indian ritual idiom as mentioned in the previous section.

1.5.1.2. Subsidiary Alliance System

The political arrangement of making alliance or entering into treaties was taken to a more accomplished stage by Lord Wellesley who arrived as the new Governor-General in 1798. With the signing of a subsidiary alliance pact, a native prince lost his sovereign power. The conditions of the alliance further encroached into the diplomatic relations that an Indian ruler maintained. Thus, the foundation of the concept of paramountcy was laid

down. The Nizam of Hyderabad was the first to sign a subsidiary alliance treaty. A British Resident was also installed in his court, though appointment of Residents was not a practice begun with this alliance. Warren Hastings, who consolidated the British hold in India, was the Resident at the Bengal capital, Murshidabad, in 1758. By now, as mentioned in section 1.3.1, the image of a British officer had already turned to that of a *nabob*.

1.5.1.3. Subordinate Isolation

The military achievements (Pindari war, third Anglo-Maratha war, Anglo-Nepalese war) in the period 1814 -1818, led to the emergence of the British as a dominant power in the Indian subcontinent. The concept of paramount power further got consolidated whereby all the annexed territories were made subordinate to the East India Company and the annexed states started accepting the British as the paramount power. By now, the hold of the Resident in the court and over the internal and external affairs of the state had turned rigid. The states could not appoint other European powers as advisors in the court, declare war or establish friendly relations with other states. The very sovereignty of these states was attacked. But at the same time, autonomy of states was accepted provided there were provisions for such an arrangement in the treaties signed. Annual tribute payments and maintenance of a British force within the state territories were the mandatory provisions and each prince was obliged to adhere to them.

1.5.1.4. Arrival of Dalhousie

The phases of annexation and subordinate isolation found a new vigour with the taking of charge by Lord Dalhousie as the new Governor - General of India and Governor of Bengal in 1848. The rapid expansion of the British between 1848-1856, added much discontent to Indians. Annexation of Punjab (1849), Second Burmese War (1852) and annexation of Awadh (1856) were the major developments during his period. Dalhousie had a particularly non-friendly attitude towards the states. The agenda pursued by him leads to a conclusion that he wanted the extinction of princely states and their early absorption into the political map of British India. He believed that misgoverned Indian states were an obstacle for the prospering British exports to India. When he implemented the Doctrine of Lapse, he was challenging the long-sanctioned tradition of India which accepted adopted heirs as rightful candidates to the throne equivalent to that of biological

offsprings. Citing this doctrine, states like Satara, Jaipur, Sambalpur, Jhansi, Udaipur and Nagpur were annexed by Dalhousie.

Dalhousie was very much interested in annexing the state of Awadh. The reigning ruler on the eve of annexation was Wajid Ali Shah. Doctrine of Lapse could not be used in this state's context as he had many heirs. Thus, an excuse of misgovernment was used as a pretext to annex Awadh in 1856 and Wajid Ali Shah was deposed and a new British Chief Commissioner was appointed whose new proprietary laws led to the dispossession of land of many zamindars and taluqdars who were the traditional elites of society. Thus, we find that all the four categories of influential people given by Cohn were affected by the British policies. The evangelical activities were also viewed with suspicion. Thus, Dalhousie took every step and tried to turn any political development as an opportunity to annex more and more princely states and add them to British India. He envisaged them as potential dangers to the integrity and security of British India. By now, Mughal power and empire had ceased to exist and the British were the *de facto* rulers of India. The nomenclature 'Empire' was now to be used only for the British territories in the East, which were now part of the British Empire. Thus, when one studies the political rituals in juxtaposition with the political developments, one finds that the rising prominence of British had a direct effect on the choreography and execution of ceremonies showcasing the subordinate status of princely states and the superior status of British. The depiction of British as the paramount power got a final touch in the canvas of rituals with the outbreak of the Revolt. This was clearly visible in the ritual enactment following the Queen's Proclamation of 1858.

1.5.2. The Revolt

The Revolt came as a major break in the history of British rule in India. It also brought a radical change in the way the British and Indians perceived each other. There is no denial of this fact that revolt came as a sudden shock to the British. It can also be said that when it sparked off in May 1857, they never expected the recalcitrant behaviour of sepoys to spread over north India at great speed and vigour. The sepoys also had the support of the masses. It is true that by 1856, the British had upset every section of Indian society due to their interference in the traditional economic and political framework.

The restoration of the Mughal rule was one of the objectives of the revolters. The sepoys marched to Delhi, declared the 83 year old king Bahadur Shah Zafar, who was a

pensioner of the Company, as their leader. In this manner, the insurgents were challenging the authority of the British and openly announcing the establishment of the old monarchical rule. By announcing the Mughal king as the leader, they were bestowing on their revolt a symbolic figure around whom they could gather and fight. This act in itself showed the influence exerted by the Mughals on the popular imagination of the people. Of course, it was a fact that the ruling house of the Mughals was reduced to a state devoid of any real power. Yet, the pomp and the ceremonies of their heyday were still vivid in the minds of the people. The same was the case with princely India as “the Chiefs of India, whether Mahomedan or Hindoo, had still continued to regard the sanction given to their successions by that shadow of royalty as something more assuring than any recognition which could come from the substance of the British Government”.⁴⁶ Delhi became the nucleus of all rebel activities and more and more soldiers joined them. The spread of the news of the rebelling soldiers led to confusion in many other places leading to a civil rebellion of peasants in the areas around Awadh.

The Revolt was a grievous threat that the British faced ever since the occupation of India. It was so enormous in magnitude that it brought administrative, military and ideological changes in the decades following its suppression. It was a matter of deliberation and analysis not just in India, but in Britain as well. The horrifying stories of murder and blood created waves of shock and insecurity with regard to the safety of the British nationals in a ‘savage’ land. The British historians depicted the uprising as a mutiny of sepoys who went on a killing spree and rape. John William Kaye, the British historian and civil servant, wrote:

“And the night was a night of horror such as History has rarely recorded... Everywhere, from the European quarters, from the bungalow of the English officers, from the mess houses and other public buildings, from the residencies of the unofficial Christian community, the flames were seen to rise which were suspended in the still sultry air...The scared inhabitants of the burning buildings-the women and children and non-combatants - sought safety in the gardens and out-houses, whither they were often tracked by the insurgents, and shot down or cut to pieces. Some fled in the darkness,

⁴⁶ John William Kaye, *A History of the Great Revolt, Volume II*, Delhi, 1988, (First published in 1878), p. 2.

and found asylums in such places as had escaped the fury of the incendiaries. Some were rescued by Native servants or soldiers, faithful among the faithless, who, in memory of past kindness, strove to save the lives of their white masters at the peril of their own”.⁴⁷

The English language newspapers reported the events of the Revolt highlighting violence committed by the Indians. The extent of colonial violence during the revolt was also alarming. The public outcry over the atrocities committed on Britons by the Indians actually triggered a vengeful reaction of the British towards the mutineers and civilians. Stories of massacring women and children influenced the way British and Indians perceived each other. Racial antagonism widened and the groups viewed each other with suspicion. The social interaction between the two diminished and the British now with a changed attitude began to accentuate Britishness and British identity. Incidents of attack on churches and Christians were also reported. The ‘dishonour’ of women on either side further infuriated both the British and Indians.

1.5.3. Attitude in the post-Revolt period

When the Revolt was finally repressed, one of the most important steps that the British took was to abolish the Mughal dynasty which still held esteem and reverence in the minds of the people. Though the Revolt was brought under control, it did bring a lot of changes which decided how India was to be ruled in the future. The British had already worked out a scheme whereby the Mughal king “was more than a pensioner, a pageant, and a puppet, and yet less than the substance of a sovereign. He was to a King and yet no King- something and yet nothing - a reality and a sham at the same time”.⁴⁸ This arrangement was altered after the suppression of the Revolt. The Mughal king Bahadur Shah Zafar was humiliated, brought before a court of trial, found guilty of treason and was deported to Rangoon. His sons were murdered with an intention of averting another rebellious upheaval and also to obliterate any further claims to the Mughal throne. The symbolic figure of the Mughal as a source of power was annihilated. The question of the dissolution of titular Mughal king was something that had come up earlier too. There were plans of shifting the royal family from Delhi to Monghyr during the days of Lord

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 67-68.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

Wellesley in 1804-5. But, the plan was not put into action and Lord Wellesley allowed Shah Alam and the royal family to live in the Delhi Palace. The practice of paying *nazar* to the king was already banned and a further restriction was put on the right of the Mughals and other native princes to grant titles. The relationship between the British and the princely states was already changing and the Revolt paved way for it to completely remould into a relationship of subordination and dependence of the latter on the former. Another major impact of the Revolt was the termination of the East India Company and the transfer of power to the monarch of Great Britain. Though the revolt failed to displace the British rule, it demonstrated the flaws in the Company's administration of India. The ambiguity revolving around the status of India in the British administration of the East was cleared. India was now part of the British Empire. The act for the better government of India passed on August 1, 1858, declared Queen Victoria as the new sovereign of India.

An attempt was made in the pre-Revolt period to liberate India from many of the evil practices sanctioned by its religion. But the revolt demonstrated that any effort to reform Indian religious practices, customs and traditions could prove fatal to the British rule in India. Thus, no religious and social reforms were initiated in the post-Revolt period. Metcalf terms this shift in policy as 'conservative brand of liberalism'.⁴⁹ The changed attitude was also reflected in the relationship with the princely states. The British now realized that Indians were to be ruled according to their own traditions. Thus, with the taking of charge of Queen Victoria, India was attached to the larger framework of imperial hierarchy which guaranteed and accepted the privileges and positions of all the four categories classified by Cohn. The new structure was pyramidal with the Viceroy at the apex, who directly represented the Crown, and the next strata occupied by high officials of the government. The next level was occupied by the native princes.

Though the British rule was now in the 'conservative brand of liberalism', the government became more authoritarian with all cautionary measures. The changed attitude was experienced in all the spheres of administration and imperial imagination had further ramifications, percolating into the ritual idiom of the British. It is in this context that traditions are redefined as suggested by Eric Hobsbawm. One finds a revamp of political rituals which had by now become the constructed area of power. The rituals and ceremonies clearly and non-violently demonstrated the British authority, superiority and

⁴⁹ Thomas. R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857-1870*, Princeton, 1964, p. viii.

paramountcy. The Durbars called at Delhi demonstrated British as the new source of authority which could warn, punish, honour and reward its Indian subjects. The British viewed India as different layers and the ethnographic undertaking and studies further shaped and objectified these layers. The Durbars were the venues where these layers were represented.

The British suppressed the Revolt with an iron hand. It exhibited the military might of the British in possession of sophisticated weapons, able commanding officers and meticulous planning. Added to these factors was the no less important factor – the support of the princely states. While one group of states revolted against the British, another group supported them. The support provided was so significant that Lord Canning called them ‘breakwaters in the storm’. The Sikh state of Punjab and the state of Jammu and Kashmir offered considerable help to the British in suppressing the Revolt. The loyalty expressed by them was generously rewarded in the post-Revolt period. Retaining the native princes at their place with retention of their privileges and insignia was the new policy that the British followed.

The understanding of Lord Canning (1856-1862) also played a great role in the reversal of policies. His deep analysis made him realise that territorial expansion was a major cause for the rebellious behaviour. The support rendered by the native princes also led to the comprehension of this fact that they can be of great support during a crisis and thus the British understood the necessity to acknowledge and reinstate them. This was clearly visible in the Queen’s proclamation of November 1, 1858 which promised to respect the rights and privileges of the Indian princes. This promise had much deeper meanings to it. It meant that the various Indian ruling houses or dynasties would not be disturbed and their right to rule their territories would not be challenged as long as they accepted the paramountcy of the British. The adoption *sanads* issued also assured the continuance of their dynasties.

But this did not mean that the British would never interfere in the affairs of the princely states. It is a fact that annexation of territories did not happen after 1858 till independence in 1947. But, whenever they found an opportunity, they interfered in the affairs of the states. The shift in the policy did not indicate that the princes would be treated as partners in the administration of India. The government at regular intervals checked the various activities of the states like taxes, construction of railway lines, minting

of money and even princes travelling abroad. The relationship with princely states also varied with the personal disposition of the Viceroys. In the post-Revolt period and before the rise of nationalism, the two viceroys who interfered or showed a constant interest in the matters of princely states were Lord Lytton and Lord Curzon. In fact, “intervention in the affairs of the states reached its apogee in the first decade of the new century during the stormy viceroyalty of Lord Curzon (1898-1905)”.⁵⁰ The programme of summoning a large scale Durbar with native princes as invitees was inaugurated by Lytton. Curzon, who believed in the imperial mission of Britain, in all possible ways, reminded the subordinate position of the native princes in his Durbar, which was called ‘Curzonian Durbar’ due to the over-shadowing role he played in it. “Curzon in fact had little respect for the princes whom he believed were devoid of intelligence and sense of duty, and obsessed by their concern for appearance”.⁵¹ Now the question arises, if native princes were an ineffective entity, what was the necessity of appeasing them in ceremonial space even during Curzon’s period of viceroyalty? To this one can possibly answer that though ineffective, they were potential agents who could raise a banner of revolt against the British. Thus, it was of great significance to appease howsoever British condemned them as incompetent and ineffective. The controversial Partition of Bengal also influenced the link between the government and the princely states. The partition triggered nationalist sentiments and agitation on an unprecedented scale. With the departure of Curzon, it was obvious that in the wake of the rising tide of nationalism, it was the same princely states which could be utilized as a counterpoise against the nationalists. In the post-1903 period, i.e., after the second Delhi Durbar, conservatism was further deepened and India witnessed one more pageant, the Durbar of 1911. Curzon was followed by Lord Minto as the next Viceroy. Understanding the turbulent situation amidst rising nationalism, Minto immediately reversed Curzon’s policy of interference and announced non-interference as his new initiative. “The Political Department was advised not to interfere in the internal affairs of the princes, except if the abuses or shortcomings of their administrations resulted in the flagrant violation of the ‘fundamental laws of civilization’.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire: 1917-1947*, Cambridge, 1997, p. 20.

⁵¹ Markovits (ed), *History of Modern India*, p. 392.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 396.

Another significant change that was clearly visible in the colonial project was that colonial sociology or colonial knowledge was getting more clearly outlined and shaped, according to British perceptions and definitions. The British already had an understanding of the Indian society in the pre-Revolt days. But this achieved a direction and purpose in the post-Revolt days focussing the native princes as the locus of indirect rule. “After 1858, colonial knowledge specifically targeted the princes and their states”.⁵³ The exact number of native princes was enlisted with information on their caste, clan, territorial extension, resources and population. Every single detail was collected and documented. This information was further ordered by a tabular statement of gun salutes that they received. In this hierarchical set-up, each prince was assigned gun salutes according to their ‘prominence’. This prominence was determined according to the history of the ruling house, its ties with the Mughal Empire, population, territorial extent and ‘loyal’ service to the British. These gun salutes decided the kind of privileges that they were entitled to in a ritual context. The monarch of Great Britain received a gun salute of 101. Viceroy received 31 gun salvos. The tabular statement showing gun salutes received by the native princes are depicted in chapter 3. Along with regularisation of gun salutes, rules were laid down regarding the protocol to be followed when the native princes and high British officials met in a formal way. These formal meetings were always marked with ceremonies, if not on an elaborate Durbar scale. Therefore, the logistics of the building, where they met, ceremonies to be followed, number of attendants that can be brought, seating arrangement, where a prince sat or stood and the manner in which he could greet the monarch or the representative of the monarch were all strictly laid down. Any breach of protocol was considered to be challenging British authority and was severely rebuked. The native princes wholeheartedly participated in the ceremonies as some of them considered it as a matter of pride to be part of the ceremonies and they were also aware of the changed political situation where their sustenance depended on maintenance of friendly relations with the British, even if it was in the status of a subordinate. There were instances when princes themselves demanded special treatment like extra gun salutes or precedence in seating when they found other states accruing benefits and recognition from the government. Cohn propounded a contradictory theory of rule in the post-Revolt period whereby on the one hand the British continued to maintain a feudal order and on the other hand, they anticipated changes that would finally destroy the same feudal order.

⁵³ Barbara Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, Cambridge, 2004, p. 88.

There is no doubt about this fact that the British tried to maintain a medieval feudal image for princely India, at least in ceremonial ambience. The status that a vassal held in medieval European society was entirely different from what the British were trying to superimpose over princely India. A vassal in medieval Europe had to manage, protect and guard the manor that was allotted to him by his feudal lord. They had authority and control over land. Along with these duties, he also had to attend the court of the feudal lord and pay obeisance to him. As part of declaring his allegiance, he promised his lifelong loyal service to the overlord. This was called Oath of Fealty. The oath taken was “I promise on my faith that I will in the future be faithful to the lord, never cause him harm and will observe my homage to him completely against all persons in good faith and without deceit.” This oath was taken in a particular ceremony called commendation ceremony. The two main segments of this ceremony were Oath of Fealty and Act of Homage. After the completion of these two ceremonies, both the vassal and the lord entered into a contractual relationship whereby the latter promised to protect the former and the former promised his unswerving loyalty and his willingness to fight for the latter’s cause. In the Indian context, the British imported the same middle ages ceremonies to India in the second half of the nineteenth century and incorporated the princely states of India into a feudal relationship, whereas the native states were more than a manor in character and nature. Though tied in a feudal relationship, the native princes did not have any actual right as enjoyed by a vassal. A vassal was in charge of his manor. But a native prince was always watched over and if found of any imperfection, the British never missed an opportunity to depose him from the throne. Thus, the native princes were neither vassals nor partners in the administration. A new relationship of ‘patron and client’ was established within the feudal framework.⁵⁴ Durbars were the proper places where this changed relationship was symbolically endorsed. Thus, one finds that in the post-Revolt period, British rule became more authoritarian yet conservative with varying degrees of interference and non-interference in the affairs of the states.

1.6. Academic Writings on Durbars

There exists a vast literature on the Durbars. The academic writings on Durbars are predominantly available as articles in journals, essays and chapters in works that chiefly focus on the history of modern India and the princely states. Durbars have been analysed

⁵⁴ Collingam, p. 131.

from different perspectives. One group of writers discusses them as part of the changed political agenda in the post-Revolt period. Another group discusses them as part of political rituals and ceremonies that happened during the zenith of the British Empire. There are also articles by writers who focus only on the three durbars. In this section, I discuss these academic and professional historical writings.

1.6.1. Academic Writings on the Durbars in general

Mihir Kumar Ray traces the factors that helped the growth and development of the historical process whereby the princely states were transformed from the status of independent powers to that of dependent and subordinate ones.⁵⁵ He considers the Mutiny or more precisely the year 1858 as a ‘Great Divide’ in the history of British relations with the princely states. With the transfer of power to the Crown, the nature of relationship that existed between the Company and the states changed, carving out the pre-Mutiny and post-Mutiny periods as distinct periods. In every possible way, the theory of the paramountcy of the British Crown was upheld and practised. Lord Canning’s adoption *sanad* legalised the right of adoption on the condition of loyalty of the princely states to the Crown, the new title of Empress of India brought all the states within the British Empire and made their rulers vassals or feudatories of the British Sovereign. He perceives the Mutiny as a blessing in disguise for the ‘loyal’ Indian princes as well as for the British authorities. “It was a blessing for the princes because they could prove their wholehearted loyalty to the British inspite of their policy of territorial aggrandisement. On the other hand, it was only during this great crisis that the authorities both in India and England realised the imperative need of ‘perpetuating’ these patches of ‘native states’ for the safety of their own empire”.⁵⁶ The result was the famous Proclamation of the Queen which reversed the Company’s policy of annexation by a definite promise of non-extension of the current territorial possessions. He also emphasizes that during the Crown’s administration, British paramountcy over the states was made explicit while during the days of the Company, it was only implicit.

With the transfer of power, the nature of the relationship between the state and the Crown changed whereby the new relationship was to be guided by the express terms of the treaties. Relationship based on equality gave way to ‘subordinate co-operation’,

⁵⁵ Mihir Kumar Ray, *Princely States and the Paramount Power: A Study on the nature of political relationship between the British Government and the Indian State*, New Delhi, 1981.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

‘allegiance’, and ‘loyalty’ on the part of the princes to the Crown. Ray envisages the Royal Titles Act as a step for legalising the Crown’s paramountcy over the princes. The political justification given to this addition to the royal style and title was the recognition of the transfer of government from the East India Company to the Crown. Prime Minister Disraeli claimed this as a step which would give great satisfaction to the princes and the peoples of India. The author brings to our notice the new way of referring to India as a ‘part’ of the Queen’s ‘Empire’, and the use of the new term ‘Imperial Throne’. Ray details the opposition which this particular bill initially faced both in the Parliament and in the press. Actually, the term ‘Empress’ drew much criticism and was considered to tarnish the good old title of King and Queen as it had an association with force, violence and debauchery.

A breakthrough in the study of Durbars was made by Bernard. S. Cohn through his seminal article, ‘Representing Authority in Victorian India’. He elaborates a theory of authority which was codified on the basis of ideas and assumptions about the proper ordering of groups in Indian society and their relationship to their British rulers. This theory was supplemented by rituals like Durbars wherein political authority was re-established. He gives a picture of how these rituals differed from the Mughal rituals or rather how the British re interpreted or re-enacted the rituals which manifested a new meaning. Rituals of incorporation were now rituals marking subordination. With this theoretical support, he looks at the Delhi Durbar of 1877 through the prism of symbolic-cultural constitution of India which is completed by the suppression of the uprising. He asserts that the Durbar manifested existing colonial sociology, how the British structured the social order in India and who were the prominent or non-prominent groups of that time. Cohn’s narration is focused on the British construction of authority and its representations which in the Durbar had more of a feudal undertone.

K.M.Panikkar shows the changed position and status of the princely states after the Mutiny and the subsequent assumption of direct sovereignty of British India by the Crown.⁵⁷ “From the foreign and independent allies of a sovereign corporation, the great States found themselves transferred to the protection of the Crown of England, whose authority over them was boldly and frankly announced and pressed with the unquestioned authority of irresistible military power”.⁵⁸ The Mutiny did play an important role in

⁵⁷ K.M.Panikkar, *Indian States and the Government of India*, Delhi, 1985.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

changing the nature of relation that existed between the states and British power. There developed a new relation of paramountcy and subordination whereby the British had a moral responsibility over the native states; and it could annex territories on the pretext of misgovernment, disloyalty of ruler and strategic considerations. Now, the dependent position of the states became clearer, which was further consolidated through a pseudo-feudal theory which stated that the rights of the Mughal Emperor had been transferred to the British due to the displacement of the *Padshah* at Delhi following the mutiny. This theory found its pompous expression in the new title of *Kaiser-i-Hind* which was proclaimed at the Durbar of 1877. "The imagination of Disraeli and the love of colour and extravagance of Disraeli were satisfied with the pomp and pageantry of an assemblage of princes as the world had never seen before".⁵⁹ In this changed context of the constitutional position of the native states, their 'feudatory' character was emphasised by various Viceroys. The policy of conducting imperial Durbars was part of this agenda which demanded allegiance of the Indian rulers to the British Crown. Other rights claimed and enforced by the British Government were the assumption and bestowal of titles, honours, salutes and precedence. Durbars were the venues where honours were granted in abundance. Panikkar disagrees with the feudal theory and considers it to be false.

Mark Bence-Jones in his account traces the history of the pageants in India and opines that the splendours and ceremonies that took place in India were due to the able administrators like viceroys and governors.⁶⁰ He states that the founder of all these splendours was Lord Wellesley who was the Governor-General of India from 1798 to 1805. Wellesley himself was fond of ceremonies and entered the office in a ceremonial manner with staff and bodyguard. He also used many Indian symbols of royalty like gold and silver maces, sticks, peacock fans and *chowri* (whisk made of yak's tail). His account mainly talks about how British associated grand buildings to the offices that they held. The new Government House in Calcutta was constructed in a palatial manner to match the Governor-General's dignity. From buildings he moves on to the grand tours and the Durbars during the British rule. While travelling, the British constructed tents of canvas which were no less than extravaganza. "The camps of Viceroys and Governors were

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 29.

⁶⁰ Mark Bence-Jones, 'Splendours of the Raj', *Journal of the Society of Arts*, Vol.132, No. 5332, February 1984, pp. 155- 170. This account was a lecture delivered as part of the Sir Birdwood Memorial Lecture, 1983.

veritable canvas cities, palaces under canvas, with Durbar tents and other large tents for reception rooms, smaller tents for sitting rooms and bedrooms joined by canvas corridors”.⁶¹ He refers to the three Durbars in his article which were summoned on an elaborate scale.

C.A.Bayly analyses a changed attitude of the British by the 1870s, “government was concerned to soothe and cajole the great magnates of the countryside and the princes who had wavered during the crisis of 1857”.⁶² They elaborated a royal cult and the language of feudal loyalty among the princes. He continues, “this trend culminated in the Delhi Durbar of 1877 when Victoria was proclaimed Queen Empress and princes and people were ranked and honoured by the principles of a peculiar amalgamation of Anglo-Norman and Mughal conception of race and royalty”.⁶³

Alan Trevithick opines that the three durbars summoned at Delhi were political rituals with an intention of legitimising and popularising British rule in India.⁶⁴ He perceives in these assemblages the execution of important agenda which was the maintenance of inequality. By giving an analysis of the ideological reasons behind the Durbars, he surveys the Indian reaction depicted in vernacular newspapers which was primarily negative. Trevithick also gives an evaluation of the viceroys who played a major role behind these ceremonies. He calls Lytton as a ‘classic political manipulator’ who believed in the power of rituals.⁶⁵ He examines how Lytton, Curzon and Hardinge were careful to avoid the presentation of these rituals as empty. Hence they accompanied these with bestowal of titles, banners and other concessions. Trevithick notes that Curzon had so much faith in the rituals that he considered these to be the foundation stones of the British Indian Empire. Hardinge was more popular than Curzon and his Durbar also had a great attendance. He agrees with Cohn’s proposition that there was an attempt by the British in the second half of the nineteenth century to build a ritual idiom through which British authority was to be manifested before Indians. He adds that the targeted group of these Durbars were the illiterate population of India. They aimed to achieve this through the

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 160-161.

⁶² C.A.Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 196-197.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 197.

⁶⁴ Alan Trevithick, ‘Some Structural and Sequential Aspects of the British Imperial Assemblages at Delhi: 1877-1911’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1990, pp. 561-578.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 562.

agency of native princes. However, his account concludes on the note that there was no proof to certify whether these three durbars achieved the results that were foreseen by the viceroys.

The article by Douglas Haynes tries to investigate the attitude of the people outside princely states towards political rituals.⁶⁶ By choosing Surat, a district in the Gujarat region of the Bombay Presidency, he throws light on the elite participation of this region in rituals. Based on the documents of the Surat municipality, he confirms that the participation of native gentlemen in various ceremonies summoned by the government was very high. He states that the ceremonial aspects of rituals in this area were expressed in three forms before the outbreak of World War I – Addresses to imperial visitors, durbars organised by collector and ritual exercises of local elites.⁶⁷ The Delhi Durbars of 1903 and 1911 had their own effects in Surat where the city participated in the celebrations actively. Haynes underlines the fact that participation of Indians in various ceremonies contributed to the establishment and shaping of the British authority.

Thomas R. Metcalf in his book examines durbars as part of the British agenda of creating difference.⁶⁸ He elaborates on how Henry Maine came up with the analytical notion that India and Britain had a common inception and yet they were different. The emphasis was on difference rather than similarity. This difference had to be elaborated to serve the colonial agenda. India's history and society had to be pictured as different from Britain's history, which had advanced and reached modernity. For this, it was essential that India was portrayed as 'feudal' and 'medieval'. The medieval idea of hierarchical society was envisioned for India. "Medievalism thus sustained the Raj not just by portraying India as itself a 'medieval' society of hierarchy and deference, but by holding forth an ideal of benevolent paternalism derived from ostensibly 'medieval' virtues".⁶⁹ Metcalf points out that it was within the agenda of medievalism that the Durbar of 1877 was summoned to illustrate the difference. Lytton took every step to give it a medieval image through its decorations. By showing to the world the peculiar nature of Indian society, the British tried to give a concrete mould to the agenda of 'difference'. The various orders and titles

⁶⁶ Douglas Haynes, 'Imperial Ritual in a Local Setting: The Ceremonial Order in Surat, 1890-1939', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, July, 1990, pp. 493-527.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 501.

⁶⁸ Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge, New Delhi, 1995.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

created an institutional framework to his Durbar. But this was reversed by Curzon during his Durbar. By giving an Indo-saracenic design, he tried to show India in indigenous representative symbols. Metcalf adds that though efforts were made to insert India into a medieval feudal vision, there was no corresponding position for the native princes within the colonial ideology. Metcalf opines that preservation of these native princes helped in reasserting the agenda of India's distinctive and different nature.

David Cannadine affirms that the British always had an image of hierarchy and that was how the British saw their society and preferred it to be.⁷⁰ "Hierarchy, it bears repeating, homogenized the heterogeneity of empire. Indeed, there were important ways in which, from within the metropolis, this vision of empire was encouraged and prompted, so as to make it more coherent and convincing. One such means was by the expansion and codification of the honours system".⁷¹ He describes the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to be periods of 'unprecedented honorific inventiveness'.⁷² As the British Empire expanded, more honours were created and awarded. He traces its beginning to 1868 when Disraeli's first government was in power. In the case of India, 'The Most Exalted Order of the Star of India' was established in 1861, 'The Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire' was inaugurated in 1878 and the 'Imperial Order of the Crown of India' was instituted in the same year. The explicit purpose of these orders was to unify the Government and the ruling princes. He draws our attention to the fact that the British were concerned with ceremony which they entertained very much in the form of splendid occasions. The creation and performance of public ceremonials were elaborately grand and royal. Thus, David Cannadine gives a picture of the British maintenance of hierarchical vision through ornamental spectacles and views imperialism as a vehicle that enabled them to replicate and export their own hierarchical social structure to their colonies.

Another work which added a new perspective to the study of Durbars was E.M. Collingham's. She examines how body was used by the British as a space for demonstrating authority. She elaborates the body of the British undergoing different phases, beginning from the Indianized body to Anglicized body and then finally to the evolution of the body of the British as an implement of authority. She points to a changed

⁷⁰ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire*, London, 2001.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 85.

⁷² Ibid.

attitude of the British in the post-Revolt period which led to a new realization among them of their elevated position as an imperial power and a superior race. Based on this conception, she argues that this ushered in a new style of ruling where a 'theatrical ceremonial style was developed which employed and developed the body' of the British official as an instrument of rule.⁷³ Body as an apparatus of authority was demonstrated in the ritual space of Durbars through the bodily demeanour of British and native princes in the Durbars. New rules of body language were developed which redefined how a subordinate can touch the body of the one representing authority. Western way of shaking hands replaced the old way of greeting through embrace and holding hands. The bow, salutation, curtsy and kneeling down which the native princes performed in the Durbars underlined their subordinate status. The touch factor, when altered, affected the whole meaning of the Durbar making it very impersonal. With the new body etiquette, the function of the Durbar was also re-interpreted. "It was no longer the site where power relationships between two people were cemented but rather a place where the relationship between abstract entities was symbolically enacted".⁷⁴ Durbars were now areas where subordination and dependent status were emphasised through bodily gestures of deference. Collingham also mentions the establishment of a feudal relationship through the new ritual enactment which further enabled the British to create a group of Indian allies.

Denis Judd in his work emphasizes the period 1858-1905 as a period where the British rule reached its pinnacle.⁷⁵ Constrained within a conservative frame, the British elaborated 'more self-assertive splendour and ceremonial than previously'.⁷⁶ He adds that this was a new strategy of British announcing to the Indians that they are the rightful ones to rule India and they would remain so 'as long as either ruled or rulers could imagine'.⁷⁷

Tracing the history of the princely states of India, Barbara Ramusack in her exhaustively researched work states that right from the days of the East India Company, the British realised the existence and the dominance of princely states in the Indian sub-

⁷³ Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, p. 128.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 131.

⁷⁵ Denis Judd, *The Lion and the Tiger: The Rise and Fall of the British Raj, 1600- 1947*, New Delhi, 2004.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 92.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

continent. It was necessary for the British to maintain either friendly or hostile relations with them to establish a strong foothold in India. Similar to the typology put forward by Cohn, Ramusack also categorises states into three groups – the antique, successor and warrior or conquest states. Antique states constituted those states that were in existence prior to the establishment of Mughal rule. They were mostly Rajput states. Successor states were those that rose to prominence due to the deterioration of Mughal power. Warrior or conquest states were those that formed due to their efforts in protecting the local inhabitants from external intruders and enemies. Travancore and Mysore in the south, Sikh state of the Punjab and Maratha confederacy fall in the third category. She also agrees with Collingham's proposition that a 'patron-client' relationship was established in the post-Revolt period.

In the article of Hira Singh, one finds a different standpoint on Durbars. More significantly, it questions the previous interpretations of scholars.⁷⁸ The existing scholarship till now has focussed more on the reasons behind the agenda of summoning Durbars. Hira Singh calls the durbars as 'colonial *tamasha*' which were politically conditioning the colonial state into Indian tradition. He rejects Cohn's characterization of political rituals falling within the 'invention of traditions' phase. Instead he argues that the Durbars were not invented tradition, but were appropriated Indian traditions.

Julie Codell in her article briefly describes the three Durbars and elaborates how the British expropriated durbar as a ritual of subordination.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, she reminds that the Durbars convoked in India were not the usual coronations that happened in Britain. The bilingual used in durbars – English and Urdu gave the rituals the nature of a 'transcultural stagings'. By borrowing from British and Indian ceremonies, the British used Durbars as a medium to distract the eyes of the natives from the real problems. She adds a completely new point to the study of Durbars by stating that these "coronation durbars anticipated modern fascist rallies in their scale and staging of imperial politics".⁸⁰ The

⁷⁸ Hira Singh, 'Colonial and Postcolonial Historiography and the Princely States: Relations of Power and Rituals of Legitimation', Waltraud Ernst & Biswamoy Pati (eds), *India's Princely States: People, Princes and Colonialism*, London, 2007.

⁷⁹ Julie Codell, 'On the Delhi Coronation Durbars, 1877, 1903, 1911', http://www.branchcollective.org/?page_id=7, *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History* (ed), Dino Franco Felluga, *Extension of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net Web*, pp.1-10, Accessed on February 5, 2015.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

present efforts to restore the venue of the three Durbars are part of revoking British Indian period of history for promoting tourism, she adds. She foresees that the availability of all documents related to the Durbars is all part of the present tendency of neo-imperialism.

In the context of these divergent thoughts, it can be said that the British gave special importance to their own position as successor state to the Mughal Empire through elaborate ceremonies. It encouraged the native princes to preserve aristocratic lifestyles in order to emphasize their pre-eminent status at the top of their local social hierarchies. By demonstrating their magnificence and power through these political rituals and ceremonies, the British hoped to establish their superior position by creating an aura of awe and thereby control the native population.

1.6.2. Academic Writings on 1877 Durbar

Gurmukh Nihal Singh finds a new legal position for the Indian rulers after exploring the underlying intention behind the passing of the Royal Titles Act (1876) in his book.⁸¹ By the Act, the title of Queen became “Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen Defender of the Faith and Empress.” He asserts that it brought the Indian states inside the boundary of the Indian Empire and changed the legal position of the Indian Rulers from Allies of the Paramount Power to Subordinate Princes within the Empire. Another aspect which he discusses is that convening of an Assemblage of a comprehensive and grand character suggested to the national workers, the holding of all-India conferences and of organising a national institution on an all India scale. He agrees with A.C.Mazumdar’s characterisation of this Durbar as truly a blessing in disguise because the idea of a United India was presented by a spectacular demonstration. However, he says that the holding of this Durbar was greatly resented by the people because India was then in the grip of a severe famine.

In S.Gopal’s work, we find a paradigm shift from the emphasis on feudatory mode of relationship between crown and native states to the ideas and aspirations of the British parties and statesmen.⁸² It is in this Conservative agenda that he discusses Disraeli’s scheme of declaring Queen Victoria the ‘Empress of India’, a scheme to provide his

⁸¹ Gurmukh Nihal Singh, *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development, 1600 to 1919, Vol.I*, Delhi, 1952.

⁸² S.Gopal, *British Policy in India: 1858-1905*, Cambridge, 1965.

concept of imperialism with a symbol. He explains the parliamentary proceedings with regard to the Royal Titles Bill and the Liberal opposition to it. He considers the grand Durbar as an occasion to strengthen the loyalty of the princes as the aristocracy exercised a powerful influence over the rest of the native population. However, he asserts that the Imperial Assemblage had little political consequence. His work is also devoid of native reaction to the event. He portrays Lord Lytton as ‘volatile, a man of warmth and wit’⁸³ who ‘took Disraeli’s imaginative fancies too seriously.’⁸⁴

Vijay Chandra Prasad Chaudhary comes with a clear picture of the Indian reaction in the vernacular newspapers.⁸⁵ He considers the seventies of nineteenth century as a germinal period in the history of Indian politics and administration and perceives Imperial Assemblage as a result of the imperial policy of British which created a new class of educated Indians and a new class of small capitalists. Both these classes constituted the Indian middle class whose interests were in direct conflict with those of imperial and native aristocratic interests. The rise of these Indian middle classes synchronized with the upsurge of vernacular newspapers with the capitalists investing the money and the educated middle class investing their brains. Therefore, it was necessary for the British to create an allied bond with the native aristocracy against the middle class and Imperial Assemblage was an attempt to achieve it. He describes the various strategies adopted by the British to win the favour of native princes. This included the proposal for the establishment of Privy Council; presentation of gold and silver medals, silken banners and gun salutes; increase of pay of the army; release of prisoners and extension of the Order of British India.

In his opinion, Lord Lytton wanted the Imperial Assemblage to be held with pomp and splendour which would demonstrate the fealty of the natives to the British government and acknowledge the paramountcy of the Empire. Other than the proclamation of the title, he unfolds before us two motives for the holding of the Assemblage. “Troops from Asia were to be withdrawn from the Russian Front and thus safety in Central Asia depended vitally on the co-operation of the Native States; secondly there was a serious famine and more imperial taxes required to be levied. He (Lord Lytton) thought that through the Delhi Durbar the Government of India would enter into personal contact in their advice and co-

⁸³ Ibid., p. 125.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 120.

⁸⁵ V.C.P.Chaudhary, *Imperial Policy of British in India*, Calcutta, 1968.

operation with respect to the new taxes, measures of economy by way of retrenchment and problems of famine administration”.⁸⁶

He gives a mixed background of the hostile criticism and encouragement to the Assemblage as depicted in the vernacular newspapers and gives an account of the expenditure on the event. He even challenges the idea of an exclusive title for India which underlines class and racial bias. “If it was an indication of her soft feeling for India- a goodwill gesture, could she disown having even softer feelings for Australia and Canada without having assumed any special title for them”?⁸⁷ He raises the question as to how can Queen Victoria be the Empress of India when British did not possess the entire geographical area of India which had within it the native states, independent State of Nepal and the Portuguese and the French possessions.

He unfolds before the reader the various ideological underpinnings of this event and asserts the new title to be an encroachment into the sovereignty of the native states. He understands the Assemblage to be nothing but a huge and costly affair to confirm the mere continuation of the old policy of racial discrimination and economic exploitation. Nevertheless, it had a positive impact. For the first time, in the history of India, natives from different walks of life and of political background assembled in large numbers at Delhi. “This meeting together gave them the feeling of unity and the vision of one India”.⁸⁸ He gives us a figure of the total expenses of the Assemblage to be approximately Rs. 7,30,000 as figures obtained from different sources and do not give an exact idea of the amount spent. Thus, he considers this event to be a *tamasha* held at a fabulous cost in the midst of famine and severe financial crisis.

O.P.Singh Bhatia affirms that the underlying idea of proclaiming Queen Victoria as the Empress of India was to impress upon the Indians the closeness of their connection with England and also the vassalage of the native rulers to the Queen who had by then assumed the position of the Mughal Emperor of India.⁸⁹ However, he also condemns the Viceroy’s idea of conducting an Assemblage amidst a famine which had swept across the western and southern India. “It is a pity that the Viceroy thought of winning the hearts of

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 82.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

⁸⁹ O.P.Singh Bhatia, *History of India: 1857-1916*, New Delhi, 1968.

the people by holding grand Durbars when he should have saved their lives by adopting proper relief measures”.⁹⁰

Another account which explores the parliamentary proceedings behind the assumption of the new title is an article by L.A.Knight.⁹¹ He underlines this assumption as part of the consolidation of the Indian Empire after the Revolt. This process was manifested in the honorific classification of Indian nobility. “It was only in the course of the preparations for proclaiming the title on the first day of 1877 that the Indian Government, recovered from its surprise, suggested that the occasion might be invested with a political as well as symbolic significance”.⁹² The Viceroy Lord Lytton saw in this occasion an opportunity for strengthening the base of the imperial government through the medium of a popular symbol. A plan for strengthening the executive was also thought by way of a new accord with the native princes of India. In return for this, the princes were to accept the paramountcy of the British and remain loyal to the Empress. By this, the British government would have access to the armies and finances of two-thirds of the Indian sub-continent. Knight adds that the idea of a new title was initially expressed by the Queen herself and in that way, it had limited political motives behind it. Prime Minister Disraeli had also thought of a new title after the Mutiny in 1858 and was waiting for the right moment. It was believed that the new title would inaugurate a new relation with the native princes making it more appropriate by giving due respect to the princes.

When this idea was initially expressed, there were criticisms from every side. Many remarked that such attempts of symbolic measures may impress the lowest strata of society who would immediately show their respect to the authority. Questions were raised as to how Queen became an inadequate title and what new title she is going to adopt. He asserts that in the beginning there was not any political objective involved in the title. However, it was decided to mark the assumption by some acts of grace.

Knight further comments that consolidating the Empire with an alliance with the princes went in parallel with Lord Lytton’s foreign policy. He believed the Imperial Assemblage as a rare opportunity to elicit loyalty from the princes and to generate respect and fear among frontier states. Thus, Lord Lytton’s objective was to proclaim an imperial policy with the new title which would inaugurate a new kind of treatment towards the

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

⁹¹ L.A.Knight, ‘The Royal Titles Act and India’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1968, pp. 488-507.

⁹² Ibid., p. 488.

princes. The princes were no longer to be considered as an agglomeration, but a collective entity whereby they were entitled to an equal and uniform treatment. The hidden agenda behind all these was that the native princes had to acknowledge their subjugated position to the Empress and pay homage to her which in turn would provide an assurance against the fear of annexation. Thus, in return for the fealty of the princes, it was suggested that the Assemblage would guarantee their territorial integrity. He further describes the committee which was appointed to supervise the general arrangements of the Assemblage. They were instructed to create a brilliant *darbar*. He explains the design of the gold medals granted. "Roman imperial ensigns, modified to efface later ecclesiastical associations, were chosen for the armorial bearings of the princes".⁹³ Stressing the significance of the title, he says, "the importance of the Title lay in its mass appeal as a symbol".⁹⁴ Many saw in the title a beginning of all India unity. He says that Queen acquired the image of a remote sympathetic savior. Crown was now visualized as *dues ex machina*.

He also reports of a belief which said that the newly assumed title carried within it the promise to bear the legal responsibilities to protect the Muslims when they expressed their loyalty in return. The Muslims were also not hesitant in showing a co-operative attitude as the idea of attaining the status of their co-religionists attracted them. Instead of appreciating the event, Knight considers the Imperial Assemblage as a political tactic of Lord Lytton whose "main interest appears to have been the military and political advantages that would accrue from more positive relations with the native princes".⁹⁵ He is of the opinion that the Assemblage improved the social relations among the native princes. But, he is doubtful whether it had inaugurated a new relationship with the government as Lytton expected. Thus, he critically analyses the Royal Titles Act which he considers to be a part of the imperial policy and the Assemblage provided an opportunity for this to be clearly manifested.

Denis Judd perceives the new title 'Empress of India' to be the brainchild of the Conservative Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli who believed that if his Government gave Queen Victoria the new title it would make the Indian princes, who ruled one third of India, even more loyal in their support to the Raj.⁹⁶ He surveys the double vision of Lord

⁹³ Ibid., p. 499.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 505.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 494.

⁹⁶ Denis Judd, *The British Raj*, London, 1979.

Lytton which had an agenda of ambidextrously satisfying both the peasantry and the Indian aristocracy.

In another work by the same author, Judd says that the British after the revolt of 1857, created fundamentally a conservative system of government.⁹⁷ The revolt made them realize the importance of maintaining the Indian princes in their places. As a result, the princely states were also safe from annexation as long as they accepted the British paramountcy. The government also was cautious in not encouraging any reformist tendencies which would set in motion any kind of resentment in the Indian minds. He says, “For the half century after the Mutiny, British rule in India was based upon conservatism tempered by pragmatism. For the next fifty years, it pursued a policy of containment and cautious development”.⁹⁸ The Revolt widened the gulf between the rulers and the ruled. He adds that the life after the uprising ‘was a strange mixture of insecurity and unbounded confidence’.⁹⁹ It was a situation where the “British women in particular becoming more fearful of a situation where, according to legend, fantasy, and gossip, one’s long-serving Indian cook or gardener might at any moment become a raging atavistic beast intent on rape and bloodshed”.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, the victorious British seemed confident about their ‘quasi divine right to rule the subcontinent’.¹⁰¹

The article by Nayanjot Lahiri conceives the convening of the Imperial Assemblage as a result of ‘policy shifts that materially changed and occasionally inverted aspects of the revolt’s brutal aftermath’.¹⁰² She envisages Assemblage as part of the programme to develop better ties between the Indians, especially the native aristocracy, and the crown. They were meeting as friends at the same spot where they fought as enemies twenty years ago. She affirms, “shots and shells were replaced by feasting and

⁹⁷ Denis Judd, *The Lion and the Tiger: The Rise and Fall of the British Raj, 1600-1947*, New Delhi, 2004.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 90.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Nayanjot Lahiri, ‘Commemorating and Remembering 1857: The Revolt in Delhi and Its Afterlife’, *World Archaeology*, Vol. 35, No. 1, The Social Commemoration of Warfare, June, 2003, p. 50.

cordiality”.¹⁰³ She presents a picture of modified attitude of the British towards Muslims as Zinat-ul-Masjid and the Fatehpuri mosques which were taken into British control after the revolt of 1857 was reopened for public worship.

Mridu Rai perceives the Assemblage as the culmination of the process of evolution of a colonial representation of India’s princes and subjects of British India.¹⁰⁴ It was also an event designed to provide an occasion for the Indian subjects to renew their vows of loyalty to the Queen Victoria who was proclaimed the ‘Empress of India’ on the same occasion. Imperial Assemblage manifested the British ruler’s idea about the proper social order in India. However, she does not deny the fact that the Assemblage was held to derive the authority of the Queen-Empress and the British from India’s erstwhile sovereigns. For this purpose, modern day personifications of the three successive ages were present in the ceremonial, the three ages being Rajput, Muhammadan and Maratha as depicted in Wheeler’s official chronicle. She emphasises that the Assemblage confirmed the double subjecthood of the subjects of princely India, to the British Crown and to their ‘native’ rulers.

1.6.3. Academic Writings on 1903 Durbar

Many works describe Delhi Durbar of 1903 as part of the writings on Lord Curzon. He, being the Viceroy of India played a major role in initiating many important policies in India. V. B. Kulkarni in his book refer to Curzon as a ‘rising star of the Conservative Party’ and an ambitious man with a love for power and pageantry.¹⁰⁵ All the works that discuss Durbar mention Curzon’s love for rituals and pageants. Kulkarni adds that Curzon possessed immense energy that he worked for eleven hours a day. “Officials, long accustomed to somnolent ways of working, dreaded and cursed this great crusader against sloth, slovenliness and *status quo*”.¹⁰⁶ He comments that it was Curzon’s love for pomp that led to the summoning of the Durbar. Kulkarni criticizes Curzon for two initiating two things- construction of Queen Victoria Memorial which was completed long after he had

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁰⁴ Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights and the History of Kashmir*, London, 2004.

¹⁰⁵ V. B. Kulkarni, *British Statesmen in India*, Bombay, 1961, p. 221.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 231.

left India and the Delhi Durbar. He feels that both these were inappropriate to a starving famine stricken India. He considers these as “examples of fundamental and irreconcilable conflict that existed between the ideas and ideals of the British rulers and the wants and wishes of the Indian people”.¹⁰⁷ Though the author criticizes Curzon for many inappropriate policies and mistakes committed in India, he praises him for conservation of Indian monuments.

Michael Edwardes throws light on the imperialist ideas and agenda of Curzon, who believed India to be an integral part of the imperial achievement.¹⁰⁸ He traces the education and ideology of Curzon which ultimately shaped him as an ‘imperialist’ in all senses. Curzon had great pride in the imperial mission that he looked beyond the horizons of Pax Britannica ‘to a great world empire’.¹⁰⁹ Equipped with such a lofty idea, Edwardes adds, Curzon arrived in India in 1899. The author also alludes to the Durbar of 1877 which proclaimed Queen Victoria as the Empress of India. The then British Prime Minister, Disraeli, according to Edwardes, “was conscious of a growing need to add the colour of romance to imperial politics”.¹¹⁰ With the Durbar being summoned, the British inaugurated a new chapter in the imperialist propaganda. Though Lytton, the then Viceroy, claimed that the new title of Empress of India was designed to replace the impersonal power of an administrative abstraction, it showed the native princes of India becoming tributary kings of the empire wherein they would “bask in the warm glow of the Victorian sun and acquire new dignity in its reflected glory”.¹¹¹

He goes on to explain the background and ideologies that influenced Curzon. This was a time when Liberalism was being threatened by the rising tide of democracy and the propagators of Liberalism lost faith in it and began to look for a substitute to it. The effect was that this brought the rendezvous of the intelligentsia – the group which had been Liberal in political persuasion and the old aristocracy. By 1887, Liberal-Unionism began to take shape which had close and intimate ties with imperialism. The imperialism of Disraeli offered theatrical picture of the British Empire - the empire on which the sun

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 234.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Edwardes, *Highnoon of Empire: India Under Curzon*, London, 1965.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 8.

never sets; and made use of emotions glorying external symbols. But there existed another kind of imperialism of the intellect which based itself on reasoned and empirical ideas and whose main spokesman was Fitzjames Stephen. Thus, in George Nathaniel Curzon was the blend of these romantic and hard headed, both in ideas and actions.

Curzon was mainly influenced by the writing and lectures of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen (Law member of the Viceroy's Council from 1809 to 1872) who dissatisfied with the political developments in Britain, began to look elsewhere for a new source of political ideas. Stephen as well as Sir Henry Maine (Stephen's predecessor as Law member) were deeply influenced by the scope which lay within India for the best alternative of Liberalism to flourish. It was mainly Stephen's writing and lectures which moulded the imperialism of the late nineteenth century. Author adds that it was the lecture given by Stephen that awoke Curzon's belief that in India lay the key to a new and dynamic imperial achievement.

His conservative political persuasion was clear and unambiguous in many aspects. In home affairs, he believed the amelioration of the condition of the lower orders of society to be the duty of a statesman, rather than of a philanthropist. Perspective on foreign affairs was openly imperialistic. Inspired by utilitarian ideal, Curzon always looked forward to a great world empire where law would bring happiness to all. He had an exalted imperialist vision and believed that "British were still the purveyors of a belligerent civilization, their purpose was still unexhausted, the power was still in their hands, and the need for their beneficent work was as strong as ever".¹¹²

The author enumerates two reasons for the summoning of the Durbar. Firstly, it was to impress the outside world and secondly it was designed to remind the British the nature of their empire and the responsibilities it demanded of them. He, like other writers, gives a description of the Durbar, preparations ahead of it, ceremonies performed and announcements made. He is also of the opinion that the Durbar gloriously re-affirmed the strength and majesty of the British. The author employs a pro-British tone with a subtle appreciation of Curzon. Edwardes considers durbar as a chapter in the ritual of the state.

In yet another biography on Curzon, David Dilks, a British historian, notes that though Curzon summoned a Durbar as called by Lord Lytton, he was not ready to follow

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 19-20.

the criteria set by the latter.¹¹³ Dilks traces the whole official discussions, proposals, conflicts, approval and letter correspondences with regard to the durbar. He maintains an exalted view of the British rule in India and says, “It was under British dominion that all India had for the first time acknowledged one Sovereign, loyalty to whom spanned many divisions”.¹¹⁴ He presents before the readers the various proposals which were being considered by the Viceroy and Hamilton to be officially declared before the people of India on the Durbar day, and details the discussion behind each proposal.

Curzon very much wanted the Durbar to be associated with acts of concession. He believed that Indians would fail to understand a Durbar which just consisted of pageant and a plausible speech. He wanted it to be in juxtaposition with a definite act of goodwill which would be remembered with gratitude. He had so much confidence in the capacity of a Viceroy, who as the head of the Government can decide the success or failure of the Durbar through the announcement of concessions. Curzon was quite clear about the two separate roles which he was to play at the Durbar. First, as the King’s representative, to read out his message and second, as the head of the Government of India, tell people how it was proposed to commemorate the occasion. “He had never wished to proclaim in the King’s name a reduction of taxation, or to tell the people that the King was remitting taxation, or to associate the King with administrative changes”.¹¹⁵ Curzon was criticized for arranging the parade of the mutiny veterans and refreshing those memories. But the act of paying a public tribute to the last survivors was not left unappreciated

David Dilks shifts our attention to something that terribly upset Curzon. Curzon regretted that the Durbar was always associated with its expense. The increased profit of the railways, post and telegraph were overlooked. Dilks says that the Durbar reflected Curzon’s power of organization and forethought. There was another wave of criticism against him that the whole Durbar affair was for the self glorification of Curzon. “The rule that the Viceroy must take precedence over everyone but the reigning sovereign was imperfectly understood and gave rise to the complaint that the whole affair had been arranged for his own glorification. Curzon too thought it rather absurd that he should have to appear everywhere as the central figure in the presence of the King’s brother. He tried to

¹¹³ David Dilks, *Curzon in India, Vol: 1, Achievement*, London, 1969.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 254.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 258.

emphasize the Duke's role whenever he could, but felt the incongruity. At the review of nearly 40,000 troops, the Viceroy, a civilian, far from beloved of the soldiers, was called upon to ride first and receive the salute".¹¹⁶ Though David Dilks gives a complete picture of the Durbar, his work is devoid of a critical evaluation of Durbar and Curzon.

Philip Mason in his book gives a critical character analysis of Curzon.¹¹⁷ He characterizes Curzon as a person who often did the right thing in the wrong way. He believed that his own personal supervision was necessary for every bit of work as Curzon himself wrote, "It is no good trusting a human being to do a thing for you. Do everything yourself".¹¹⁸ Still, Mason considers Curzon to be an eminent administrator. He remarks, "Lord Curzon was the greatest of the Viceroys, and India has reason to forgive him for much. He did love India, he did perceive the poetry and glory of his position".¹¹⁹ Mason considers the summoning of Durbar in 1903 by Curzon as a result of a wrong realization. He failed to realize that the splendours of an era were already at an end. Instead, he had an exalted view of the Empire which made him feel that the "Durbar was the outward and visible sign of an ideal, the heavenly pattern of an Empire to which his life was devoted".¹²⁰ Though Mason considers the Durbar to be a landmark in the history of the people, he differs from others on a particular point; he considers it be the end of an era.

L. M. Bhatia tries to give a critical character sketch of Lord Curzon by highlighting the positive and negative aspects of his administration.¹²¹ Curzon had a penchant for state ceremonial for which he was greatly criticized. His vanity and egocentricity earned him a name of 'most superior person'. Bhatia adds, "He was a man in a hurry to see his policies in practice".¹²² He probed into every detail of administration as he believed efficiency to be the key note of administration. His determination to get things done efficiently and thoroughly at the cost of British prestige elicited criticism from Home government. The

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 265.

¹¹⁷ Philip Mason, *The Men who ruled India*, New Delhi, 1985.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 262.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 265.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ L. M. Bhatia, *A Miscellany on the Raj: Historical and Other Pieces*, New Delhi, 1989.

¹²² Ibid., p. 63.

author brings our attention to some of the administrative policies of Curzon. Curzon separated railways from the Public Works Department. An amount of sixty crores of rupees was sanctioned for the construction of 6110 miles of track. Better accommodation facilities were also initiated for native passengers in third class carriages. He wanted the duty on salt tax to be reduced. Bhatia comments, "If subsequent official attitude had remained equally sympathetic, perhaps, it would not have been necessary for Gandhiji to undertake the march to Dandi in 1930".¹²³ He was the only Viceroy ever to understand the importance of Hindi. He issued orders to permit the petitions from public to be presented in Hindi and accepted the translation of the orders of Government into Hindi. The Universities Act of 1904 was passed to tighten the government's grip over educational institutions and curb unwanted interferences from politicians and amateurs in the administration of the same. The Ancient Monuments Preservation Act was passed in 1904 as he regarded the conservation of monuments of the past as one of the primary responsibilities of the government.

Though a man of vision and originality, he was not without flaws. Yet, Bhatia considers him to be an enlightened ruler with great strength of character and as a stern administrator. He adds, "It was Curzon's misfortune to have worked in India in a jealous age which delighted in malicious depreciation News about him in Britain was often coloured by partisan fiction".¹²⁴ Bhatia considers Curzon to be more than a 'tinkling' name in the history of British India. It can be said that though his actions earned him odium, his many other achievements stand out to his credit. He also gives a picture of Curzon who probed into every single detail of the Durbar as portrayed by Philip Mason. It is a common factor in all works on Curzon that all point to a Curzon who supervised every aspect of the Durbar.

In the biographical work on Lord Curzon, Nayana Goradia traces the life and career of Curzon. She gives a sketch of Curzon who enjoyed pomp and splendour.¹²⁵ "Curzon loved the tributes inscribed on triumphal arches erected to welcome the visiting Viceroy. The fantastically adorned greetings so delighted him that years later in England

¹²³ Ibid., p. 66.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 71.

¹²⁵ Nayana Goradia, *Lord Curzon: The Last of the British Moghuls*, Delhi, 1993.

he would spend hours chuckling over them”.¹²⁶ The Durbar was another instance that came as a testimony to his zeal for pageants. She affirms that the state entry made by him on an elephant made him feel that he was a true British Mughal. Goradia adds that as part of the deliberations and talks related to Durbar, Curzon made many upset in the Home Government. She asserts that the Durbar came as a ‘climax of Curzon’s career as an eastern potentate’.¹²⁷ Based on private papers and correspondings in different departments of Government of India, Goradia gives the picture of an ‘imperialist white Mughal - Curzon.’

Julie. F. Codell in her essay gives an evaluation of the Indian Art Exhibition that was arranged as part of the Durbar.¹²⁸ She explores the question as to why it was only an Indian art exhibition and why Curzon believed that the exhibition was the most significant contribution to the Durbar.

Stephen Bottomore, a film historian discusses this Durbar as part of history of early non-fiction cinema.¹²⁹ Non-fiction indicates to films on wars, battles, natural calamities, political events and royal ceremonies. “These include films of the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War, Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee and various Royal weddings and coronations”.¹³⁰ Both the durbars of 1903 and 1911 had video coverage. Bottomore mentions the difference, through this article, between the two in terms of filming. He points to the fact that the Durbar of 1903 was filmed by novice cameramen whereas the Durbar of 1911 was filmed by professional cameramen representing various film enterprises. He shows the presence of film companies like Gaumont and Warwick in the filming of Durbar. The main attraction of all the firms was the shots of the processions. He also mentions the photographers who came to capture the event. Bottomore discusses the style and techniques of shooting employed when modern techniques of editing and sync had not developed. Nevertheless, he adds that there exist fewer details regarding the

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp. 150-151.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 158.

¹²⁸ Julie. F. Codell, ‘Gentlemen Connoisseurs and Capitalists: Modern British Imperial Identity in the 1903 Delhi Durbar’s Exhibition of Indian Art’, Dana Arnold (ed), *Cultural Identities and the Aesthetics Britishness*, Manchester, 2004.

¹²⁹ Stephen Bottomore, ‘An Amazing Quarter Mile of Moving Gold, Gems and Genealogy: Filming India’s 1902/03 Delhi Durbar’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1995, pp. 495- 515.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 496.

screening of these shot films. Yet, he reminds that the films of durbar play an important role as a case study in the history of non-fiction and news film making.

The book compiled by Malcolm Rouse discusses the Delhi Durbar Medals awarded at the Durbar ceremony.¹³¹ They were 38.5mm diameter and were struck in gold and silver. The medal had, on its obverse, the crowned and robed effigy of the King facing right with 'Edward VII' being inscribed to the left of the King's head and on the right 'Delhi Darbar 1903'. He adds, "The striking reverse of the medal has a border running around the rim, containing an ornate design of roses, shamrocks and thistles".¹³²

1.6.4. Academic Writings on 1911 Durbar

R.E. Frykenberg traces the repercussions of the transfer of capital from Calcutta to Delhi.¹³³ He views it as part of the government's decision of Partition of Bengal and its annulment. He shows how the partition came as a jolt to the rising tide of nationalism in Bengal. He also discusses the Durbar of 1911 where this announcement was made. In the second half of the essay, Frykenberg's gives a comprehensive account of the Durbar in a brief and analytical manner.

The Durbar of 1911 is also a subject of interest for film historians. Few works have emerged looking at the Durbar from the perspective of advancements made in the film industry. A prominent name in this genre is Stephen Bottomore whose article on the filming of 1903 Durbar filming is already mentioned in the preceding pages. He also has done a study on the filming of 1911 Durbar.¹³⁴ News film making was established by the time of the third Durbar and it was called 'news reel'. It was first established in France and then later in Britain by 1910. Bottomore says that ceremonials depicting allegiance to the British Crown was of great interest to the visual media in Britain and elsewhere. He adds that the present Durbar had an extensive coverage than the previous Durbar. "The Durbar was almost certainly the biggest newsreel event to date, and was remembered for years

¹³¹ Malcolm Rouse, *By Grace of the Lord of the Realm: The Medal Roll for the Delhi Durbar 1903*, Devon, 2002.

¹³² Ibid., p. 5.

¹³³ R. E. Frykenberg, 'The Coronation Durbar of 1911: Some Implications', R. E. Frykenberg (ed), *Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, Delhi, 1986.

¹³⁴ Stephen Bottomore, 'Have you Seen the Gaekwar Bob?: Filming the 1911 Delhi Durbar', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1997, pp. 309-345.

afterwards by those who took part”.¹³⁵ Bottomore also gives a brief description of Durbar days in his article. India at this point of time was aware of cinema and bioscope shows. Both British and Indians were active in the field. He points to cinematograph shows amidst Durbar celebrations. The royal tour also had a video coverage.

The British wanted the events to be recorded and memorialised for the future. Hence, special care was taken for the accommodation of the media persons. The King himself made sure that they got a convenient accommodation in the Press camps. Thus, the Durbar had a heavy presence of painters, journalists, photographers and visual media men. Bottomore also describes the business tactics employed by various companies to attract more viewership. Indian firms also filmed the Durbar as agents to the foreign cinematograph firms. “The India firms and individuals apparently include Bourne and Shepherd and Shri Nath Patankar, as well as N. K. Chatterjee of the Imperial Bioscope”.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, Bottomore adds that except for Hiralal Sen, there are no concrete documents or records to prove that the Indian firms filmed the Durbars. He also shows a diagrammatic representation of the position of the camera and crew men.

Bottomore shifts our attention to the laboratory facilities in Bombay to develop the film. Many of the companies developed the film and screened it within hours of shooting. Screenings happened in Bombay, Calcutta and Lucknow, with the King and Queen attending the Calcutta screening. Even while the couple was in India, films were sent back to Britain and other parts of Europe to be screened. The film companies were on a mad race to screen it in Britain before other companies do so as it was a matter of esteem for them. Outside Europe, France was the first European country to screen the film. He also mentions the act of disrespect by the Gaekwar and elaborates the role played by media in filming it. Bottomore looks at the Durbar from the perspective of a film historian and his article describes the efforts of various companies in filming it. His article helps in understanding how a new budding media, in its early stages, was utilised to capture and memorialise an important pageant of colonial era.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 309.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 316.

Another work which looks at the Durbar again through a discussion of visual media is by Luke McKernan.¹³⁷ He is of the opinion that the monarchy had played a significant role in nourishing British film industry in 1910-1911. In its developing stage, many royal events were covered by several film enterprises. In this article, McKernan mainly discusses the contribution of Kinematograph Company in the filming of 1911. This company was owned by Charles Urban. The company's exception was that they had colour reels of the Durbar which was screened at Scala with music and light effects. The filming of the funeral of King Edward VII was the first major assignment of kinemacolor production. "Unquestionably, Kinemacolor's greatest triumph was the record of the royal tour of India over the course of December 1911 and January 1912, with the centre-piece attraction of the Coronation Durbar held at Delhi".¹³⁸ In spite of the great success that it received, Kinemacolor perished. Thus, we find that Durbar was discussed not just as part of history of rituals, but also as part of history of cinema.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

The general works that exist on Durbars and political rituals agree on the fact that there was a change in the British attitude in the Post-Revolt period. Many of the works view these Durbars as part of the feudal theory implemented in the post-Revolt period. Other works view it as culmination of the newly defined relation of paramountcy and subordination whereby a new status was achieved by the native states.

The works that focus on each Durbar also agree upon the broad idea established by the general works. The works that focus only on the Durbar of 1877, accept the changed attitude of the British in the decades following the revolt. They present different perspectives on the Durbar. When one group explores the Conservative party's agenda and Disraeli's intentions in summoning the Durbar, the other group maps the Indian reaction to the Durbar. Another group criticizes the inappropriateness of the Durbar being called during the time of a severe famine. The extension of a medieval feudal vision is surveyed in the works on the Durbar of 1903. A clique of writers discusses the Durbar as an outcome of Curzon's love for pomp and grandeur. The Durbar is elaborated in many of the

¹³⁷ Luke McKernan, 'The Modern Elixir of Life': Kinemacolor, Royalty and the Delhi Durbar', *Film History*, Vol. 21, No. 2, Early Colour Part 2, 2009, pp. 122-136, P5.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 127.

biographical works on Curzon. The Durbar of 1911 is often discussed along with the two major decisions of Government of India – Transfer of capital and annulment of partition.

In this thesis, I have also acknowledged the argument that the British attitude changed in the post-Revolt period. Accepting this, I explore how this changed attitude was reflected in the ritualistic political culture of the British in India. Agreeing with Cohn's argument of development of a theory of authority in the years following the Revolt, I view the Durbars as political rituals falling within the project of inventing traditions. But at the same time, I try to argue that the ritual enactment in the Durbars was also a repercussion of the altering position of Britain as an imperial power in the international politics. To show this, I give a picture of the developments between 1858-1877, 1877-1903 and 1903-1911 in the subsequent chapters. The encounters with other imperial powers led to the necessity of presenting Britain as a strong power. For this purpose of display, the best and efficient mediums were the Durbars summoned in India; India being the important possession of the British Empire. Thus, this study argues that these choreographed Durbars were a symbolic claim of British control over India.

1.8. Sources and Methodology

The primary sources that have been used for this study include the records of various departments of colonial government – Home, Public, Police, Judicial, Jails and Foreign collected from the National Archives of India, New Delhi. Rare and old books on Durbars written during the study period were collected from the library section of the National Archives of India, Central Secretariat Library, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and the library of the ICHR, New Delhi. I have also explored the volumes of Native Newspaper Reports preserved in National Archives of India.

This study visualises the three Durbars as premeditated British strategy of legitimization restricting itself within the purview of their political culture. An attempt is made to analyze the three Durbars in a comparative manner linking it to the specific and changing political milieu. If the Durbar of 1877 is seen against the backdrop of the Revolt of 1857, the Durbar of 1903 is envisaged against the rising wave of nationalism and the Durbar of 1911 is analyzed against the repercussions of the Partition of Bengal. The study also draws a comparison of the various ceremonies observed in the three Durbars evaluating their symbolic significance. In addition to exploring the elaborate ceremonies,

this study also looks at the whole process of ‘ritualization’, evolving practices and its impact on natives.

I also investigate two other themes. Firstly, the imperial ideology which had a pre-conceived notion of inequality, and secondly, its application in the exercise of power as predesigned pageants – Durbars. When the British used these pageants in India, it was also essential for them to retain their foreign identity and preserve ‘Britishness’. Hence, it was not possible to completely adopt the Mughal rituals and at the same time it was not feasible for the British to totally import their own rituals to a foreign land.

Considering the peculiarity of the situation, the British inaugurated in India a whole new set of ceremonies whereby British ritual elements and Indian elements were merged. Mughal ritual practices were performed with a new meaning. Douglas Haynes also finds a significant development taking place whereby the “British ruling group trying to capture important symbols of power for itself and to socialize the Indians into adopting norms it itself held dear”.¹³⁹ This was also complemented by different stipulations regarding many Indian ceremonial practices. In Mughal ritual practice, ritual space was also an arena for the ruler to receive petitions and requests and tackle the problems of subjects directly. But, with the British taking over the scene, this was completely stopped. Ritual space was only for carrying out ceremonies, not to address administrative matters. Here in all the three Durbars, there are no requests or petitions submitted from the native side.

1.9. Framework of Chapters

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 acts as an introduction to the topic discussing political rituals in general and Durbar in particular. It maps the differences between the rituals in pre-colonial India and the rituals in colonial India. With a discussion on the symbols of royalty, it shows the symbols that were appropriated and discarded by the British. Chapter 2 surveys the contemporary and colonial works on Durbars bringing in the various perspectives on each Durbar. This includes works written during each event, mostly colonial records and works of British historians, and works that have come later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Chapter 3 discusses the Durbar of 1877 and the native response to it. It also provides a detailed description of the ceremonies observed to give an idea as to how a Durbar was executed in the colonial period. Chapter 4 discusses

¹³⁹ Haynes, ‘Imperial Ritual in a Local Setting’, p. 500.

the Durbar of 1903 by highlighting its blend of Indian and British elements of rituals. It also reveals the response of Indian National Congress to this spectacle. The Durbar of 1911 is examined in chapter 5 with a discussion of the royal couple's visit to India, ceremonies followed, announcement of the transfer of capital, annulment of partition of Bengal, and another equally important spectacle – hunting. Chapter 6 is the conclusion which sums up the arguments put forward in this thesis.

Chapter 2

Historical writings on Durbars

2.1. Contemporary Works

In this section I discuss the works that were written immediately after the respective Durbars had taken place. These were mainly official records and works written by British administrators.

2.1.1. Works on 1877 Durbar

Many works had been written on this particular Durbar which stand divided in terms of their perspectives and understanding. The Delhi Durbar of 1877 was styled as the Imperial Assemblage in many of the contemporary works. The first work on this Durbar was ‘The History of Imperial Assemblage at Delhi held on the 1st January 1877’ by James Talboys Wheeler, a civil servant of the Indian government. He was commissioned by the government to write a commemorative book on this event. “The Imperial Assemblage at Delhi has been held to celebrate the assumption of the title of ‘Empress of India’ by her Majesty the Queen”.¹ Wheeler believed that ‘the event itself will stand out for all time as an epoch in the history of India’.² He perceived it as a natural outcome of the political change which had moulded India into a British colony.

As an introduction to the narrative of the proceedings of the Durbar, he reviewed the past history of India. He traced other royal assemblages that had taken place from the epic age which included *Aswamedha* and *Rajasuya*. “The story of such gatherings is told in the earliest traditions of the two famous Hindu epics,-the Ramayana and Mahabharata”.³ However, he denied their historicity. “These legends can scarcely be called historical. They are relics of an age which is a blank in history”.⁴ Wheeler referred to an assemblage recorded by the Chinese pilgrim Huang Tsang in the seventh century

¹ Wheeler, *The History of Imperial Assemblage at Delhi*, Delhi, 1982, (First published in 1877), p. 1.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

C.E. called upon by Siladitya. During the period of the Rajputs, these gatherings were known as *Rajasuyas* and *Aswamedhas* and came to be known as Durbars during the medieval period.

Wheeler compared the Durbar to these early assemblages and affirmed that the former was held in a respectful and cordial manner where no coercion was exercised on the princes. “The early assemblages were often characterised by the overbearing haughtiness of a suzerain... Princes were called upon to fill degrading offices which lowered them...or they were subjected to abuse and insult, which bowed them with shame and mortification”.⁵ He described the Imperial Assemblage as a ‘festival of peace’ held at the close of a victorious war where goodwill was established between ancient foes and associates it with pardon and amnesty.⁶ By war, he meant the Revolt of 1857 where the British emerged victorious. He showed a pleasant picture of the assemblage which was called in accordance to the feelings of the people of all classes in the presence of the Viceroy before all the heads of the British administration, ruling chiefs and the native gentlemen of India. Princes, whose forefathers had fought each other for generations met together as friends under the peaceful shadow of the British suzerainty and celebrated together the assumption of the title of ‘Empress of India’ by the Queen. “The object of the Imperial Assemblage was therefore to bind princes and people together in a common loyalty to their sovereign; to bring European and Native rulers and officials into close communication with each other on a great occasion”.⁷

Wheeler gave a picturesque description of the English and native camps which were set up as part of the Durbar. “It was not held within the walls of Delhi. A city of tents and pavilions was set up on the surrounding plain...The English camps at Delhi were distinguished by their simplicity”.⁸ The size and appearance of the tents and pavilions varied according to the importance of the individual camp. The camp of the Viceroy consisted of tents and the pavilion was a canvas palace. The arrangements in the camps of governors, lieutenant-governors and chief commissioners were on a smaller scale. The camps of foreign consuls, attaches and representatives of the press formed a banqueting

⁵ Ibid., p. 92.

⁶ Ibid., p. 43.

⁷ Ibid., p. 46.

⁸ Ibid.

room for daily meals. The native camps were of a different character. They resembled either ancient or the Mughal type. "Some were radiant in blue and scarlet, surrounded by gold knobs and other ornaments. Most of them were enclosed from curious gazers by walls of coloured cloth, supported by bamboo canes, tipped with golden knobs or steel spear-heads".⁹ The native camps and the adjoining spaces were all lively with horsemen and camel men moving around in colourful attires. The caparisoned elephants with *howdahs* added more shades of colour to the scene. On the whole, it was an amalgamation of every variety of colour and costume.

Wheeler asserted that the Durbar was successful in eliciting spontaneous loyalty of the native aristocracy towards the Empress. The political effect of the Durbar could be inferred from the presence of the deputations of independent potentates beyond the frontier of India. Ambassadors from the Maharaja of Nepal, King of Siam, deputation from the Imam of Muscat, envoy from Yarkand, messengers from Chitrol and Yassim were present in the Durbar. Khan of Khelat arrived with his retinue.¹⁰

Wheeler drew attention to some of the proceedings that happened in the Durbar days. The Durbar coincided with the famine which had hit across the Madras and Bombay presidencies. Since the Durbar had the attendance of many high officials, the Viceroy found it opportune to convene a general council to discuss and implement measures to alleviate the miseries of the famine. The Duke of Buckingham, Governor of Madras and Sir Philip Wodehouse, Governor of Bombay submitted the progress report regarding the famine relief measures and the action plan undertaken by the local officials. The council decided to depute Sir Richard Temple, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal to Bombay and Madras to report on the developments in the famine-stricken districts from his personal observations and to provide necessary help and suggestions to the two governments for the implementation of various measures. Other matters of imperial interest were also discussed like the foreign policy to be executed in the north-west frontier; financial issues related to the coming budget, merging of Oudh with the north west provinces and other matters of significance on which the opinion of the prominent men of India was essential.

⁹ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁰ Khelat or Kalat was a princely state located in the centre of the modern province of Baluchistan in Pakistan. Khan of Kalat or Khan-e-Qalat was the title of the rulers of the state of Kalat. The territories controlled by them fluctuated over the centuries, but eventually were established by treaties with the British in late nineteenth century.

Wheeler gave a vivid description of the concluding episodes of the event. The march past by the British force excited much admiration. His work contained the copies of the speeches delivered by the Viceroy in the state banquet, at the banquet to the Governor of Bombay and the Viceroy's replies to the addresses from different deputies. He enlisted the receptions received by the Viceroy; the return visits and the 63 ruling chiefs who attended the Durbar; the table of salutes to native princes and chiefs; the high officers of government and chiefs who were conferred the honourable title of 'Counsellor of the Empress'; appointments to the 'Most Exalted Order of the Star of India' and other personal titles granted like *Maharaja, Maharani, Raja Bahadur, Raja, Rao Bahadur, Rai Bahadur, Rao Sahib, Rao, Rai, Sirdar, Thakur, Nawab, Khan Bahadur* and *Khan*.¹¹

He further offered the criteria of prisoners who were released as precedent to the Durbar, gave an account of the sanctions allotted to the native armies of India and the royal navy and the revised rate of pay to the native commissioned officers.¹² Wheeler had even recorded the guests to the Durbar from various government departments.¹³ He gave the name of the native ruling chiefs and other nobles from each province with special reference to the ruler's caste, title, area, population of the state and the revenue extracted annually.¹⁴

Thus, Wheeler tried to emphasize how the British associated the occasion with some public act whose memory they wanted to perpetuate in the hearts of the people. His work helped us in understanding how colourful and awesome the British wanted to present themselves before the natives. Written in a pro-British style, this work eulogized all aspects of the British. Though it gave a clear and captivating narrative of the event, the book failed to throw light on the Indian responses at the local level and did not give a testimony of the expenses as expected from an official work.

Another work which was written during this time was by Val. C. Prinsep who was a civil servant turned artist.¹⁵ He was commissioned to paint the Imperial Assemblage and the picture was proposed as a present to the Queen on her assumption of the title of

¹¹ Ibid., Appendix I, pp. 128-147.

¹² Ibid., Appendix I, pp. 147-153.

¹³ Ibid., Appendix II, pp. 159-185.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Val. C. Prinsep, *Glimpses of Imperial India*, Delhi, 1979, (First published in 1878).

‘Empress of India’. This book was more by way of his travel notes. He gave a description of the Durbar from an artist’s point of view. He said, “oh horror! What have I to paint? A kind of thing that outdoes the Crystal Palace in “hideosity”. It has been designed by an engineer, and is all iron, gold, red, blue, and white. The dais for the chiefs is 200 yards across, and the Viceroy’s dais is right in the middle, and is a kind of scarlet temple 80 feet high...Everything is designed by the Royal Engineers, and you may fancy what they have done. In another hundred years, unless we can arrest their hands, there will not be a good thing in India”.¹⁶

Though written from an artist’s point of view, he spoke in a pro-British manner and identified himself with the British interests. For instance, he said, “The Ridge was the place held by our troops during the Mutiny, and from which we bombarded the city”.¹⁷ He continued, “on Tuesday, I went with the Viceroy to the place of Assemblage, as it is called,...They have been heaping ornament on ornament, colour on colour, on the central or Viceregal dais,...The size-which, will make painting it impossible- gives it a vast appearance, like a gigantic circus”.¹⁸ Though he gave a picturesque description of the Durbar, he failed to give a critical analysis of the event and constrained his work to the description and critique of its physical appearance on aesthetic grounds.

Many other writers observed a feudalistic mode of relationship being established in this Durbar between the Crown and the princely states of India. Sir Richard Temple (Governor of Bombay, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and Finance Minister of India) explained such a relation after identifying the native states as a political entity of some magnitude in the Indian Empire.¹⁹ His feudal concept was in the medieval setup where the vassals acknowledged their subjugation to the feudal lord. He wrote purely from a British administrator’s point of view and considered the sovereigns of these states to be more or less under the control of the British government, as suzerain and paramount power. He said, “Some of them are potentates enjoying much consideration, while others are hardly distinguishable from feudal barons”.²⁰ He portrayed the picture of Indian states which

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁹ Sir Richard Temple, *India in 1880*, London, 1881.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 59.

were conscious of their linked destinies to those of England and mentioned the firm allegiance which some of the states displayed during the Revolt of 1857. Richard Temple remarked, “They acted according to the instinct of self-preservation, being convinced that they would be buried in the ruins of the British Government if it should fall. Nevertheless, it must be in generosity admitted that they gave full play to noble and loyal sentiments”.²¹ He called them “bulwarks of imperial stability, and as conservative elements in a country where subversive and explosive forces may at times burst forth”.²²

Another notion which was promulgated was that the Indians attached great importance to titles and distinctions and when granted these, they extended their immediate support and loyalty. Richard Temple opined that the addition of the imperial style to the titles of the British sovereign had strengthened the loyalty of native states and their oriental sense of grandeur had been gratified. Their imaginative faculties were also stimulated by the same. He considered the Durbar to be a grand ceremony which had not even taken place during the brightest days of the Mughal Empire. He hoped the Durbar to pertain in the recollections of many millions of men and believed in the operation of the native states as an imperial safety-valve to release various kinds of discontent. If such a vent was not found it might burst out hazardously in the British territories as had happened in 1857.

2.1.2. Works on 1903 Durbar

The task of writing an official account of this Durbar was assigned to Stephen Wheeler.²³ His father James Talboys Wheeler was commissioned by the then government to write the official narrative of the first Durbar. Stephen Wheeler’s work was based on government records and official papers. His work was more elaborative when compared to the previous official work on 1877 Durbar. A coronation ceremony was held at Westminster, London on August 9, 1902. However, this narrative restricted itself to the celebrations and rejoicings held in India in 1903.

²¹ Ibid., p. 60.

²² Ibid.

²³ Stephen Wheeler, *History of the Delhi Coronation Durbar held on the first of January 1903 to celebrate the Coronation of His Majesty King Edward VII Emperor of India*, Delhi, 1991, (first published in 1904).

The Durbar of 1903 was also called 'Coronation Durbar'. It was on a larger scale than the Durbar of 1877. The boundaries of the Empire had extended since 1877 and the number of ruling chiefs, noblemen and native gentlemen of distinction attending the Durbar had also increased. There was also a high attendance of outside visitors which was a phenomenon absent in 1877. "The Durbar of 1877 had attracted so few visitors from the outside that only four guests from England partook of the Viceroy's hospitality in Lord Lytton's camp. In fact the great influx of European visitors from all parts of India, and still more abroad, was one of the most striking features of the Delhi gathering of 1902-3".²⁴ Wheeler said, "in addition to these, Lord Curzon invited the attendance of a number of rulers on the outskirts of the Empire who, in 1877, were either beyond the sphere of British influence or were not considered important enough to merit the honour. Among these may be mentioned the Shan Chiefs from the borderlands of Burma and Siam; the chieftains from the North and North-West Frontiers such as the Mehtar of Chitral, the Mirs of Hunza and Nagar, the Khan of Nawagai, and the Nawab of Dir; the potentates of the Aden Protectorate, namely, the Sultans of Shehr and Mokalla and of Lahej, and the Amir of D'thali".²⁵ He further added that another novel thing initiated by the Viceroy was the extension of invitations, for the first time, to the South African colonies and the Commonwealth of Australia to send representatives to an Indian celebration. This demonstrated the increasing unity of the Empire and India's position within it.

It was interesting to note that Wheeler viewed the summoning of the Durbar as an advance in the direction of imperial consolidation. He considered the previous Durbar "as an event of deep political significance, marking, as it did, the commencement of a new chapter in the history of British India, and the final ratification of a definite theory of constitutional relationship between the Crown and its greatest dependency".²⁶ Wheeler had included in his work the message from the King-Emperor Edward VII to the princes and people of India and the viceregal proclamation which explained why the King was not able to attend personally the Coronation Durbar. The King instead deputed his brother, the Duke of Connaught and the Duchess of Connaught to represent the royal family at the

²⁴ Ibid., p. 53.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

Durbar. The King's nephew, the Grand Duke of Hesse was also present at the Durbar as the Viceroy's guest.

Wheeler gave a picturesque description of state entry into Delhi and enlisted the number of guests entertained by the Viceroy. He also explained why Delhi was chosen as the venue for the ceremony. He said, "Its history and geographical position alike point to Delhi as the most fitting site in India for great ceremonies of State, such as attended the proclamation, by Lord Lytton, of Queen Victoria's assumption of the imperial title, and, twenty-six years later, the Durbar held by Lord Curzon in honour of the coronation of the King-Emperor, Edward VII. A seat of empire from the earliest ages, Delhi, more than 'Agra and Lahore of Great Mogul', may lay claim to the distinction of being the hereditary political capital of India".²⁷ He affirmed that though Delhi was not the central seat of government, many historic events were connected with Delhi which itself bestowed on it the rightful status for being the venue for a great state ceremony.

Wheeler elaborated the exhibition of Indian art which was held at Delhi on December 30, 1902 in association with the Coronation Durbar. It was decided that the exhibition would include "all that was best in Indian art, as still produced or capable of production by the best native artificers, carefully selected in all parts of the country and presented with the opportunity and the means of showing their skill".²⁸ From the Viceroy's speech depicted in Wheeler's work, it can be inferred that the exhibition was stipulated to be an arts exhibition. It did not display any European or quasi-European items. A rule was laid down that those works which represented the ideas, traditions, instincts and beliefs of India would only be included in the exhibition. The Viceroy wanted the premium of all items which were rare, beautiful and characteristic of Indian art.

Wheeler further gave a description of the Grand Chapter of the Orders (Order of the Indian Empire & Order of the Star of India) and the review of troops. He considered the march past of the army to be 'the grandest military spectacle' as it produced "a marked effect on the assembled spectators, more especially on the large number of Indians of the more warlike races, who had made their way to the parade ground".²⁹ He mentioned

²⁷ Ibid., p. 48.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 87.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 190.

various spectacles, popular entertainments and festivities and other interludes which took place in association with the Coronation Durbar. He called the review a 'moving panorama of oriental pageantry'.³⁰ Many competitions and tournaments were also conducted like riding and jumping competition, tent-pegging competition, football matches, hockey, polo and cricket tournament. Finally, in a function of religious as well as semi-political character, the Sikhs renewed their pledge of loyalty to the King.

Wheeler gave an account of the local celebrations that took place all over India, in the British territories and in the native states. Celebrations also took place in Nepal, Persian Gulf and Turkish Arabia. He stated that the grandeur and solemnity of the Durbar had left a deep impression in the minds of the spectators who gathered at Delhi. "The whole fabric of the British Empire in India, from its foundation to its topmost pinnacles, seemed to be revealed through the pageantry of the Delhi ceremonies, as in a vision".³¹ Wheeler also registered the approval addition to the table of salute to native princes and chiefs; appointments to and promotions in the 'Most Honourable Order of the Bath', 'Most Exalted Order of the Star of India', 'Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire'; conferment of honour of knighthood; award of *Kaiser-i-Hind*, medal for public service in India; grants of favours and concessions to different branches of the army; grant of various titles and other rewards for distinguished services.

In a lofty manner, Wheeler tried to give a legitimate position to the British as the rightful heir to the Indian throne. He appreciated all aspects of the British rule and asserted that the greatest lesson of the Durbar was that it showed that India was not behind the rest of the Empire in loyalty and devotion. He gave credit to the British Crown for accomplishing the task of uniting millions of Indians. The Crown "left upon British and Indians alike the impression, amounting to a conviction, that this is no accidental or fleeting phenomenon, but that it is preordained and will endure".³² This work of Wheeler had made an attempt to incorporate important aspects of the Durbar which were ignored in the official chronicle of the Durbar of 1877 by James Talboys Wheeler. Yet it failed to give an analytical account of the Durbar.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 197.

³¹ Ibid., p. 237.

³² Ibid.

The account by C. J. O'Donnell gave a critical analysis of Curzon's period of viceroyalty by evaluating the negative side of each policy that he implemented.³³ Interestingly, Donnell did not give any special focus to Durbar as he considered it to be an 'unpardonable waste of public and private money'.³⁴ He called it "epicene apings of the follies of the Moghul sovereigns in the days of their vicious and shameless decadence".³⁵ He gave the statistical details of the death caused by plague from 1896 to 1903 which the government had concealed and sarcastically remarked, "Assuredly these are fitting days for Durbar festivities"!³⁶

The work by Lovat Frazer documented the political conditions in India during the viceroyalty of Curzon and after his departure.³⁷ Being the editor of 'Times of India', gave Frazer access to many of the official documents during the period. He stated that it was not an easy task to commemorate the entire seven years of Curzon's time in India in a single volume. Yet he asserted partition of Bengal, solving the issue of north western frontier, educational reforms and framing of a new land revenue policy to be Curzon's landmark achievements. Frazer added that Curzon reached on the proposal of dividing Bengal accidentally and it was not a premeditated plan. Though he claimed his work to be impartial and detached, the work had the tone of a panegyric of Curzon.

2.1.3. Works on 1911 Durbar

John William Fortescue was the historian chosen to chronicle the entire tour of the royal couple.³⁸ He traced the voyage from Portsmouth, arrival at Bombay, Durbar proceedings, royal announcements and the couple's return to Britain. As observed in all the official works, Fortescue's work also gave minute details regarding decorations and reception wherever the couple was welcomed. The commixture of colours in the Indian gathering was specially mentioned, perhaps with an intention of affirming the notion that

³³ C. J. O'Donnell, *The Failure of Lord Curzon: A Study in "Imperialism", An Open Letter to the Earl of Rosebery*, London, 1903.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 84.

³⁶ Ibid., p. xix.

³⁷ Lovat Frazer, *India Under Curzon and After*, London, 1911.

³⁸ John William Fortescue, *Narrative of the Visit to India of their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary and of the Coronation Durbar Held at Delhi on 12th December 1911*, London, 1912.

the East or Oriental gave attention to festoons, noise and decorations and the Occident appreciated neatness and discipline. Describing the attire of the multitude that came to see the couple, he wrote, “There was no rest for the eye in the ever-changing feast of colour”.³⁹ All the activities and events prior to the Durbar were described in detail like laying the foundation stone of the Edward Memorial, presentation to the Queen and presentation of colours. Fortescue referred to the presentation of veterans as something expected as this segment was a repetition from Curzon’s Durbar. Though he elaborately described the payment of homage by the native princes, surprisingly he did not mention the breach of conduct by the Gaekwar of Baroda. All other works, official and academic made a mention of this incident. But Fortescue did not refer to this incident which had created controversy at that point of time. He asserted that the arrival of the King brought immense happiness to the natives as “they believe in no vague abstraction called a Government; they believe in the one ruler whom God has set over them; and when he comes among them they fall down and worship”.⁴⁰ Fortescue’s work documented various proceedings and arrangements of the Durbar as appendices at the end of the work. It gave a sketch of the entire Durbar seating arrangement. Though an illustrated work, this work also did not give an analytical account of the Durbar.

Another official record on this Durbar was compiled from the government documents related to the same.⁴¹ This narrative gave a comprehensive description of the Durbar right from the beginning of the voyage of the royal couple, their arrival at Bombay, Durbar days, other miscellaneous activities and their return to London. It narrated the day to day activities of the royal couple. The book was illustrated with photographs of Durbar days; ceremonies; British officials who attended the Durbar; native princes; imperial and native camps; and medals and badges awarded. An interesting point to note was that all the official accounts on the Durbars made references to gatherings mentioned in *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* in their narrative. Though the historicity of these gatherings was denied, the citation to these in the official documents had the nature of seeking validation from the non-Christian population. But at the same time, these gatherings were rejected as tales. The work stated that India always had a history of ceremonies. “India has always had its

³⁹ Ibid., p. 110.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 187.

⁴¹ Government of India, *The Historical Record of the Imperial Visit to India 1911: Compiled from the Official Records under the Orders of the Viceroy and Governor-General of India*, London, 1914.

royal progresses and pageants, its coronations and durbars”.⁴² It referred to the Revolt of 1857 as a ‘disease’ for which Queen Victoria prescribed the ‘remedy’ - assumption of direct power by the Crown.⁴³ “The proclamation of the direct supremacy of the British Crown...was a stroke of genius at the time”.⁴⁴ The work, as an official mouthpiece of the government, adopted a pro-British style of writing and referred to the proclamation of 1858 as an ‘act of a great Sovereign mother which appealed to oriental sentiment’.⁴⁵ Exuberantly, the work asserted that the assumption of the title of ‘Empress of India’ promoted the native princes to a higher level, altering the subordinate relationship with association and stagnation with progress.

The illustrated work which was compiled and published by the Imperial Publishing Company gave details regarding the Durbar.⁴⁶ It recorded every single detail of the proceedings, ceremonies followed, king’s speech, royal proclamation and other imperial boons. This work, like any other official narrative, gave details without an analysis of the event.

2.2. Colonial Works

The works reviewed here, in this section, were written some years or many years after the conduct of the Durbars, but during the period of colonial rule.

2.2.1. Works on the 1877 Durbar

Charles Lewis Tupper (British administrator in India and legal historian) elaborated a feudal theory in the nature of relationship between the Crown and the states.⁴⁷ The attendance of an assemblage at the behest of a superior was an acknowledgement of the allegiance. It was clearly manifested in such a vast attendance of 63 big ruling chiefs. He confirmed that the feudatory character of the native chiefs was acknowledged even by the

⁴² Ibid., p. 3.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *The Imperial Coronation Durbar (Illustrated): Delhi, 1911, Vol: 2*, Lahore, 1913.

⁴⁷ C.L.Tupper, *Our Indian Protectorate: An Introduction to the Study of the Relations between the British Government and its Indian Feudatories*, London, 1893.

natives of India. The congratulatory letter from the inhabitants of Poona and other places in Deccan said, “The native princes, great and small, are protected by the strength of the paramount power from internal dissention, and their continuance as the feudatory members of the empire has been assured to them beyond all risk of change”.⁴⁸ Another theory which he added to the feudal theory was the theory of double allegiance of the subjects of the native states – allegiance to their own chief and to the Queen-Empress. Though Tupper did not deny their high birth and their right to rule from generation to generation, he regarded the native rulers as the agents of hereditary officers of the British Empire for the administration of its varied possessions.

Tupper perceived the Durbar and adoption of an imperial title as a natural consequence of the transfer of Government of India from the Company to the Crown. The Royal Titles Act was passed in recognition of the transfer and it brought an addition to the royal style and title. It was also intended that the imperial title should add to the strength of the foundations of the British rule. Tupper emphasised that the native rulers attached great importance to marks of distinction. He said, “In presenting to the Chiefs who attended the Assemblage banners which it was supposed they would appreciate, because of the importance attached by native potentates to similar marks of distinction conferred on them by the Moghul emperors, the Viceroy reminded each of them of the close union between the throne of England and the house of the Chief, and of the earnest desire of the paramount power to see the dynasty of the Chief strong, prosperous and permanent”.⁴⁹ He asserted that the speech made by the Viceroy at the time of the proclamation described the new title as a permanent symbol of the union of the Crown with the interests of the princes and peoples of India. He affirmed that pageantry and formalities suited Indian society where ceremonies and display retained a powerful imagination. He stressed that the Indians of rank and honour wished to share the British honour and thought highly of them. “The very fact that these states are not on the equal footing of the independent powers of Europe necessarily makes them the more jealous of ceremonial privileges”.⁵⁰

Tupper further shifted our attention to the grant or recognition of titles. He affirmed that it was an established fact that the power to bestow distinctions in India rested

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 126.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 124.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 361.

exclusively with the Viceroy as the immediate representative of the Queen-Empress. To the long list of Oriental titles, were added, the English titles of 'His' or 'Her Highness' and 'Sir'. "The title of 'Highness' is restricted to ruling chiefs, who are entitled to a salute of not less than 10 guns, either permanently or as a personal concession".⁵¹

In the volume II of another work compiled by Tupper, he linked the amnesty proclamation of 1858 to the speech of Viceroy Lord Lytton at the Durbar and considered the Durbar as "an important political occasion seized to confirm in an emphatic way the confidence of Ruling Chiefs in the intention of the Paramount Power to safeguard their interests".⁵²

In Volume III, he traced the genesis of the practice of granting titles, salutes and various other honorary distinctions to the native princes.⁵³ He asserted that it was from the time of Lord Amherst (assumed charge of office on August 1, 1823) that this practice of granting titles came actively and systematically into use. "During Lord Amherst's administration, titles and various other honorary distinctions were bestowed on several respectable and meritorious individuals, both in acknowledgement of services and good conduct during the prevalence of war on the Eastern Frontier, and to reward and encourage acts of public spirit and liberality connected with the formation of roads, the endowment of colleges and the promotion of other institutions tending to the welfare and improvement of the native community".⁵⁴

A resolution of the Government of India, dated May 30, 1829 stated that the titles would be awarded on the grounds such as services during war and in times of public emergency, meritorious conduct on the part of landholders in the interior in aiding the police; distinguished success in improving the agricultural system and the manufactures of the country; and the execution of important public works and lastly liberal contributions for the support and promotion of beneficial public undertakings and institutions. Tupper agreed that the Durbar was the occasion for many grants of salutes and additions to salutes as marks of the favour of the government.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 359.

⁵² Tupper, *Indian Political Practice: A Collection of the Decisions of the Government of India in Political Cases* (vol: 2), Delhi, 1974, (First published in 1895), p. 35.

⁵³ Tupper, *Indian Political Practice* (Vol: 3), Delhi, 1974, (First published in 1895).

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 205-206.

It was only in H.G.Keene's work that we found a description of the miseries that hit across India in the form of cyclone, famine and drought.⁵⁵ He reported that the cynical observers considered the Durbar as an attempt by the Europeans to cajole the native rulers.

Lady Betty Balfour, daughter of Lord Lytton also perceived a feudalistic mode of relation between the Crown and native states and considered the Durbar as an occasion which confirmed this fact.⁵⁶ She said, "There can indeed be no doubt of the fact, now universally acknowledged in India, that the proclamation of the paramount superiority of the British Crown was an act of political wisdom and foresight which has not only strengthened our position throughout the vast territories of India proper, but has had no small effect also beyond the frontier of the Indian Empire".⁵⁷ She added that the transfer of the administration from the East India Company to the sovereign helped in shedding its administrative abstract image as it was replaced by the direct personal authority of a human being. She perceived the assumption of an appropriate title as a necessity to keep that non-abstract image. The title of 'Empress' was the suitable word which represented the nature of Queen's relations with the states and kingdoms of India. Moreover, this title was familiar to the natives and impressive as well.

Lady Betty Balfour also mentioned that Lord Lytton, on his arrival to India, found it opportune to inaugurate a new policy which would identify the Crown of England with the hopes, aspirations, sympathies and interests of a powerful native aristocracy. She added that Lord Lytton believed that the natives attached great importance to any honour bestowed by a sovereign. He found it necessary to properly exploit this which could in turn, help the British. After the perusal of the letters written by Lord Lytton (included in the book), it was clear that he considered the Indian chiefs and princes as a powerful aristocracy whose cordial and willing allegiance were required and at the same time, who could not be given increased political power.

A different opinion with regard to the conducting of Durbar amidst the famine was found in P.E.Robert's work.⁵⁸ He said, "But ceremonials of this nature can hardly be

⁵⁵ H.G.Keene, *History of India: From the Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century*, Vol: 2, Edinburgh, 1915, (First published in 1893).

⁵⁶ Lady Betty Balfour, *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration 1876-1880: The Untold History*, Delhi, 1988, (First published in 1899).

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 133.

⁵⁸ P.E.Roberts, *History of British India under the Company and the Crown*, London, 1952, (First published in 1923).

postponed, and the members of the civil service, as they stood in the great assembly on the famous Ridge, must have recognized that there was a measure of political wisdom in occasionally displaying to the ruling princes and their ministers not only the dry results of a sound administration but something of the might and splendour of that empire in which both British servants of the Crown and Indian rulers and statesmen occupied each his appointed place”.⁵⁹ He was of the opinion that the new title *Kaiser-i-Hind* conferred upon the sovereign of England stirred the personal loyalty of the Indian princes and any other title like *Padishah*, with purely Islamic association would have alienated the Hindus.

H.E.Hennessy in his book detailed a new political status acquired by the native states of India with the new title.⁶⁰ With the new title, they became subjects of the Crown and parts, not of British India, but of the British Empire. Though their people did not become subjects of British India, they were now ranked as subjects of the British Empire. “Politically, they are somewhat like the subjects of a British dominion out of India. But they are protected by and, in several matters, are under the control of the British Government in India”.⁶¹

The book authored by the Directorate of the Chamber’s Special Organisation traced as to how and when the ‘feudal’ idea came into existence in relation to Indian states.⁶² In the beginning, this word was used only in relation to the *jagirdars* and landholders whose tenure was confirmed by the Company. Such a conception, as applying to states as a whole, appeared for the first time during the Viceroyalty of Lord Canning. The book also stated that though the Revolt helped in repudiating the doctrine of lapse, it did not abolish the doctrine of pseudo-feudalism. However, adoption *sanad* was issued to remove the harmful impression created by Dalhousie’s annexations and the Queen’s proclamation announced its intention of making no fresh extension of territory in India. The book also dismissed the idea of the states being bound to the Empire by the feudal tie. It asserted that there was no historical basis for such a claim. “As a matter of fact, Great Britain one day woke up to the idea that by accident she had acquired an Empire and was glad enough to

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 462.

⁶⁰ H.E.Hennessy, *A History of India with Notes on Administration: 1526-1925*, Bombay, 1925.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.537-538.

⁶² The Directorate of the Chamber’s Special Organisation, *The British Crown and the Indian States: An Outline Sketch drawn up on behalf of the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes*, London, 1929.

accept a romantic explanation of her justification for Eastern rule”.⁶³ This book was written by the Directorate of the Chamber of Princes, an institution which was established in 1920 by royal proclamation to provide a forum in which the rulers of the Indian princely states could voice their needs and aspirations to the government of British India. Thus, it rejected all the feudal claims which undermined their prestigious position.

Maharaj-Kumar Raghubir Sinh, heir-apparent of one of the smaller states in India, Sitamau, through his book, analyzed the feudal theory.⁶⁴ He added a new dimension to this theory by characterizing the period 1857-1906 as a period of subordinate union of the princely states. The Revolt brought an end to the Company rule and power was transferred directly to the British Crown. He asserted that, in this context, the question of relationship with the Indian states once again assumed importance, and it was necessary to redefine the policy towards them. The Queen’s proclamation assured no further annexation of the territories of Indian states and promised to respect the rights, dignity and honours of native princes as their own. Thus, the foundation stone for a new feudal policy in relation to the Indian states was laid. The theory of paramountcy and feudal overlordship needed a visible manifestation. Raghubir Sinh considered the holding of Durbars amidst pomp and splendour, presided by the Viceroy as an explicit affirmation to this theory. He agreed that the purpose of these Durbars was to reduce the independent states to complete subordination and to the status of allegiance. Despite the fact that the East India Company had efficient governor-generals who offered quality governance, it still remained a corporation of merchants. Due to this, he said, it was impossible to expect personal loyalty from the natives. With the transfer of power from the Company to the Crown, the British government lost its abstract image. “Thus, the entry of the Crown in the politics of Indian India revolutionized the situation”.⁶⁵ The new phrases like ‘allegiance to Her Majesty’, and ‘loyalty to the British Crown’ came into currency. Raghubir Sinh added that the Viceroys also went on emphasizing the feudatory character of the Indian states.

Narendra Krishna Sinha and Anil Chandra Bannerjee agreed with H.E.Hennessy’s opinion of acquisition of a changed position of the Indian states after the assumption of the new title, ‘Empress of India’.⁶⁶ They affirmed that the assumption of this title on January

⁶³ Ibid., p. 121.

⁶⁴ Maharaj- Kumar Raghubir Sinh, *Indian States and the New Regime*, Bombay, 1938.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

⁶⁶ Narendra Krishna Sinha & Anil Chandra Bannerjee, *History of India*, Calcutta, 1944.

1, 1877 in a Durbar brought the Indian states within the boundary of the British Empire. They also perceived the new political status in the light of a feudalistic theory. “The Princes ceased to be allies; they became vassals”.⁶⁷

2.2.2. Works on 1903 Durbar

Earl of Ronaldshay in his biography on Curzon discussed the entire plan of Durbar.⁶⁸ In the second volume of his work, he discussed the period of Curzon’s viceroyalty till his return to Britain. He elaborated the whole proceedings and preparations of the Durbar, oppositions to it and the final phenomenon of Durbar. Though Curzon was reviled for conceiving such a plan, Earl of Ronaldshay showed in his work how he overcame those. He added that “Lord Curzon took the whole burden of planning the function on his own shoulders”.⁶⁹

2.2.3. Works on 1911 Durbar

Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of India wrote about the Durbar in his memoir.⁷⁰ He admitted that the most important decision of his period was the modification of partition of Bengal “which had ever since been a festering political score and the cause of all the anarchical agitation in Bengal”.⁷¹ He narrated the whole discussions that went behind the proposal before it was announced at the Durbar by the King. He revealed that at one point, the proposal was on the verge of cancellation. But yet, deliberations continued and it became clear that it was utmost important to reverse partition to bring immediate political contentment. The transfer of capital from Calcutta to Delhi was another proposal that was announced at the Durbar. Hardinge added that extreme secrecy was maintained regarding this that all the copies of letters were made by him. He called it as ‘one of the best-kept

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 863.

⁶⁸ Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon: Being the Authorized Biography of George Nathaniel Vol:2, Viceroy of India*, London, 1928.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 225.

⁷⁰ Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, *My India Years: 1910-1916*, London, 1948.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 36.

secrets in history’.⁷² Though high secrecy was maintained regarding the transfer of capital, Hardinge expressed the difficulty in keeping it as secret after the arrival of the King and till he announced it. Thus, a separate camp called press camp was set up which dealt with the printing of pamphlets, documents and gazettes related to the transfer of capital. As in other works, Hardinge gave details of security measures, camp arrangements and the visits received by the royal couple. He did not give details of the ceremonies followed in the Durbar, but elaborated the breach of protocol by the Geakwar of Baroda. His memoir gave not just an account of the Durbar, but all the events, political developments and administrative measures during his viceroyalty. This was an illustrated work. Hardinge also mentioned the rest of the royal couple’s programme till their departure from India.

In the biography of King George V, Harold Nicolson said that the King always had a special interest in the matters of India.⁷³ He had visited India as Prince of Wales in 1905-1906. King George maintained this idea that the princes of India were no longer getting a role to play in the political context of India due to the rising tide of nationalism and the scene being taken over by politicians. He also had immense trust in the efficacy of ‘Council of Princes’ as conceived by Lord Lytton (though this did not happen in reality) and wanted to manipulate it as a counter balance against the nationalists. Nicolson asserted that the image of King George enlivened the popular imagination as monarch rather than an abstract image of crown. His imperial tour of India served this purpose. King George “believed that his own presence in India as King-Emperor would do much to receive and consolidate the loyalty of the Indian masses”.⁷⁴ Nicolson documented the public life of King George by focusing more on his political role as the monarch of the state. Durbar was also discussed as part of this role that he played. The work was based on official letters, cabinet reports, prime minister’s reports and King George’s diary notes.

Summing Up

The contemporary works on all the three Durbars were written by the British writers who were commissioned by the government to write commemorative accounts of the Durbars. All the official records on the Durbars were elaborate in nature with

⁷² Ibid., p. 49.

⁷³ Harold Nicolson, *King George the Fifth: His Life and Reign*, London, 1952.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 166.

illustrations and appendices giving copies of letter correspondences and other miscellaneous details. All the works enlisted the names of the officers and invitees associated with each Durbar. They narrated day to day activities of the Durbar in a tone of eulogising the British rule. Description of trivial details like temperature and decorations, and presentation of the British as legacy to the Mughal rule were common features of these works. The official accounts just served the purpose of memorialising the events and were written in a style bestowing an exalted nature to the Durbars and events linked to it.

There was no major shift from the above style of writing in the works written during the colonial period. Many of the works written in the colonial period were either by the British administrators or British historians. Very few were written by the native princes. The Durbar also found a place in the personal memoirs of the Viceroy, biographies of the Viceroy and personal accounts of family members of the Viceroy. The accounts of the British administrators and family members of the Viceroy gave explanation of the Durbars devoid of an analysis or evaluation of the same. The personal memoirs and biographies of the Viceroy had an undertone of the British imperial pride. The works by native princes gave an analytical account exploring the medieval feudal theory put forward by the British. Some even repudiated this theory as fabricated without any historical basis.

Both contemporary and colonial writings were used by professional academic historians for their analysis of the Durbars. The narrative parts of the contemporary works were used by them for an understanding of the ritual enactment of the Durbars and colonial period works were used as supportive evidences. The academic writings were reviewed in the previous chapter.

Chapter 3

Delhi Durbar of 1877

In the Durbar of 1877 Queen Victoria was proclaimed the 'Empress of India'. However, this particular Durbar cannot be seen as an isolated event as it is linked to the events which preceded it. In other words, the Delhi Durbar of 1877 requires to be seen in the backdrop of the Revolt of 1857. The Revolt of 1857 stands as a divide in the history of British administration. Though there exist different interpretations defining the nature and character of the Revolt, it cannot be denied that the Mutiny of 1857 did bring a change in the nature of the relationship between the British and the princely states. Michael Edwardes calls the revolt as the "violent meeting of the two dying systems, of British India as a 'country' power - an essentially oriental government with strong European overtones - and of traditional India, trembling with unresolved and frequently unstated fears, obsessed with the past and unable or unwilling to accept the modernising tendencies of the British".¹ The initial outbreak of the rebellion occurred in Meerut in May 1857 and spread to Delhi and other places in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh. However, Bengal, Punjab, Bombay and Madras remained unaffected. Moreover, most of the princely states supported the Company and provided the necessary help in crushing it.

3.1. Developments between 1858 and 1877

The British response to the Revolt was reflected in many of the policies which were pursued in the post-Revolt period. The new policies gave a concrete shape to the imperial attitude. There was a complete reorganisation of the internal administration and a revised nature of relation with the Indian states. The East India Company was abolished and the Crown took over the direct administration of the country. A series of administrative and legislative reforms were initiated which complemented the reorganization of the army and police. The proportion of Europeans in the army was raised and Indians were prevented from entering artillery battalions. A policy of blending communities in the ranks was begun. General emphasis was placed on recruitment from the so-called martial races - Gurkhas, Sikhs, Punjabis, Pathans and Jats. Social reforms

¹ Micheal Edwardes, *British India 1772-1947: A Survey of the Nature and Effects of Alien Rule*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 152.

were either completely renounced or its pace was decelerated. Howsoever the Revolt is interpreted, it was a divide in the course of the British governance of India.

The next significant developments were the Government of India Act of 1858 and the Queen's proclamation which followed it. By the Act, the Board of Control of the East India Company was replaced by the Secretary of State for India. The Governor-General became Governor-General and Viceroy who was to be appointed by the Crown and directly responsible to the Cabinet through the Secretary of State for India. This change in administration was announced to India through the Queen's proclamation read out by Lord Canning on November 1, 1858 at a Durbar held in Allahabad. This proclamation which announced the direct assumption of power by the Crown was simultaneously issued in eighteen languages and read at different places. The proclamation in itself was important as it reflected the changed attitude of the British after the Revolt.

Lord Canning was reappointed. The proclamation said, "well-beloved cousin and councillor Charles John Viscount Canning, do hereby constitute and appoint him, the said Viscount Canning to be our first Viceroy and Governor-General in and over our said territories and to administer the government thereof in our name".² The Proclamation confirmed all the civil and military officers appointed by the Company. It brought within it a new principle of governance with regard to the princes. It said, "We hereby announce to the Native Princes of India that all treaties and engagements made with them by or under the authority of the Honourable East India Company are by us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained, and we look for the like observance on their part...We desire no extension of our present territorial possession: and while we will permit no aggression upon our dominions or our rights to be attempted with impunity we shall sanction no encroachment on those of others...We shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of our Native Princes as our own; and we desire that they as well as our own subjects, should enjoy that prosperity, and that social advancement which can be secured by internal peace and good government".³

To the people of India, the proclamation said, "We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects".⁴ It also promised non-interference in matters of religion. It said, "so far as

² G.S.Chhabra, *Advanced Study in the History of Modern India*, Jalandhar, p. 263.

³ Ibid., p. 264.

⁴ Ibid.

maybe our subjects of whatever race or creed be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity only to discharge”.⁵ Lord Canning repudiated the Doctrine of Lapse and issued adoption *sanads* upon all rulers above the rank of jagirdars perpetuating the dynasties of the princes. These *sanads* recognised the prerogative of the princes to adopt successors to the throne on the condition of loyalty towards the British. It also announced unconditional pardon to all those who would lay down their arms by January 1, 1859 with the exception of those who were involved in the murder of British or gave support to revolters or acted as leaders or inciters of the revolt. Thus, Canning, realizing the volatility of the situation, pursued ‘a policy of punishing resistance and rewarding obedience’.⁶

An important landed class who experienced reversal of policies towards them was the *taluqdars*. Metcalf defines *taluqdar* as ‘a rent receiving intermediary holding several villages’.⁷ *Taluqdars*, who were the landed section in Oudh, had joined the revolt. Peasants rallied behind them as the former considered *taluqdars* as their local leaders. *Taluqdars* were those who lost their lands due to the land settlement of British in 1856. This measure had exasperated them. When anarchy was set loose in the months of Revolt in 1857, *taluqdars* grabbed the opportunity in expressing their frustration and acquire back their dispossessed land. *Taluqdars*, together with other prominent landholders offered stiff resistance to the British. They either supported the insurgents or participated actively in the revolt. “As the *taluqdars*’ grievances were fresher, and rankled more deeply, than those of almost any other class of subjects, their hostility surprised no one”.⁸ In the post-Revolt period, they got back the lands that they lost in the events of 1856. The British were also particular to ensure that their proprietary rights were protected and the *taluqdars* found in the British ‘a powerful patron and protector’.⁹ *Taluqdars* who were not involved in the murder of British were given pardoned and their lands were restored. “A large number of *talukdars* were not only pardoned but given back all the lands which they had owned.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ S. Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 8.

⁷ Metcalf, *Land, Landlords and the British Raj: Northern India in the Nineteenth Century*, Delhi, 1979, p. xii.

⁸ Ibid., p. 174.

⁹ Ibid., p. 186.

Some 22, 658 out of the 23, 543 villages in Oudh were restored to the talukdars in return for submission and loyalty”.¹⁰ Permanent ownership of land was granted to them with rights “in matters of land revenue on their own estates and the powers of magistrates”.¹¹ Though their lands and position were restored, the British also took care that the *taluqdars* did not rise in rebellion against the British in future. The British implemented a policy of disarmament whereby all their arms and ammunitions were surrendered. On the one side, the British tried to placate them and on the other side, they instructed them to dissolve their followers, surrender weapons and deconstruct their forts. Like the native princes, taluqdars were also potential entity capable to rise in revolt. Thus, when the Durbar was convoked, it was very obvious that this group would constitute a part in the invitees list. It is to note that after the controversial land settlement of 1856, the British never implemented any land measures upsetting the taluqdars and the latter remained loyal to the British. The Durbar also provided an opportunity for them to be seated and honoured in the presence of Crown’s representative.¹² The congratulatory address of the taluqdars of Oudh on the occasion of the Durbar gives the indication that though they had taken part in the Revolt of 1857, due to the changed attitude of the British in the post-Revolt period, they have become supporters of the British by 1877. They said, “All of us most fervently pray to the great giver of all blessings that so long as the sun and moon shine in heaven, the “Empress of India” may reign over our country, and enjoy eternal prosperity...this day, we feel assured, will mark the dawn of a new and resplendent era, and will ever be fondly remembered in the future annals of Hindustan...How shall we, beloved Empress, convey to Your Imperial Majesty the feelings of everlasting gratitude and heart-felt affection we entertain towards Your Royal person? Had we been endowed with a thousand tongues instead of one, our deep devotion towards Your Imperial throne would still remain undescribed”.¹³

All these new promises and measures reflect the predominant concern of the British after the Revolt - the consolidation of their rule so that the foundation stone of the

¹⁰ Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹² Wheeler’s official account gives the names of the taluqdars who attended the Durbar. For details see, Wheeler, *The History of the Imperial Assemblage*, Appendix II, Part II, pp. 214-215.

¹³ Government of India, Foreign Department, Pol.A, File No: 286-496, Proceeding No. 408, December, 1877, National Archives of India, (Hereafter NAI), New Delhi.

imperial administrative system would not be rocked again by another revolt or rebellion. They strengthened their position and authority by maintaining honorific hierarchy where the British stood as the paramount power at the apex. Thus, it was necessary for the British to have an alliance with the native princes who were described by Lord Canning as 'the breakwaters to the storm which would otherwise have swept over us.' The princes dispossessed of their territories by Lord Dalhousie had provided leadership to the rebels. However, vast majority of the ruling princes remained loyal to the British and some provided military support at critical times. This demonstrated to the British the potential of the Indian states as a political force capable of backing their rule. Therefore, the policy of annexation could no longer be continued and it was essential to have a cordial relation with them.

Lord Canning was succeeded by Lord Elgin in 1862. He remained in office little more than a year and died in office in 1863. Though his period of viceroyalty was short, significant developments had started taking place in the north-west frontier in Afghanistan, at the time of his death. Elgin was succeeded by Sir John Lawrence in 1864. This frontier crisis was posed by the Wahabis, a group of Muslim fanatics. Together with the Pathans and the Afridis, they declared a battle against the unbelievers - the British. There occurred a clash between the two and the Wahabis were brought to surrender by the British with a loss of one-tenth of the troops sent to the border. The next military encounter was with Bhutan when an envoy was sent to Bhutan for deliberation. The British envoy, led by Ashley Eden, was humiliated and forced to sign a treaty. He escaped back to India and the government of India sent an ultimatum to Bhutan asking the ruler of Bhutan to acknowledge their submission in three months. Following the silence of Bhutan, a war ensued and Bhutan surrendered with a promise of yearly subsidy. John Lawrence's regime also witnessed famine and pestilence, with an outbreak of cholera and fever. In 1866, famine hit Orissa, a division of Bengal taking a toll of one million people. "One-fourth of the entire population, perished from starvation".¹⁴ Famine was followed by flood in river Mahanadi. India was already undergoing serious misery when it witnessed again another round of famine in the Bundelkhand and Rajaputana regions in 1868-69. The American Civil War had its repercussions in Indian finances. The civil war had led to the total suspension of the export of raw cotton due to the blockade of southern ports by Northern states. Consequently, the demand for cotton for the factories in Britain fell on India. The

¹⁴ R. W. Frazer, *British India*, London, 1896, p. 321.

export of raw cotton from India increased leading to a fortune. But the situation completely reversed when the blockade of southern ports was lifted at the end of the civil war. American cotton was again in demand leading to the dwindling of the Indian cotton export. This led to a complete shatter of many of the cotton houses in Agra and Bombay. In other spheres also, the economy was in bad shape due to other issues of internal and external security and administrative requirements.

Efforts were made by Lord Mayo (1869-1872), successor of John Lawrence, to compensate for the financial deficit. He initiated some momentous measures to alleviate the crisis. Salt tax was raised and income tax was increased to two and half percent. His financial reforms had its benefits and the 'deficit of Lord Lawrence's rule was converted into a surplus'.¹⁵ In a span of three years, 1870-73, a financial surplus of £5,840,134 was generated. With the increased salt duty, he also was successful in creating a surplus of £108,000. India had its first general census in 1871 during this period. Mayo's period of viceroyalty ended soon when he was murdered on his visit to Port Blair.

The next appointed Viceroy was Lord Northbrook (1872-1876). India's financial situation was better at this point of time due to his predecessor's reformatory measures. India's trade was also in an improved condition since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. He reduced the import duties to seven percent. Instead of lowering the salt tax, he remitted the income tax, a move in full favour of the wealthy class of India - both Indian and British. As the reminiscences of the Orissa famine of 1866 remain, there was a threat of famine in Bihar in 1873-74. Another significant development during his time was the deposition of Malhar Rao, Gaekwar of Baroda for the misgovernment and attempt to poison the British Resident, Colonel Phayre. The Gaekwar had to face court of trial and was declared guilty. He was secretly taken to Madras and the British installed a minor prince as the new Gaekwar. Baroda was not annexed, but whatever reason or clause had been given for the deposition of the ruler, the British had control in the affairs of the state as long as the present ruler remained minor. The next development was the visit of Prince of Wales in 1875-76. The Prince of Wales was later Edward VII who was announced Emperor of India in the Curzon's Durbar in 1903. The Duke of Edinburgh had visited India in 1869-70. The chronicler of the visit of Prince of Wales says, "The narrative of the Duke's adventures was very tempting, and I believe the Prince of Wales lost no time in

¹⁵ P. E. Roberts, *History of British India Under the Company and the Crown*, New Delhi, 1983, (First published in 1923), p. 417.

telling Lord Mayo that he intended to see India at an early day”.¹⁶ The Prince toured whole of India and met native princes of India.

Lord Northbrook was succeeded by Lord Lytton, the one who summoned the Durbar or the Imperial Assemblage as he christened it. His period witnessed one of the most severe famines, also called the Great Famine of 1876-78. It affected most of the south including Madras, Hyderabad and Mysore and also south-western parts of India including Bombay. In due course of time, the famine spread to north, central and north-western parts of India. Punjab was also affected by famine. The famine was followed by pestilence of cholera and fever. It was reported that 5.5 million people died in India and two million acres of land turned unfit for cultivation. The famine led to a fiscal deficit of £ 2,250,00 due to loss of land revenue. Even before the famine took a severe form, the climatic conditions in India were not favourable. Monsoon failure of 1876 had already created the ground for a crisis situation in the south. There were also popular protests from different parts of India, specially south and Bombay due to hike in prices of commodities. The demand for cotton in the factories of Britain had led to a substitution of cultivation of gram with cotton production. There was no storage of grains in the individual household and village reserves as it “had been largely supplanted since the Mutiny by merchant inventories and the cash nexus”.¹⁷ The surplus production of wheat and rice in the previous years was also exported to Britain when millions starved to death in India. Hoarding also went in parallel when merchants hid the grains stock.

It is to note that when famine and the unpredicted Russian threat existed, Lytton made preliminary arrangements for his Assemblage to announce to the world the new title assumed by Queen Victoria. Famine relief measures were implemented. Richard Temple was sent on a deputation to examine the famine stricken areas and report on the famine relief measures. He writes, “My inspection began, in January 1877, on the banks of river Tumbadra, dividing the Madras Presidency from the Nizam’s dominions, and extended through the Madras territory known as the Ceded districts... The aspect of the country at that time was dreary and desolate in the extreme. The plains of black soil stretched widely, but were for the most part without vegetation... The town of Adoni, near the border of Madras Presidency, on the main line from Madras to Bombay, was the centre of perhaps

¹⁶ George Wheeler, *India in 1875-76, The Visit of the Prince of Wales: A Chronicle of His Royal Highness’s Journeyings in India, Ceylon, Spain, and Portugal*, London, 1876, p. 2.

¹⁷ Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World*, London, 2001, p. 26.

the greatest distress”.¹⁸ In spite of death and starvation, the Durbar happened in pomp and splendour and with enough food to feed the British and Indian invitees.

3.2. The Great Game: Relation with Afghanistan

Afghanistan, located in the north-west boundary of British India, was a zone of strategic and military importance. The British always looked with suspicion at this particular region as they always feared a Russian invasion of India through Afghanistan. Due to this fear, Britain and the British India were wary of any developments in this area. The location of Afghanistan also added to this. It was a landlocked region adjacent to the unstable Punjab and the rival of British Empire - Russia. The British always dreaded growing Russian influence in this area and the conflict for supremacy in Central Asia between British Empire and Russian Empire by occupying Afghanistan constituted the Great Game. Even before the Revolt, the British had met Afghanistan in the first Anglo-Afghan war in 1839-1842. The relation with Afghanistan constituted one of the most integral constituents of British India's foreign policy. The annexation of Punjab in 1849 had opened up adjacent territories to India that now the borders of British India reached to the foothills of Afghan mountains. Nevertheless, it remained flexible and no fixed boundary was drawn. The province of Afghanistan was inhabited by tribes, among which a prominent tribe was the Pathan. “They were fierce, turbulent, and treacherous, always ready for plundering expeditions and raids over the frontier, and a constant source of embarrassment to the government of Punjab”.¹⁹ In the post-Revolt period, things took a significant turn when the Amir of Afghanistan, Dost Mohammad Khan, died in 1863. This led to a war of succession between his sixteen sons. After a series of battles, Sher Ali Khan established himself as the next Amir. It is to note that Dost Mohammad had remained loyal to the British during the events of 1857. Nevertheless, Sir John Lawrence, the Viceroy of India at this point of time considered non-interference in the affairs of Afghanistan to be the best option and simultaneously maintain friendly relation with it when Afghanistan was going through a phase of fratricidal war. By now, Russia started advancing southwards from Central Asia towards the northern borders of Afghanistan. Russia had already annexed neighbouring Khanates of Kokand and Bukhara. Tashkent and Samarkand were

¹⁸ Sir Richard Temple, *Men and Events of My Time in India*, London, 1882, pp. 444-445.

¹⁹ Roberts, *History of British India*, p. 406.

annexed in 1865 and 1868 respectively. This alarmed the British and John Lawrence informed the home government to initiate talks with Russia to demarcate the spheres of influence of their respective empires. In spite of these developments, though he urged the home government to initiate talks, John Lawrence found it expedient not to send the British troops to Afghanistan. He believed that if ever Russia decided to invade India, it was wise to give a counter attack on familiar territories of India, than in an unfavourable terrain of Afghanistan with hostile people. He strongly believed that “the first invaders of Afghanistan, whether British or Russian, would be received as foes, while the next would be hailed as friends and deliverers”.²⁰

On the other side, Sher Ali was already unhappy with the British as the latter chose to not to offer help during times of crises whereas Russia was willing to help Sher Ali. In the midst of these developments, John Lawrence was succeeded by Lord Mayo. The new Viceroy also followed his predecessor’s policy of non-interference. By now Afghanistan issue had become an important aspect of the Central Asian politics. With the fall of Khiva in 1873, Sher Ali sent an envoy to Simla seeking help in case territories of Afghanistan were attacked. Lord Northbrook gave word back that Russia had assured Britain that Afghanistan was outside her sphere of influence. He also promised money, supplies and troops in crisis situation. This did not satisfy the Amir and added to his distrust on the British. It was at this time that the government changed in Britain. The Liberal government was replaced by a Conservative ministry and Benjamin Disraeli and Lord Salisbury were appointed the new Prime Minister and Secretary of State for India respectively. The new government’s attitude and approach to the whole Central Asian question were sceptic and apprehensive. Salisbury was not satisfied with the existing state of affairs and suggested the appointment of British Resident in Afghanistan. Lord Northbrook was against this proposal suggesting that any pressure exerted on Amir to receive a Resident would lead to unwanted consequences. The difference of opinion between the two grew and later Northbrook resigned. The new Viceroy was Lord Lytton. Lytton shared the same aspirations and attitude of the government and initiated a new foreign policy with new vigour, diplomacy and imperial objectives. He was ready to offer all the favours that Sher Ali sought like fixing an annual subsidy and recognition of his younger son Abdulla Jan as the heir to the throne of Afghanistan. But Lytton put a twist to this offer by stating that these were to be granted only if Sher Ali allowed the stationing of a British Resident at

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 410-411.

Herat. An Indian Muslim was already there as a British agent in Afghanistan. Lytton was ready to send a mission and form a defensive alliance only if the Amir fulfilled the condition put forward by the British. Sher Ali was also asked to receive a complimentary mission from India which would announce to him the new title 'Empress of India' assumed by Queen Victoria. Amir refuted this proposal saying it to be not necessary. It was reported back to India that if he allowed a British agent in his territories, then Russians were also entitled to the same status, which he could not refuse. In spite of this reply, Lytton adamantly pressed on to the disagreeable condition. He, who was also a poet and essayist, stated that the position of Afghanistan between Britain and Russia was that 'of an earthen pipkin between two iron pots' and if the Amir maintained friendly relation with the British, the troops of the British would 'spread around him as a ring of iron, and if he became our enemy, it could break him as a reed'.²¹

Another development which exacerbated the already unresolved issues between Britain and Afghanistan was the occupation of Quetta by the British in November 1876 as a result of the treaty arrangement between the British and Khan of Kalat. Quetta was a strategic place and whoever occupies Quetta gets an easy access to Afghanistan through Bolan pass. Sher Ali viewed this as a move by the British to occupy Kandahar and Herat. Still talks continued between the representatives of Britain and Afghanistan and the Amir unwaveringly refused to accept a British Resident as he was aware that the presence of a white man would trigger off a popular revolt. Even his position as the ruler could be threatened and the protection of the British officers could also not be guaranteed. Sher Ali, who did not want any foreign inferences in his territory, after realizing Britain's standpoint, moved towards Russia for deliberations. Russia by this time had had crossed the Balkans and forcefully tried to enter into treaty arrangement with Turkey which was checked by Britain. The British knew that Russia had the capability to be a threat to the foundations of British India. Amir entered into an alliance and a treaty of friendship with Russia. Lytton received the news of the Russian presence and he immediately sent an English envoy to Afghanistan, whether the Amir wished it or not. On November 21, 1878 war was declared against the Amir marking the beginning of second Anglo-Afghan war. Even before the commencement of war, Lytton had anticipated a war with Afghanistan and he clearly wanted to avert Russian advance into India through Afghanistan. Through

²¹ Ibid, p. 434.

the Imperial Assemblage, he hoped to rally around the British, the support of the native princes for this cause.

3.3. The Royal Titles Act

A context that came as a precedent and reason for the summoning of the Delhi Durbar was the Royal Titles Act of 1876. The suggestion to add a title to Queen's royal style was also within the phase of the changed attitude of the British in the post-Revolt period. In its germinal stage, the idea of an assumption of a new title was just Victoria's desire to have a new title adding to her royal privileges. She also wanted to equate herself, with the new title, to the Russian emperor. In this plain sense, the title did not have any high political motive or was not part of any political agenda. But the Queen had the support of her Prime Minister Disraeli. She urged him to introduce Royal Titles Bill in the Parliament. It is also to note that just before the introduction of Bill, the Prince of Wales had returned from a successful tour of India. The Prince was overwhelmed by the warmth with which India and native princes received him. "No doubt the success of the visit, especially with the Indian princes, was a stimulus to the new title".²² If one looks at the title from a pragmatic point of view, the title did not grant any additional power on the Queen over the Indian subjects. The Opposition was aware of this and the Bill, when introduced in Parliament, met with rigid resistance.

When a new title was contemplated, the titles of 'Empress of Canada' or 'Empress of Australia' were not considered. India was the most important possession of the British Empire and with the new title, the government hoped to bond the native princes of India to the Crown. It was crucial in the wake of an imminent attack of India by Russia. Thus, the title could also be utilised to accrue political and military advantages from native princes' side. There is no denial to this fact that the British expected to redefine the status of princes, but obviously subordinate to the British. Durbar provided "an opportunity of guaranteeing territorial integrity once for all in return for the principle of submission".²³ The acceptance of the British paramountcy by native princes was something that was never compromised. Lytton also expected to enhance the significance of the new title by announcing it in a ceremonial space grandly and thereby elicit support for famine relief

²² Knight, 'The Royal Titles Act and India', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1968, p. 490.

²³ Ibid., p. 497.

measures and a war, if Russia invaded India. The announcement that the Queen assumed a new title could also have been declared without summoning an ostentatious Durbar. It could have been announced through a proclamation in all Indian languages read across India. But considering the conditions in India and developments in the Afghan border, Lytton had the intention of 'proclaiming an imperial policy with the title'.²⁴ He believed that such occasions of enormous significance could hardly be postponed. In spite of the criticism and resistance questioning the necessity of the new title, the Bill was passed in the Parliament.

By the Royal Titles Act, though it was decided to proclaim Queen Victoria, the Empress of India, the question of its translation to the vernacular language came up. There occurred a series of discussions as to what would be the apt translation to the title 'Empress of India'. *Shah-in-shah*, *Badshah*, *Chakravartini*, *Adhiraj* and *Kakan* were some of the titles recommended as an equivalent for the new title. The British were, however, very particular that the translation should express the imperial character of Britain and should elicit the loyalty of the people belonging to different faiths and spheres of life. It was very essential to demolish the image of the Mughal Emperor through the new title. Thus, the title *Kaiser-i-Hind* was accepted as the appropriate translation, a title proposed by G.W. Leitner, professor of Oriental Languages and Principal of the Government College, Lahore. He was able to convince the government that the title was quite familiar to the natives of India as they were used by the Muslim writers in relation to the Roman Caesar. Leitner found in the title an appropriate blend of Roman 'Caesar', German 'Kaiser' and Russian 'Czar' titles. *Kaiser-i-Hind* was readily accepted as it did not have any association with Hindu or Muslim titles.

L.A. Knight believes the new title to have inaugurated a new imperial polity thereby making the relationship between the Crown and native princes unambiguous. Now there arises two questions as to why the adoption of such a new title after a period of eighteen years, which could have been assumed earlier when the transfer of power from Company to the Crown was announced in 1858. James Talboys Wheeler, in his official narrative asserts that such a proclamation at that point of time would have associated it with the "story of treachery and rebellion. It would have perpetuated the memory of the foulest event in the annals of British India...The Imperial Assemblage at Delhi has thus been a

²⁴ Ibid., p. 496.

festival of peace. It had not been held at the close of a victorious war”.²⁵ The second question is whether the change in nomenclature, from ‘Queen’ to ‘Empress’ led to any change in the relationship between the Crown and the native princes. Though the title was changed, it did not elevate the status of the princes. They were not treated on an equal footing. In every possible way, the British tried to impose and manifest its paramountcy. Whatever justifications were given by the Viceroy, it is true that the title did not bring any benefit in actual sense to Indians. It was more of a symbolic significance without any change in the nature of administration.

Prior to the assumption of the new title ‘Empress of India’, the Royal Style and Title of Queen Victoria was, ‘Victoria, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith’. The assumption of the new title of ‘Empress of India’ was to recognize the transfer of government from Company to the Crown by means of an addition to the style and titles of Queen Victoria, as explained by the initiators of the title. However, this move was severely criticized by the contemporaries in England and was viewed as a brainchild of Disraeli. Though it met with opposition, the Bill was passed in 1876 and the Queen became Empress of India. In Latin tongue, it was called *Indiæ Imperatrix*. Later, it was decided that as the assumption of the new title was a significant event, it needed to be proclaimed to the world. The British, who by now realized the importance of the cooperation of the native princes in the sustenance of the British Indian Empire, decided that declaration should be made in a pompous manner with elaborate rituals in the presence of the native chiefs and other native gentlemen. The Queen’s proclamation was read in Delhi and all throughout the country. The Durbar had within it, this subtle agenda. Thus, it is of importance to have a glimpse of the ceremonies that were witnessed in the Durbar which reaffirmed the subordinate status of India. Lytton was very particular in calling this Durbar, Imperial Assemblage. However, the succeeding assemblages held in 1903 and 1911 were called ‘Durbars’. Though the 1877 event was officially called Imperial Assemblage, the term Durbar was in currency.

3.4. Ceremonies at the Durbar

The site chosen for proclamation was a place outside Delhi where three structures were built, viz, Throne Pavilion for the Viceroy, an amphitheatre for the high officials and

²⁵ Wheeler, *The History of Imperial Assemblage*, pp. 43-44.

ruling chiefs, and blocks for representatives of foreign governments and spectators. The Throne Pavilion was a hexagon shaped structure with each side having a length of forty feet. It was a massive structure of blue, red and gold. The amphitheatre for the high officials and ruling chiefs was a pavilion of blue, white and gold in semi-circle shape divided into thirty six compartments. It was in front of the Throne Pavilion and stretched out nearly eight hundred feet. Along with these three important structures, a number of tents and pavilions were also set up on the surrounding plain. Wheeler in his official chronicle describes the English and native camps and brings out the differences between them. The English camps were built on the ridge which was occupied by the British army in 1857. The English camps stood apart due to their simplicity. Two rows of tents with a pavilion at one end constituted one camp. These two rows of tents formed a wide street which was decorated with turf and flowers. The size and appearance of the tents and pavilions varied according to the ranks of the officials occupying the camp. The Viceroy's tents were spacious tent houses and his pavilion appeared to be a canvas palace. When compared to this, the arrangements made in the camps of Governors, Lieutenant-Governors and Chief Commissioners were on a smaller scale. The camps of foreign consuls, attaches and representatives of the press were like a banqueting room.

The native camps represented a multitude of colours. The style, by which they were made, represented ancient or the Mughal kind. There was a fusion of different colours like blue, scarlet, gold and other ornamental accessories. Bands of horsemen, camels, caparisoned elephants with highly ornamented *howdahs* added more colour to this picturesque canvas.

Principal chiefs, nobles and native gentlemen of India were invited to this Durbar. Following were the ruling chiefs who were present at the Durbar.²⁶

Ajaigarh, the Maharaja of.

Alipura, the Jagirdar of.

Alwar, the Maharao Raja of.

Belaspur, the Raja of.

Bamra, the Raja of.

Baroda, the Gaekwar of.

Beronda, the Raja of.

Bijawur, the Maharaja of.

²⁶ Ibid., Appendix I, pp. 132-133.

Bhopal, the Begum of.
Bhurtpore, the Maharaja of.
Bhaunagar, the Thakur Sahib of.
Bhawalpur, the Nawab of.
Bundi, the Maharao Raja of.
Chamba, the Raja of.
Charkari, the Maharaja of.
Chatarpur, the Raja of.
Dattia, the Maharaja of.
Dewas, the Raja of (junior batch).
Dhar, the Raja of.
Dholpur, the Rana of.
Dojana, the Nawab of.
Faridkot, the Raja of.
Gwalior, the Maharaja of.
Hyderabad, the Nizam of.
Indore, the Maharaja of.
Jaipur, the Maharaja of.
Jammu and Cashmere, the Maharaja of.
Jaurah, the Nawab of.
Jhallawar, the Maharaj Rana of.
Jhind, the Raja of.
Jigini, the Rao of.
Jodhpur, the Maharaja of.
Junagarh, the Nawab of.
Kalsia, the Sirdar of.
Karauli, the Maharaja of.
Khairpur, the Mir of.
Kharond, the Raja of.
Kishengarh, the Maharaja of.
Kondka, the Mahant of.
Kuch Behar, the Raja of.
Loharu, the Nawab of.
Mysore, the Maharaja of.

Maler Kotla, the Nawab of.
 Mandi, the Raja of.
 Morvi, the Thakur Sahib of.
 Nabha, the Raja of.
 Nahan, the Raja of.
 Nandgaon, the Mahant of.
 Nauanagar, the Jam of.
 Paldeo, the Jagirdar of.
 Panna, the Raja of.
 Pataudi, the Nawab of.
 Piploda, the Thakur of.
 Rajpipla, the Raja of.
 Ratlam, the Raja of.
 Rewah, the Maharaja of.
 Sampthar, the Raja of.
 Suket, the Raja of.
 Tehri, the Raja of.
 Tonk, the Nawab of.
 Tori-Fatehpur, the Rao of
 Udaipur, the Maharana of.
 Urcha, the Maharaja of.

Lytton made his public entry into Delhi on December 23, 1876. The city of Delhi became the converging point of people from different parts of the territory. They included Afghans, Baluchis from Khelat, Bengalis, Hindustanis, Burmese and Siamese. Wheeler says, "there was every variety of colour and costume, from the cheap calicoes and cloths of the multitude to the jewelled turbans and rich attire of Rajput and Mahratta chieftains".²⁷ The British troops were stationed on the line of route. The native princes also had their own troops and followers. The retinues of the ruling chiefs of Rajputana were disposed on the Lothian Road from Najafgarh Canal to the Chandni Chowk. The retinues of the Punjab chiefs were drawn up outside the Lahore Gate and those of the Gaekwar of Baroda, Maharaja of Mysore and the Nizam of Hyderabad were stationed on both sides of the road which ran along the ridge to the Flagstaff Tower. In the same way, the feudatory chiefs of

²⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

Bombay, the North-West Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bengal, Madras and Central India had their own position to be stationed. Lytton arrived at Delhi by special train on the afternoon of Saturday, December 23, 1877. Guns of salute were fired announcing his arrival. He and his wife were received at the station by the President in Council; the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, the North-West Provinces and Punjab; the Commander-in-Chief of India and other high civil and military officials. The 63 ruling chiefs also assembled at the railway station to receive the Viceroy. He thanked them for accepting his invitation and coming to Delhi to attend the Assemblage. After conversing with them, the Viceroy and his wife mounted the state elephant and followed by the British officials, proceeded in procession through the streets of Delhi, to the Viceregal camp. The procession was quite impressive. First the 11th Hussars came in followed by a Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery and the 3rd Bombay Cavalry with white head coverings. They were followed by the personal escort of the Viceroy in scarlet uniforms, Aides-de-camp on elephants, two in front. After them, rode in the Chief Herald of the Durbar in a tabard emblazoned with the arms of England. Next twelve trumpeters came forward on horseback (half Europeans and half natives) in scarlet uniforms carrying their silver heraldic trumpets. They were followed by body guards. As the Viceroy moved along the line of route, arms were presented by the British troops and the bands played the national anthem. Colours were also thrown on them.

In the same way, the retinues of the native princes paraded according to their respective national customs at the positions allotted to them. Drums and bands of music were played, their banners and insignia were exhibited and their troops were on horse, foot and elephant. Camel artillery stood in attention and saluted in oriental fashion. Next to them, a long line of elephants came in an ordered fashion. Staff of the Viceroy and two squadrons of the 10th Hussars rode by in blue and gold. Three elephants were assigned to each province. In this procession was present, Sir Henry Davies, Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab and staff; Sir George Couper, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces and staff, General Sir Frederic Haines, the Commander-in-Chief in India. Other officials appeared on horseback followed by another squadron of 10th Hussars. The procession of elephants carried the members of the Council of the Governor-General, the Chief Justices of the High Courts and the Secretaries to the Government of India. Another group of elephants marched in with native noblemen and gentlemen of high position (not ruling princes) who were dressed in oriental attire.

The elephants were succeeded by 3rd Madras Cavalry clad in light blue and silver uniform with red head coverings; the 4th Bengal Cavalry in scarlet and gold with blue turbans and waistband; Battery of Royal Horse Artillery and the 15th King's Hussars. The procession which started from railway station, proceeded towards Juma Masjid, entered Chandni Chowk, crossed it and exited out of Delhi through the Lahore Gate. It then traversed the famous *Sabzi Mundi* or Vegetable Market, which was one of the venues of the battles fought during the Great Siege. It also went along the ridge which was held by the British troops in 1857. It passed the pillar of Asoka and the house of Hindu Rao (which was defended during the Siege). It reached the camp of Viceroy after marching nearly six miles and thus was brought to an end. The whole procession took almost three hours. Thus, from the day of public entry itself, the British took every care to create an aura of awe in the minds of the natives. An elaborate and colourful parade established the reality of the British Empire in the hearts of the people of India. All symbols of authority or sovereignty were carefully used. For instance, elephants had been a symbol of power and position in India from ancient times. A common man could never lead a procession on elephant. It was always the men in power who could lead a procession seated on an elephant with *howdah*. Through the public entry in procession on elephant, the British emphasized and reaffirmed their paramount status over the native minds.

From December 26 to 28, 1876 the Viceroy received visits from native chiefs and returned the visits to those who were entitled to that honour. They included the Governor-General of the Portuguese settlements in India; the Khan of Kalat; the foreign ambassadors and envoys; and seventy-seven of the principal native chiefs, ruling and titular present at Delhi. The chiefs were received ceremonially and presented to the Viceroy. "The Viceroy then entered into conversation, taking care to refer to any distinguished service rendered to the British Government by the Chief or his ancestors; to any great work of public utility constructed, or being constructed, in the territory of Chief; to any special measure in the Chief's administration; or any public act deserving of warm approval or commendation. The banner of the Chief, richly blazoned with his armorial bearings, surmounted with the Imperial Crown, was then brought in by Highland soldiers, and planted in front of the throne".²⁸

In these receptions, the Viceroy presented to the ruling chiefs, the banners and gold medals commemorative of the Assemblage sanctioned by the Queen's Government. He

²⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

announced to the native chiefs and princes, the special concessions and acts of grace which the Queen or the Viceroy had been pleased to bestow upon them. When conferring the banners and medals, the Viceroy addressed each Chief as follows.

“I present Your Highness with this Banner as a personal gift from Her Majesty the Queen in commemoration of Her assumption of the title of Empress of India. Her Majesty trusts that it may never be unfurled without reminding you, not only of the close union between the Throne of England and your loyal and princely House, but also of the earnest desire of the Paramount Power to see your dynasty strong, prosperous, and permanent. I further decorate you, by command of the Queen and Empress, with this Medal. May it be long worn by yourself, and long kept as an heirloom by your family, in remembrance of the auspicious date it bears”.²⁹

3.5. The Proclamation Day

January 1, 1877 was the Durbar Day - the day on which Queen Victoria was proclaimed the Empress of India. Elaborate arrangements were made for the announcement of this news to the people of India. The Lieutenant-Governors, ruling chiefs with their main attendants and other high officials of the government sat in the amphitheatre facing the Viceregal throne. Special care was taken to make these ruling chiefs sit intermingling. “Sixty-three Ruling Chiefs of India were present in the Amphitheatre...In the centre of the Amphitheatre were the three boy princes of India,—the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Gaekwar of Baroda, and the Maharaja of Mysore. On the right were the Ruling Chiefs of Rajputana, including the young Maharana of Udaipur and the Maharajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur. On the left were the Ruling Chiefs of Central India, including Maharaja Scindia, Maharaja Holkar, and other representatives of the extinct Mahratta empire. At the extreme left were the Ruling Chiefs of the Punjab and the Maharaja of Kashmir. The remaining compartments were occupied by Chiefs of minor note, more or less dependent on the Governments of Madras, Bombay, Bengal, the North-West Provinces and the Central Provinces: feudatories in fact of the local Governments, rather than of the Government of India...Amongst the European authorities present in the Amphitheatre, it may suffice to name His Excellency the Duke of Buckingham, Governor of Madras; His Excellency Sir Philip Wodehouse, Governor of Bombay; Sir Richard

²⁹ Government of India, Foreign Department, Pol.A, File No: 286-496, Proceeding No. 317, December, 1877, *NAI*.

Temple, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal; Sir George Couper, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces; General Sir Frederic Haines, the Commander-in-Chief in India; the Chief Commissioners of Oudh, the Central Provinces, Mysore, Burma, and Assam; Members of Council, Judges, Secretaries to Government, and other High Officials”.³⁰ There were spectator’s seat in the pavilions erected to the right and left of the Throne Pavilion which were occupied by ambassadors, envoys and deputations including those from Nepal and Siam, the Khan of Kalat, Governor-General of the Portuguese Settlements in India; the foreign envoys and consular body; large number of European ladies and gentlemen, native noblemen and gentlemen from all parts of India. The general public was admitted to the area behind the amphitheatre. Both the British troops and native troops were stationed on the plain around in a vast circle. Guards of honour were also stationed on both sides of the Throne Pavilion and at the different entrances to the amphitheatre.

The seating arrangement for the Durbar was carefully done to avoid any questions of precedence. The princes were seated in a semi-circular manner, according to their regional location, say from north to south. The Viceroy was seated on the Viceregal dais which was at the centre surrounded by his personal staff and family members. The princes sitting in the front row were at an equal distance from the Viceroy on the dais. This kind of arrangement averted the question as to who was superior to the other. The Geakwar of Baroda, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Maharaja of Mysore were seated in the centre of the seats in a special section. The rest of the grand stand was divided province by province or agency by agency.

The ruling chiefs started arriving to the venue in their state carriages accompanied by retainers and soldiers. The invited guests, ambassadors, envoys and deputations from Nepal and Siam (Thailand), foreign consuls, European ladies and gentlemen & general public were already seated and the British troops were stationed on the plain north of the pavilion by the time the Viceroy arrived. The entry of Lord Lytton was impressive. He was accompanied by Lady Lytton and other members of the royal family. The Viceroy’s arrival was announced by the blowing of trumpets. He was greeted by the people assembled with a standing ovation and by the playing of grand march by the military bands. The Viceroy, in the collar, badge, and robes of the Grand Master of the Star of India, advanced towards the Throne Pavilion preceded by the personal staff. As he took his seat upon the throne, the bands played national anthem and the guards of honour presented the arms. The chief

³⁰ Wheeler, *The History of Imperial Assemblage*, pp. 73-74.

herald then read the Queen's proclamation in English and later it was also read in Urdu by Thornton, the Officiating Foreign Secretary to the Government of India. At its conclusion, the royal standard was hoisted in the Queen and Empress' honour; a grand salute of 101 salvos of artillery was fired, interspersed with *feux de joie* at intervals from the combined lines of British and native infantry.³¹ National anthem was played by the military bands followed by the music of the march in 'Tannhause'. After a pause, the Viceroy rose and delivered an address where he clearly explained the intentions of the Queen in assuming the new title and described to the people of India the foundation, growth and character of British supremacy and asserted its permanency.

3.6. The Viceroy's Speech

Beginning with an introductory retrospection of the Queen's proclamation, Lytton stated that the present Assemblage was a visible confirmation of the fulfilment of all the promises guaranteed in 1858. The Viceroy's speech on the proclamation day was more of promises to the natives, assurances to the native princes and congratulations to the British servants. He stressed that the addition of the new title was a permanent symbol of the Queen's interests with that of the princes and people of India and its claim for their loyal allegiance. The religious right of the natives, irrespective of their community, to follow the rules and rights of their religion was also assured by him. The address to the British administrators and faithful officers began with a congratulatory note. Their continued labours were appreciated and gratitude was expressed in the name of the Queen. He acknowledged their persevering energy, public virtue and self-devotion. The readiness of the members of the civil and military services to take responsibility and discipline amidst a population whose language, creed and customs were different was acclaimed. Lytton stated that the Queen with pride acknowledged the heroic achievements of the officers and soldiers of the British and native army and appreciated the manner by which they have upheld the honour of her arms. She further entrusted them with the charge of maintaining peace and order in her Indian dominions. The loyal and successful efforts of the volunteer soldiers were also recognized.

³¹ *Feu de joie* is a rifle salute fired by soldiers on a ceremonial occasion, each soldier firing in succession along the ranks to make a continuous sound. The term means fire of joy.

The Viceroy expressed the Queen's thanks to the princes and chiefs of India for their willingness to help her government during the time of crisis. He further added that it was with the desire to perpetuate the intimate relations between the Crown and princes and chiefs that the new imperial title was assumed by the Queen.

Addressing the native subjects, he said that the present conditions and interests of the Empire demand the supervision and management of administration by English officials trained in western political principles which were necessary to sustain the imperial rule. However, he asserted that the Government of India recognizes the claim of the natives to have a share, according to their capacity, in the administration of the country irrespective of caste and creed. He added that the administration of this Empire demands a high moral and social superiority from the natives' natural leaders who are distinguished by birth, rank and hereditary influence. High intellectuality was not just the sole criterion as qualification to be part of the administration. Therefore, the British expect from the native side, adoption of public virtue comprising loyalty, incorruptibility, impartiality, truth and courage which would lead to the consideration of their co-operation in the administration by the government. Allegiance of a uniform population was far more important than the strength of the armies.

The Viceroy also announced that the duties and interests of the British were not restricted within the boundaries of the British Empire. For this reason, Britain earnestly desires to maintain cordial relations with the rulers of neighbouring states adjoining the borders of British India. Simultaneously, Lytton cautioned that any encroachment into the territories of British Empire in India would be dealt with enormous seriousness. He called all those states that had sent representatives to the Assemblage as 'Asiatic allies of the Empress of India'.

The Viceroy's speech had nothing new to offer. It, in a way, affirmed that Indians would be continued to be deprived of their right to serve in the executive, judiciary and military posts of the country. He won over the native aristocracy by declaring that birth would be the criteria for future admission into the civil service for Indians. The speech gave an assurance to the fact that the Queen desires the welfare of her subjects with a careful consideration of the rights of her feudatory princes. This reaffirmed that the rights and privileges of the princes would be continued to be acknowledged and respected, as promised in the proclamation of 1858. The decay of Mughal power was referred as a culmination of a phase when its rulers failed to secure internal peace.

As soon as the Viceroy finished his address, the whole of Assemblage rose and joined the troops in giving cheers. Many of the native chiefs took this opportunity to speak up. The first person to speak was Maharaja Scindia. He said, “Shah-in-Shah; Padshah, - May God bless you! The Princes of India bless you, and pray that your sovereignty (hukumat) and power may remain steadfast forever”.³² The Begum of Bhopal also spoke in a similar fashion. On behalf of the Nizam, Sir Salar Jung rose and spoke the following words.

“I am desired by the Nizam to request Your Excellency to convey to Her Majesty, on the part of himself and the Chiefs of India, the expression of their hearty congratulations upon Her assumption of the title of Empress of India, and to assure Her that they pray for Her long life and for the enduring prosperity of Her Empire both in India and England”.³³

In the same manner, the Maharajas of Udaipur and Jaipur offered their loyal congratulations to the Queen on her assumption of the new title. The Maharaja of Kashmir expressed his great satisfaction on Viceroy’s speech and added that his chief protection would be the shadow of Queen’s Empire. When the native chiefs had begun speaking, the Viceroy dissolved the Assemblage, and left the dais, with the same ceremonies as were observed on his arrival.

A state banquet was given by the Viceroy on the evening of the proclamation day. In the succeeding days, he was occupied in receiving and replying to addresses from municipal committees and other public bodies; in receiving farewell visits of ceremony from the native chiefs, ambassadors, and noblemen present in camp; and in the transaction of important official business. On Thursday, January 4, 1877, there was a farewell reception of the ruling chiefs. Each ruling chief was presented with items of esteem like sword together with a book, portrait or other items by the Viceroy. Even the suite and political officers accompanying them also received silver commemorative medals.

3.7. The Concluding Day

January 5, 1877 was the concluding day of the Imperial Assemblage. The day witnessed a review of troops. The review began with a procession of all the troops and

³² Government of India, Home Department, Public B, File No: 130, Proceeding No. 24, September, 1877, *NAI*.

³³ *Ibid*.

retainers of the ruling chiefs. The procession started at 11 o' clock. Though each chieftain was given the liberty to arrange his forces according to his pleasure, a general pattern of order was observed. Between the stationed body of British troops and the spectators, came in the infantry accompanied by a band playing European music on European instruments. The cavalry came next accompanied by kettledrums. The guns, if any, followed the cavalry with elephants, camels, litters, horses and retainers in a variety of costume. The banners presented by the Viceroy were also displayed on the back of elephants, some on camels and in some cases they were carried before the infantry. The horses and elephants were brightly caparisoned with elephants bearing magnificent trappings with gold and silver and highly ornamented *howdahs*. Besides the European music, there were performers playing native instruments as well. They either walked on foot or were carried on elephants and camels. The atmosphere was filled with the beating of kettle drums, clashing of cymbals and other wild music. Then, came in the well mounted cavalry. The officers had a uniform of red or blue, or bright yellow and gold. There were uniforms of every variety which included brass cuirasses and helmet; chain armour with steel morions and head dress which included enormous turban of the Sikh to the flat-twisted turban of the Maratha. Horses rode past the Viceroy. Two elephants were made to draw a golden car. The native infantry marched past the Viceroy with a band playing 'Home, Sweet Home'.

These processions of native troops and retinue were succeeded by the review of the British troops. Four hundred and thirty officers, and thirteen thousand four hundred and sixty-two men of the three presidencies, under the Commander-in Chief in India, passed in review order before the Viceroy, in the presence of the British and native visitors at the camp, the foreign representatives and a large number of spectators. The parade came to an end with the march past of the horse artillery and cavalry. At the close of the review, the Viceroy addressed the Commander-in-Chief and commanding officers. He thanked and expressed his admiration for the magnificent review of the troops which provided a fitting close to the proceedings of the week. The proceedings of the Assemblage were formally closed at sunset on the same day, by a salute of 101 guns from the flagstaff tower in the vicinity of the Viceregal camp and at 11 PM the Viceroy left for Patiala.

3.8. Other Acts of Concession

Though the Durbar was an occasion to announce to the world, the assumption of the new title by Queen Victoria, it was also accompanied by other acts of concession so that its effect reaches the different strata of society. The Durbar announced the increase in salutes assigned to different native princes and chiefs of India. It also initiated a new policy of 'life' salutes. The assignment of salutes to the chiefs determined their position in the public standing and the more salutes one had, the more elevated was his status. The Durbar was the venue where the additional or increased salutes were announced. It also fixed the salute of the Queen and Empress to one hundred and one guns, and the salutes for the Royal Flag and for the Viceroy and Governor-General of India to be thirty one guns.³⁴ The Gaekwar of Baroda, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Maharaja of Mysore were the rulers who had the highest number of salutes, the number being 21. The following is the revised table of salutes which was published after the approval of the Queen's government.³⁵

Salutes attached to Chiefships

Salutes of 21 guns

The Gaekwar of Baroda; The Nizam of Hyderabad; The Maharaja of Mysore

Salutes of 19 guns

The Begum (or Nawab) of Bhopal; The Maharaja of Gwalior; The Maharaja Holkar of Indore; The Maharaja of Jammu and Cashmere; The Khan of Khelat; The Raja of Kolhapur; The Maharana of Meywar (Udaipur); The Maharaja of Travancore

Salutes of 17 guns

The Nawab of Bhawulpur; The Maharaja of Bhurtpoor; The Maharaja of Bikaner; The Maharao Raja of Bundi; The Raja of Cochin; The Maharaja of Jaipur; The Maharaja of Karauli; The Maharao of Kotah; The Rao of Kutch, The Maharaja of Marwar (Jodhpur); The Maharaja of Pattiala; The Maharaja of Rewah

Salutes of 15 guns

The Maharao Raja of Alwar; Senior Raja & Junior Raja of Dewas; The Maharaja of Dhar; The Rana of Dholpur; The Maharawul of Dunganpur; The Maharaja of Dattia; The Maharaja of Edur; The Maharawul of Jassalmir; The Maharaj Rana of Jhallawar;

³⁴ Government of India, Foreign Department, Pol.A, File No: 286-496, Proceeding No. 322, December, 1877, *NAI*.

³⁵ *Ibid*.

Mir Ali Murad Khan of Khairpur; The Maharaja of Kisengarh; The Raja of Partabgarh; The Rao of Serohi; The Maharaja of Sikkim; The Maharaja of Urcha (Tehri)

Salutes of 13 guns

The Maharaja of Benares; The Nawab of Jaurah; The Raja of Kuch Behar; The Nawab of Rampur; The Raja of Rutlam; The Raja of Tipperah

Salutes of 11 guns

The Maharaja of Ajeygarh; The Maharawul of Banswara; The Nawab of Baoni; The Thakur of Bhaunagar; The Maharaja of Bijawar; The Nawab of Cambay; The Maharaja of Chirkari; The Raja of Chamba; The Raja of Chatterpur; The Raj Sahib of Drangdra; The Raja of Faridkot; The Raja of Jhabua; The Raja of Jhind; The Nawab of Junagarh; The Raja of Kahlur (Bilaspur); The Raja of Kapurthalla; The Raja of Mandi; The Raja of Nabha; The Jam of Nauanagar; The Raja of Narsingarh; The Dewan of Pahlampur; The Rana of Porbandar; The Maharaja of Panna; The Nawab of Radhanpur; The Nawab of Rajgarh; The Raja of Rajpipla; The Raja of Sitamau; The Raja of Silanna; The Raja of Sirmur (Nahan); The Raja of Suket; The Maharaja of Sampathar; The Nawab of Tonk

Salutes of 9 guns

The Rana of Alirajpur; The Babee of Balasinor; The Raja of Baria; The Rana of Barwani; The Raja of Chota Udaipur; The Sultan of Fudhli; The Sultan of Lahej; The Rana of Lunawara; The Nawab of Maler Kotla; The Raja of Nagode; The Sir Desai of Sawant Wari; The Raja of Sonth.

Many of the chiefs were awarded personal salutes which varied from 9 to 21. The conciliation of native chiefs was revealed when they were included into the Indian order of knighthood called the 'Star of India' as a means for strengthening the bond of loyalty between the Crown and the princes who had not rebelled in 1857. The Durbar also made fresh appointments to the first, second and third classes of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India. Many personal titles were also granted like Maharaja, Maharani, Raja Bahadur, Raja, Rao Bahadur, Rai Bahadur, Rao Sahib, Rao, Rai, Sirdar Bahadur, Sirdar, Thakur Rawut, Thakur, Nawab, Diwan Bahadur, Diwan, Khan Bahadur and Khan. The Gaekwar of Baroda, the Maharaja of Gwalior and the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir were granted the title of *Farzand-i-Khas-i-Daulat-i-Inglishia*, *Hisam-us-Saltanat*, *Indar Mahindar Bahadur Sipar-i-Saltanat* respectively.³⁶

³⁶ Ibid.

A number of native officers were admitted to the 1st and 2nd classes of the Order of British India with titles of *Sirdar Bahadur* and *Bahadur* respectively from Bengal, Madras and Bombay. A day's pay was also granted to every petty officer and seaman and to every non-commissioned officer and Private of the Royal Marines on board in the vessels of the Royal Navy serving in the Indian seas. Every non-commissioned officer and soldier, British or native, of the Queen's army in India, and every non-commissioned officer and Private of the Volunteer Force present at the Durbar were granted a day's pay including good-conduct pay.

As part of the Durbar, it was decided to give some concessions to the Muslim community of Delhi and thereby appease them. Some of the mosques in Delhi were transferred to the hands of Hindus after the Revolt in the government auction made under the category of confiscated property. The government realizing the need of the hour decided to restore them back to the Muslims. Though many mosques were recommended for this, like Fattehpuri Mosque, mosque of Macula Sadruddin Khan and a ruined mosque adjoining a Gurudwara in the Chandni Chowk at the Kotwali, the transfer of the precincts of the Fattehpuri Mosque to the Muslims was sanctioned by the Viceroy. In the case of Zinat-ul-Masjid, a mosque near the palace, long closed on military grounds, it was decided that the military authorities would offer no objection to the opening of the mosque to public worship provided some regulations are made preventing the assembling therein of large crowds. The mosque of Sadra-i-Sadur were decided to be left in the present condition as the Viceroy thought the interference with the mosque in the vicinity of the Sikh Gurudwara to be undesirable.³⁷ Further the archival documents show that the Viceroy and the Governor-General sanctioned Rs.1000 to the trustees of the Jama Masjid for its repair.³⁸ It can be said that the new appeasing measures extended towards the Muslims was to win them over and avert any further occurrences of dissatisfaction from their side. It was also a very important political measure which brought tremendous effect to the Durbar.

In addition to all the above measures and in order to mark the day with the benevolent concessions of the government, nearly 16,000 prisoners were released throughout India, even in remote districts. As an act of clemency and grace, the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council resolved to release certain number of sentences against

³⁷ Government of India, Foreign Department, Pol.B, File No: 872-875, December, 1877, *NAI*.

³⁸ Government of India, Foreign Department, Pol.B, File No: 876-77, No. 56.D.C.P., December, 1877, *NAI*.

criminals in all the jails all through India, in the Penal Settlement of Port Blair and in the Straits Settlements. Four different classes of prisoners considered were; i) General offenders ii) Civil prisoners iii) Political prisoners iv) Prisoners at Port Blair. However, certain conditions were put for the release of prisoners in each category. Firstly, in the case of general offenders, the Governor General in Council had directed to release ten per cent of all the prisoners under confinement in each province on January 1, 1877, with care being taken to make the number released as evenly as possible over all localities. However, this act of clemency and grace excluded three classes of prisoners, European or native, namely those whose conduct during their jail was bad and wild; those whose crimes and their recommendation for release after twenty years of imprisonment at Port Blair did not fall under the terms of the resolution of the government of India; and those who had committed the crimes under such circumstances that their release was likely to lead to a renewal of animosities, or other disturbances which could threaten public peace and other professional criminals and prisoners who were convicted more than twice.

The three classes of general offenders, European or native, who were entitled to clemency in the ten percent, were those who were well behaved, but committed crime in a moment of anger; women who committed infanticide out of shame; those who committed their crimes under circumstantial pressure; those who were undergoing punishment at an early age for the crime they had done out of ignorance than with the motive of doing wrong; those whose term of punishment was expiated due to their good behaviour. Under this head fell few life-convicts who had undergone imprisonment for twenty years and were well behaved during their term of punishment.

Directions were also given with regard to the military prisoners, that whether European or native, they should not be released without previous communication with the Commander-in-Chief of each presidency. Prisoners released by ordinary efflux of time on January 1, 1877 were not to be included amongst those released under the ten per cent rule. Another category separately mentioned was the partial remission of sentence. This included the release of all persons under sentence of one month's imprisonment or less, who had worked out half their sentence on or before January 1, 1877. A remission of fifteen days was extended to those whose sentence was above one month's imprisonment and up to six months or less and all persons under sentence of above six months imprisonment were granted a remission of one month. All persons under sentence of above a year's imprisonment were granted a remission of one month for each year of their sentence. All remissions granted under these orders were restricted to well-conducted

convicts. The remission was not extended to those criminals who were convicted more than twice or to those who were committed to jail as security for keeping the peace; or to any person whose premature release was considered a disturbance to the public peace.

Secondly, in the case of civil prisoners, the Governor-General ordered the release of all whose debts did not exceed the sum of one hundred rupees. Thirdly, with regard to political prisoners, the Viceroy in Council was of the opinion that all those who were not considered dangerous may be recommended for release. With regard to the prisoners at Port Blair, the Governor-General in Council directed 278 male life-convicts and 90 female convicts to be released absolutely, 65 male and female term-convicts, and one Christian convict. Here is the total number of prisoners released.³⁹

a) Prisoners, including civil and political prisoners, released by				
local governments and administrations	...	...	...	15,317
b) Released at Port Blair	...	...	...	434
c) Prisoners released in the Straits and elsewhere	...	...	...	237
			Total	15,988

The shift in attitude was also reflected in the reconsideration of the terms of the amnesty granted in 1859. In order to portray the benevolent character of the British again, the Viceroy in Council announced that the leaders of revolt who were earlier denied amnesty was now entitled to that and could return to their homes on the condition of good behaviour in future. However, the Viceroy in Council made it clear that in case of leaving the boundaries of their districts; they needed to give previous notice to the District authorities. Nevertheless, none of these concessions were applicable to murderers and to Feroz Shah, the son of the late King of Delhi.

Another notification by the government of India in the financial department, dated January 1, 1877, Camp Delhi announced that in exercise of the power conferred by section 11 and section 28, clause (2) of the Indian Coinage Act 1870, the Governor-General in Council was pleased to direct that the inscription 'Victoria Empress' shall be substituted for the inscription 'Victoria Queen' on all coins "coined under the said Act on and after the 1st January 1877, and that the date of the calendar year, according to the Christian era, in which it is coined shall henceforth be put upon every such coin".⁴⁰

³⁹ Wheeler, *The History of Imperial Assemblage*, Appendix I, p. 150.

⁴⁰ Government of India, Foreign Department, Pol.A, File No: 286-496, December, 1877, *NAI*.

Though all the important and powerful noblemen were invited, the archival documents show that all of them could not attend it due to several reasons. Those native chiefs proclaimed the assumption of the new title in their states on a different date. For instance, Sir Desai of Sawant Wari was a native chief who was not able to come in person to the Durbar and receive the honour from the hands of the Viceroy due to the famine which affected his state Sawant Wari. So, to present him the Imperial Assemblage banner, a full dress Durbar was conducted at Sawant Wari. It was conducted on May 9, 1878 in the presence of all the principal sirdars, officers of the state and about 4000 inhabitants assembled there.⁴¹

3.9. Response of released prisoners

The reaction of the prisoners who were released was mixed. For some, it was like a dream come true and for some others it took considerable time to believe. The prisoners were taken by surprise that it took considerable amount of time in explaining to them the fact of their release and the occasion responsible for it. The Minute by Sir.E.C.Bayley explains that at Bara Banki in Oudh, a prisoner found it very difficult to believe the fact of being released that he went again and again to the Superintendent until he was convinced. In some of the jails in Oudh, the released prisoners refused to take the food offered in the jail before their release stating that as they were free men, they would eat only their own food. An account by the superintendent of the jail at Midnapur says that the released prisoners found all the developments to be a reverie, but understood the role played by Queen Victoria in it. The whole group showed spontaneous demonstrations of joy and dispersed into different directions like school boys let loose for a long holiday. The women released instantly expressed their happiness by bowing at the feet of the officers who ordered their release and cried and shouted out of joy. Another interesting case was that of a man who was declared by the medical authorities to be suffering from a paralytic affection of the lower extremities. This man, when called to receive the money for the expenses to home, to everyone's surprise, stood up, put his hand out to receive the money, saluted and walked off unsteadily. The medical officer of the jail remarked, "The case was

⁴¹ Government of India, Foreign Department, Pol.B, File No: 27-29, Proceeding No. 741, June, 1878, *NAI*.

beyond all doubt one of true paralysis, and its most serious form. I believe it was the effect of the shock on the nervous system which wrought such a change”.⁴²

The prisoners at Port Blair and Singapore showed marked satisfaction. A person who had spent best part of his life in prison said, “I shall find no one whom I remember at home, but at least I shall die - the sooner the better - among my own people”.⁴³ Another case was that of a woman, a life-prisoner, who was married to a term-convict whose term of imprisonment had expired. On hearing her name in the list of released prisoners, she, her husband and family all threw themselves on the officer who was reading out the list and started embracing him and blessing him.

The general public found this measure of release of prisoners as a graceful and appropriate act and indeed this was the effect which the British wanted when they initiated the proposal. The Minute says that an extremely small fraction of the large number set free reverted to crime again and only one or two cases were reported where the persons released were again arrested on criminal charges. The payment of liabilities of the prisoners confined for petty debts by the government was appreciated everywhere. “In the Central Provinces, at Seonee, a rich money lender at whose suit a good many debtors were in jail, as soon as he heard that all of them who owed him under Rupees 100 had their debts paid by Government, at once sent releases for all the rest in order to mark his appreciation of the liberality of Government and his own loyal feeling”.⁴⁴ Lord Lytton in his letter to Salisbury, the Secretary of State for India, dated February 2, 1877 mentions the chiefs who attended the Assemblage. He writes,

“The titular Chiefs and Native Gentlemen attending (exclusive of members of the suites of Ruling Chiefs) were nearly three hundred in number, comprising the flower of the Indian Nobility, and persons of distinction from almost every province of the Empire. Among them were the Prince of Arcot and the Princess of Tanjore from the Madras Presidency; the Maharaja Sir Jai Mangal Singh, and some of the principal land owners and citizens of Bengal; the Maharaja of Balrampur and the principal talukdars of Oudh; forty representatives of the most

⁴² Government of India, Foreign Department, Pol.A, File No: 286-496, Proceeding No. 493, December, 1877, *NAI*.

⁴³ *Ibid*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

distinguished families of the North-Western Provinces; scions of the ex-royal family of Delhi; descendants of the Saddozais of Cabul, and the Alora Chiefs of Sindh; Sikh Sardars from Amritsar and Lahore; Rajputs from the Kangra Hills; the semi-independent Chief of Amb, of the Hazara border ; Envoys from Chitral and Yassin; Ababs from Peshawur; Patan Chiefs from Kohat and the Northern Derajat; Biluch Tomanders from Dera Ghazi Khan; leading citizens from Bombay; Gond and Mahratta Nobles from the Central Provinces; Rajputs from Ajmere; and Natives of Burma; Central India, Mysore and Baroda. In addition to the Feudatories and Nobles of the Empire, His Excellency the Governor-General of the Portuguese Settlements in India; the Khan of Khelat; a deputation from the Sultan of Muscat; Ambassadors from His Majesty the King of Siam, and the Maharaj Adhiraj of Nepal; the Envoy from the Amir of Kashgar; the Foreign Consular Body; and a large concourse of English and Native officials and visitors were present as spectators”.⁴⁵

As part of giving publicity to the Queen’s newly assumed title, on the same date, Durbars, for the reading of the proclamation, were held in each district or division throughout British India and at the capitals of the native chiefs and princes absent from Delhi. The notables of each district such as jagirdars or honorary magistrates, members of municipal school, dispensary and other committees, principal citizens, land holders, persons who distinguished themselves by good service and loyalty to the British government were invited to the Durbar. In the Madras Presidency, the principal places where the Durbars were conducted were Tanjore, Bellary, South Arcot, Coimbatore, Cuddapah, Nilgiris and Nellore. In the Bombay Presidency, Durbars were held at various places like Cambay, Cutch, Satara, Nasik, Aden, Mahi Kanta, Kanara, Belgaum, Kolhapoor, Sawant Wari, Poona, Rewa Kanta Agency, Tanna, Sind, Broach, Colaba, Junjeera, Ahmednagar, Kaira, Pahlanpoor, Radhanpur, Kattywar, Hallar, Gondal State, Wadhwan, Prant Gohalwar, Shikarpoor, Harare, Dharwar, Kaladgi, Sholapoor, Surat, Bansda State, Sucheen, Upper Sind Frontier and Rutnagiri. Durbars were also held in other principal towns within the administration and political jurisdiction of the Lieutenant-Governor. This includes Calcutta, Bankipoor, Howrah and Chittagong. The Raja of Hill Tipperah also held a

⁴⁵ Government of India, Home Department, Public B, File No: 130, Proceeding No. 24, June, 1878, *NAI*.

Durbar. Durbars were also held at various places within the divisions of Chota Nagpur, Dacca, Bhagalpore, Rajshahye, Cooch Behar, Burdwan and Patna. One general Durbar was held for the whole Orissa division, including the tributary states to which all rajas of the tributary states, chief zamindars, notables, honorary magistrates and members of local committees were invited. A Durbar was also held at Cuttack on January 1, 1877. The assumption of the new title of 'Empress of India' by the Queen was proclaimed and celebrated in the districts of North-Western Provinces, both in the native states and the British districts. Similar ceremonies were held in the provinces of Oudh, Punjab, Central Provinces, British Burma, Assam, Mysore, Hyderabad, Central India, Rajputana, Baroda, Manipur, Persian Gulf and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Financial Statement for 1877-78 published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, dated March 15, 1877 gives the details of the cost of ceremonies on the assumption of the imperial title. "The gross cost of the ceremonies throughout India on the 1st of January is Rupees 13,71,000 under this Head; Rupees 3,00,000 under the army: total Rupees 19,54,000: there was also an inconsiderable outlay in England, the particulars of which we do not yet know. Against the gross outlay is to be set the increased revenue from the Railways (estimated at, at least, net Rupees 9,00,000), and under telegraphs and other Heads: upon the whole, it does not seem likely that the net cost exceed Rs.10,00,000. It will be understood that these charges are by no means on account of the Delhi Assemblage only, but include the gift of a day's pay to the Army, and the cost of the ceremonies at the Presidency towns and at every large station throughout India: such charges as these had no connection with the Assemblage. The net cost of the Assemblage itself cannot at present be exactly ascertained; but, in an estimate sent last month to the Secretary of State, it was calculated at about Rs.5,00,000, a sum which must be looked upon as extremely moderate".⁴⁶

3.10. The Critique of the Durbar

The attempt to bestow an additional title to the Queen was severely criticized in England. Prime Minister Disraeli was criticized as an eastern potentate who was corrupting the English monarchy by turning the Queen into an Empress. Though, it met with

⁴⁶ Government of India, Foreign Department, Pol.A, File No: 286-496, Proceeding No. 495, December, 1877, *NAI*.

objections, the Durbar did take place in a pompous manner. This can be seen in the backdrop of the changed attitude of the British government which was now involved in the project of propitiating the Indian princes by recognizing their right to practise their own religion and acknowledging their lineage and legitimate right to rule. Now arises with this the question as to whether this Durbar was a successful event which had the fortune to be happily accepted by the Indians. In the quest to find an answer to this, contradictory information was available from the official documents and the reports on native newspapers. The official documents describe the effect of the Durbar to be far reaching, taking its message to even the remotest corners, and thus a big success. But, many of the newspapers criticize the Durbar from different perspectives. There is no doubt about the fact that the British took every measure to make the Durbar persist in the minds of the natives. By bestowing concessions in many forms they tried to win them over. But, it was not an event which went uncriticized. The summoning of this in the midst of a famine was lambasted in the newspapers. For getting information on the criticisms which appeared in the newspapers, I have been able to use only the reports on newspapers of the Bengal Presidency. Thus, the information given on such criticism is solely from this presidency's report.

3.10.1. Response of the Press

The press by this time had become an important channel which gave vent to the voice, aspirations and grievances of the people. It played a vital role in critically analyzing the Durbar. Thus it is important to have a glimpse of those newspapers which articulated strong condemnation of the Durbar and put forward some suggestions which could be put into consideration if the government really cared about the welfare of the Indians. To begin with, the *Sulabha Samachar* of January 2, 1877, on the occasion of the assumption of the new title, brought forward issues like consideration of natives for promotion in high government ranks and other rewards of merit, fair treatment of Indians in the lawsuits that involved Europeans and natives and the removal of racism shown by the Europeans towards Indians.⁴⁷ The *Samaj Darpan* of January 5, 1877 threw light on the fact that a costly proclamation of the imperial title did not bring any change in the condition of Indians. Beyond a number of empty titles, the Durbar had not bestowed any substantial

⁴⁷ Report on native newspapers in Bengal for the week ending January 6, 1877, January-December, 1877, No. 1 of 1877, p. 4, *NAI*.

privilege on the natives. *Sadharani* of January 7, 1877 wondered as to what was the objective behind such a costly affair. It asked whether the Durbar was to make an impression on the native mind by use of pomp or for the well being of them. *Somaprakash* of January 8, 1877 observed the Durbar to be disappointing for the natives who had expected some privileges to be conferred on them. Instead, the Durbar made them realize that the government's policy was to keep them in tutelage for an indefinite period of time. Similar expectations had arisen at the time of transfer of power from the Company to the Crown, but were blighted. The *Bharat Mihir* of January 11, 1877 was of the opinion that it was difficult to understand the significance of the empty titles which the government bestowed lavishly in the Durbar. It made a bold remark that the title did not even possess the meaning and usefulness of children's toys. It complained that other than being bestowed with a new title, the recipients were not elevated to any new position in society. It recalled that during the times of Mohammadan Nawabs, honours were accompanied with high appointments and grants of *jagir*. In the case of the Durbar, many titles were granted, but were not accompanied by any grant of *jagir* or any high appointments to the natives. The same paper remarked that if the motive of the Imperial Assemblage was to impress the minds of the people and confirm the paramount status of the British power in India, then the government must be congratulated for its success. *Hindu Hitoishini* of January 13, 1877 reported of the disappointment of the natives as the Viceroy's speech had no new privileges to offer them.

Somaprakash of January 15, 1877 noticed the injudicious selection of persons for honour and as a result many were honoured who had no claims to distinction and because of liberal and indiscriminate distribution of titles, the titles itself had lost the importance attached to it. *Bharat Sangskarak* of January 15, 1877 also commented of a lavish and unselective bestowal of titles in the Durbar which was not known under any previous governments. It drew the attention of the readers to the fact that many undeserving people were granted titles when no mention was made of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Keshub Chandra Sen, Rajendra Lal Mitra and Kristo Das Pal. The same paper in an article titled the 'Effects of the Imperial Assemblage at Delhi' alerted the government that the natives could no longer be exploited by mere show and idle display. It further reminded that Indians were no longer semi-civilized to be entertained by toys and meaningless vanities. It asserted that the assemblage was held not to conciliate the natives, but to exhibit the wealth and paramount influence of the British nation in India. *Hindu Hitoishini* of January

20, 1877 made a satirical remark that the indigo and tea planters, who are the greatest oppressors of the people, should have been given the title of 'Friends of India'.⁴⁸

The *Dacca Prakash* of January 21, 1877 opined that a grand and expensive assemblage was not actually required to proclaim the assumption of the new title. Moreover, it was summoned at an inopportune moment when different parts of India were affected by famines, storm waves and pestilence. The natives' hopes of getting admitted into military services and high offices were blasted. The paper warned that the native chiefs and people were no longer children to be content with idle pageantry, few medals and empty titles. *Somaprakash* of January 29, 1877 stated, "The medals and other honours, bestowed on the occasion, have become a laughing stock among the people; some of whom have made imitation medals of lead to decorate themselves and now expose them for sale at a low price".⁴⁹ It also opined that the Durbar was convened at an inconvenient time and should have been cancelled when famines broke out in Bombay and Madras. Thus, the paper declared the Durbar to be a gigantic failure. Thus, it can be said that the holding of the Durbar stirred up criticism among the vernacular newspapers.

3.11. Response of Political Organizations and other Groups

One of the significant developments of the nineteenth century was the formation of organizations or associations on modern lines to voice the political interests of Indians. The leaders of these organizations had a better understanding of the heterogeneous character of the Indian scenario and started envisaging a united India with interprovincial co-operation. This idea went a long way in the advancement of pan-Indian consciousness. These associations also responded to the call of the Durbar with enthusiasm. Let us examine the reaction of these public bodies in their respective addresses.

In its address to Queen Victoria, 'British Indian Association', Calcutta expressed its loyalty, gratitude and joy on the assumption of the new title and appreciated the happy union of India with England by means of the new royal style and title. It felt that the Indian subjects would now be elevated to the same level of progress and development which

⁴⁸ The Indigo revolt was an uprising of indigo farmers which arose in Burdwan, Bankura, Birbhum and Murshidabad districts of Bengal in 1859-61 against the indigo planters. However, the revolt was suppressed by the government with an iron hand.

⁴⁹ Report on native newspapers in Bengal for the week ending February 3, 1877, January-December 1877, No. 5 of 1877, p. 34, *NAI*.

British subjects enjoy and hoped that they “will be united in a common bond of thought, feeling, loyalty and affection, enjoying the same rights and privileges, and thriving under the same just and beneficent rule”.⁵⁰

The case of ‘Indian League’ was also not different. It was a body formed in 1875 as a counter organization to the British Indian Association, which by now had acquired the name of being an exclusive body of zamindars. This newly formed organization came to be hailed as an association of the middle class or rising class of English educated Indians who wanted to have a share in the administration of their country. The League on May 27, 1876 in a public meeting at Calcutta celebrated the assumption of the title. It presented its address with 5000 signatures to Lytton on the occasion of the Durbar. The address, of course, embodied the joy felt on the occasion and expressed the gratefulness and loyalty towards Queen Victoria.

The ‘Bombay Association’, an association formed for the purpose of representing the wants of the people residing in the Bombay Presidency and for promoting measures beneficial to them, expressed its gratitude for the various blessings which India received from its connection with England. At the same time, it expected the government to make a liberal admission of Indians in the high ranks of the administration of the empire. The address presented by the Hindu community of the district of Fatehpur, North-Western Provinces, gave an exalted presentation of the British rule. It announced that because of the remarkable administration of the government, present age of *kaliyug* (the age of war) has turned into *satyug* (the age of virtues). “In other words, vice and oppression have altogether disappeared”.⁵¹

Poona Sarvajanic Sabha (1870) also responded to the durbar with ardour. It saw in this event an opportunity for accruing some new privileges from the government. It also drafted a congratulatory address which acknowledged the beneficial results of British rule in India since 1858. The *Sabha* said,

“The great work of union, inaugurated by the Proclamation of 1858 has been continued with unabated progress for a whole generation, and now this assumption of an Indian title is regarded by us as the crowning of the noble edifice. Unbroken peace has reigned throughout the land for

⁵⁰ Government of India, Foreign Department, Pol.A, File No: 286-496, Proceeding No. 383, December, 1877, *NAI*.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Proceeding No. 426.

twenty years; the whole country has been covered by a network of civilization which brings the remotest parts to feel sympathy with each other as members of a living body, and many races, and tribes, and varieties of creed and language are, under your benign sway, forgetting their old differences and petty traditions, and are being welded together into a great and homogeneous nation. The native princes, great and small, are protected by the strength of the paramount power from internal dissensions, and their continuances as the feudatory members of the Empire has been assured to them beyond all risk of change. The blessing of a fixed and generally uniform law of equality of personal and civil rights has been secured to every part of this Empire. The subordination of the military to the civil power, the separation of judicial from executive functions, publicity in matters of legislation, justice and taxation, the general freedom of enterprise, commerce and locomotion, the three-fold freedom of speech, of public assemblies, and of the press, religious neutrality and toleration, the blessings of a widespread and elevating machinery of education, the vast development of commerce, and the revival of home industries, these and many more similar blessings which your most gracious Majesty's subjects in this country have been enjoying, have endeared your rule to many millions".⁵²

However, its address was not just confined in extolling the British rule. It presented certain new privileges which could be granted to the people of India. They were, the amalgamation of Indian princes to the Council of Empire through some assembly where they could converge and consult each other and the officers and diplomats of the government; admission of Indians to high civil and military offices; Indian presence in the British Parliament; reformation of the legislative councils in India to make it more of a kind of representative and decision making body; bringing more lands under Permanent Settlement and the alleviation of Indian national debt on the finances of India. The address concluded with the hope that "the assumption of the imperial title may be signalized by the grant of new constitutional rights to the people of the country, thereby inaugurating a new era in the gradual development of the institutions of this country, elevating its people to the

⁵² S.R.Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, New York, 1971, pp. 198-199.

political and social status of the British nation, and teaching them gradually, by examples and encouragement, and by actual exercise of responsible power, to be manly and self-sustained, prepared to welcome their connexion with England as a providential arrangement intended for their welfare, and resolved to abide by it through all troubles and trials of their mutual growth”.⁵³

Other than just writing an address suggesting changes, the *Poona Sarvajanic Sabha* also wrote a circular letter to the invitees (princes, chiefs, and gentlemen) of the Durbar on December 5, 1876. In this letter, the *Sabha* urged them to visualize the Durbar as one epitomizing the growing unity of India as a nation and advised them to take advantage of it to consolidate that unity. Thus, for them it was not just an occasion for merry-making and pomp, but a fertile ground where seeds of unity could be easily sown. They wrote to the invitees,

“The honour that has been paid to you in your personal or representative capacity [in being invited to the gathering at Delhi] is regarded by us as an honour to the nation to which you belong, and we have no doubt that the gathering of so many representative men from all parts of India is an event of national importance, and that it will be regarded, in all future history, as the commencement of that fusion of races and creeds, the second birth of the great Indian nation, for which we have so long prayed and dreamed...On such an occasion, it behoves you to sink the individual and the temporary in the national and permanent concern of the event...Never since the introduction of foreign rule in this country has such an assemblage been brought together, and it is in justice due to the great power under whose sheltering wings we have learned to outgrow our small differences, and feel as one united nation with a great past behind, and a greater future before us...you should not be dazzled by the gaieties of the gathering, but learn the great moral lesson of healthy, self-sustained, and joint political action, which such an event is so well calculated to teach. You are the great notables of the land, the first Parliament of the united Indian nation, the first Congress of the

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 199-200.

representatives of the diverse states and nationalities which make up the body politic of India”.⁵⁴

Sensing the national importance of the Durbar, *Poona Sarvajanic Sabha* suggested some programme of action to be implemented at the Durbar. It wanted the princes to meet and interact with each other in private gatherings ‘foregoing all reserve and petty understandings’ and discuss issues of mutual concern.⁵⁵ It also found it appropriate to reciprocate the assumption of the title with the presentation of a united address by the princes from all India at the foot of the throne.

The inhabitants of Poona and other places in Deccan in their congratulatory address to the Queen saw the assumption of the title as the right moment to inaugurate a new change whereby the native princes would be associated with the administration of British India. By accepting the paramountcy of the British power, they suggested the formation of a council where issues like frontier wars between tribes, boundary disputes between native states and the British and non-British territory, cases of misgovernance by rulers, questions of adoption, extradition, coinage and imperial legislation could be discussed. At the same time, they expected some liberal changes to be introduced in the case of admission of Indians into military and civil service and of representation of India in the British Parliament. Thus, they expected the assumption of the imperial title to grant new constitutional rights to the people thereby inaugurating a new era.

The translation of an address from the zamindars and inhabitants of Dinajpur presents a eulogistic account.⁵⁶ They stated, ‘The descendants of the great emperors of Delhi are burnt in the fire of your might; also the mighty descendants of sun and moon are now seeking your favour. Those princes who do not pay tribute to your imperial treasury now tremble from fear. Whole India now shines in your hand as a lotus in the hands of the goddess of fortune. Because you excel all the princes of India in the defence and government of the country, so it is proper that you only should be called Empress of India. Because your commands are obeyed by all the princes of India, and because you are the head of the whole empire, hence we can compare this assumption of the title of Empress of India with the *rajasuya* festival of Pandavas celebrated 3000 years ago at Delhi. In ancient

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 200.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Dinajpur was a district in Bengal Presidency.

days heroes of India, such as Krishna, congratulated the Imperial Assemblage, but at the present day the assembled great princes congratulate you at the assumption of your title as the Empress of India”.⁵⁷

The translation of the address from the municipal commissioners of Agra enumerated the advantages which were accrued from the imperial rule. They included liberty, establishment of hospitals, availability of medicines, introduction of vaccination for smallpox, introduction of railways, opening of canals and establishment of municipalities which gave a share for Indians in the administration. The address ended with the following couplet, “May fortune ever smile on Your Majesty, and may the heads of all your enemies be over the points of the bayonets. Amen”.⁵⁸

Anjuman-i-Islami or ‘Mahomedan Association’ was an organization formed on May 6, 1855 by pleaders and government employees for the promotion of the general welfare of the Muslim community in India. In its congratulatory address to Queen Victoria, the President and members of *Anjuman-i-Islami* of Bombay offered their sincere congratulations to Queen Victoria on her assumption of the new title. They concluded with a prayer for the sustenance of the British rule over India. “May Your Majesty long continue to rule as Empress of India, and may this great and glorious title forever prove to be as much a source of glory to Your Majesty as of happiness, contentment, and prosperity to the millions who acknowledge with pride Your Majesty’s Imperial sway”.⁵⁹

‘Mahomedan Literary Society’ was founded in 1863 with an intention to arouse interest among the Muslims in western knowledge, promote social interaction between Muslims and Anglo-Indians and to operate as a pressure group for the Muslim community. It stated that the British government honoured the society by lending it support which further enabled the society to supply the government with useful information on public interest, specially the sentiments of Muslims when they were required to be known before the government.

Anjuman-i-Punjab from its formation in 1864 had been in good proximity with members of the royal family. The Prince of Wales in 1865 became the patron of this organization. The organization also congratulated the Queen on the assumption of the new title and felt privileged of being the subjects of the Empress of India.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Proceeding No. 388.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Proceeding No. 375.

The Muslim community of the North-Western provinces articulated their sincere satisfaction and feelings of loyalty in their address. They clearly expressed their happiness on the occasion of this formal recognition of the historical fact. They reminded that though the congratulatory address was from the descendants of a race who were the rulers of India, it was with greater confidence that they foresee the future which was now dependent on Queen Victoria. But, still they recalled in their address the enlightened toleration of Akbar, administration of justice by Jahangir and magnificence of the court of Shah Jahan.

The Muslim inhabitants of Sylhet admitted that they were very much pleased on the assumption of the title and considered themselves to be fortunate enough to be under Queen's care and protection.⁶⁰ "When this poor dependency was under the management of the East India Company years ago, we scarcely had an idea of what care and affection Her Gracious Majesty took for her Indian subjects. It was in 1858 that we acquired some light in that respect, when Her Most Gracious Majesty was pleased to assume the direct Government of this country, but even then we were not fully satisfied, for when we thought who was our Sovereign, we had to call her "the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland," and had not the fortune to add our country to her name, and now fortunately we have gained the day to hold out to the world that our Sovereign is our Empress of India and not the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, a foreign and distant country to us".⁶¹

The Durbar also witnessed the formation of the 'Native Press Association' on December 27, 1876 comprising the representatives of the Indian Press who had assembled at Delhi. S.N.Banerjee was its secretary. It also presented an address to the Viceroy on January 3, 1877 and decided to hold a meeting at some place once or twice a year to discuss and adopt measures for protecting the interests of the press and of the country. S.R.Mehrotra finds it as a new beginning and says, "Thus, by a strange irony of history, it was on the occasion of the imperial durbar at Delhi, and encouraged in part by its very example, that Indian patriots made the first tentative efforts to organize a periodical conference of representative men from all parts of the country which nine years later led to the establishment of the Indian National Congress".⁶²

⁶⁰ Sylhet was governed as part of Assam. It is presently located in the north-eastern divisions of Bangladesh.

⁶¹ Ibid., Proceeding No. 413.

⁶² Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, p. 201.

After a scrutiny of all the addresses it can be said that almost all the public bodies and individual groups assured their loyalty, fidelity and submission to the British rule. They considered the assumption of the title as a visible proof of Queen's growing interest for Indian subjects. In many of the addresses, the Queen's rule is described as benign and compared to maternal care. This comparison of Queen Victoria's rule to mother's love and care is a feature which is noticed in many of the addresses. In the translation of the Sanskrit stanzas presented to Queen by the Hindu residents of Sylhet, she is addressed as 'Mother Empress'. An enumeration of the blessings of the British government was another feature of almost half of the addresses. They enumerate the contribution of the British Government like railways, canals, electric telegraph, post offices, roads, bridges, codification of laws, creation of municipalities, establishment of courts, hospitals, dispensaries, colleges and schools, introduction of printing, machines and other useful instruments for manual labour, liberty in the observance of religious rites, freedom of speech and writings, diffusion of knowledge, advancement of civilization, development of trade, protection of life and property, guarantee of peace and tranquility, introduction of irrigational facilities, curtailment of robbery, construction of serais, hotels and improvement in sanitary facilities. An exalted picture of the British rule accompanied by a prayer for its sustenance is presented. They themselves consider India to be a valuable jewel of the imperial diadem. They use a metaphorical language whereby it is said that the lion/tiger and the goat drink water at the same spring. This usage is employed to emphasize that the Indians and the British enjoy the same rights and privileges despite belonging to two different race and creed.

Another feature of the addresses was that the previous authority that existed before the establishment of the British rule, specially the Mughal rule, was severely criticized. The Mughal administration is condemned as defective which did not guarantee any religious equality. On the other hand, the British rule is depicted as magnanimous where Hindus and Muslims enjoy equal treatment with Christian subjects. It is praised for establishing peace over the anarchy and confusion which the Mughal rule had left as legacy. The level of admiration and appreciation of the imperial rule goes to that peak of exaltation that in the address from the people of Faizabad, one finds the following laudatory statement. "If the hairs of the heads of the people of India contained each a hundred tongues, it would still be impossible to number the imperial favors which have

been shown and which are still being bestowed on us”.⁶³ One comes across many exaggerated statements that crimes like poisoning murder were never heard of under the British rule. It is interesting to note that all the addresses are devoid of condemnation. They constrain themselves in elucidating the blessings of the British rule and fail to present a real picture of the British rule which was not actually free of flaws. They overlook many of the atrocities committed by the British and present a luminous picture of their rule. There can also be another reason for this because all the public bodies mentioned above had a similar history of being loyal to the British. Many of them had received help or support from the British government in one form or the other. For instance, when the revolt broke out in May 1857, *Anjuman-i-Islami* solemnly promised its loyalty and support to the British government and condemned the Revolt. The British officers also made use of the services of the leaders of this organization to tranquilize the Muslim opinion in Calcutta during the Revolt. Thus, it is obvious from their side to offer an adulatory address.

3.12. Presence of Frontier States

The British presence in India, by 1877, was consolidated and secure. Yet it had its own frontier threats and crisis. In spite of the skirmishes mentioned aforesaid, it also tried to exert influence on the frontier states and maintain its indirect hold. Some historians call this as a tendency of maintenance of the Informal Empire. Though Indian subcontinent was within the British control, they did not occupy the whole of Asia. Of course, the British had vested interests in other Asian countries as part of establishing their larger Empire in Asia. There were threats from other imperial powers. In the wake of such developments, it was important for the British to maintain predominance in the affairs of the neighbouring states and secure the Empire with their support and allegiance. This idea of appeasing frontier states was manifested in the Delhi Durbar as well which had the presence of deputations from Nepal, Bhutan, Burma and Siam (Thailand). Their presence in the Durbar was as equally important as that of the presence of the Indian native princes. With each of these states, Britain had its own relationship of interference, hostility and cordiality.

⁶³ Government of India, Foreign Dept, Pol.A, File no: 286-496, Proceeding No. 430, December, 1877, *NAI*.

Geographically, Nepal was located between British India and China. The British had a strained relationship with Nepal during the early nineteenth century when frontier disputes erupted between the two. The East India Company at that point of time was in the mood of expanding territory through annexation. This led to an Anglo-Nepalese war (1814-1816) during the Governor-Generalship of Lord Hastings. The war led to the victory of the British and signing of the treaty of Sagauli on December 2, 1815 which was ratified on March 4, 1816 between the East India Company and the King of Nepal. According to the settlement, Nepal ceded Sikkim, the territories of Kumaon and Garhwal, and most of the territories in the Terai region to the British. New border was drawn with Mechi river as the new eastern border and Mahakali river as the new western boundary of the kingdom of Nepal. The British East India Company was to pay 200,000 rupees as war indemnities to Nepal for the loss of income from the territories ceded to the Company. Nepal was compelled to accept a British Resident at Kathmandu. Convinced of the fighting skills of the Gurkhas, the British agreed to recruit Gurkhas to the Company's army. The treaty called for enduring peace and friendship between the East India Company and the king of Nepal. Ever since, Nepal remained an ally of the British.

The British interference in Bhutan can also be traced back to the Company days when inheritors to the throne of Cooch Behar approached the British in helping them to chase away Bhutanese from their territory. The Company was ready to offer help on one condition that the ousted ruler of Cooch Behar had to pay half share of the revenue collected. When this condition was accepted, in 1772, Warren Hastings sent troops and drove out the Bhutanese. The deposed ruler was installed back to the throne. Even after this encounter, British met Bhutan in two battles in 1773. However, peace was settled due to the intervention of Tibet, and Bhutan and the British entered into a peace treaty on April 25, 1774. According to the treaty, the ruler of Bhutan was not to encroach into the territories of the Company and Bhutan allowed British to use its forest resources, specially timber. The next turning point in Bhutan-British India happened immediately after the Anglo-Burmese War. Consequent to this war, the British got control of Assam which lies to Bhutan's southern border. This initiated a conflict for the region called *duars*. The term meant door or gate. This area was of great significance and constituted the largest tea growing areas. However, peace could not be settled as the British had other campaigns to worry about like Afghan issues, Anglo-Sikh wars and then later the Revolt. Consequently, a mission headed by Ashley Eden was sent to Bhutan with a proposal of accepting a British Resident in Bhutan's court. But, Eden was subjected to humiliation and was forced

to sign a treaty. The mission failed and the Bhutan war or Duar war (1864-1865) continued. Finally, on November 11, 1865, through the treaty of Sinchula, region of *duars* was given to the British forever. Though Bhutan never accepted the proposal of the appointment of a British Resident, it tried to maintain cordial relation with British India. The treaty of Punakha in 1910 guaranteed non-interference from the British side in the internal affairs of Bhutan.

The British conquered Burma following the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26) and retained control over it till 1948. By 1877, two wars were already fought between Burma and British India. Burma remained a province of British India till its independence in 1948.

Siam or Thailand lies south of Burma and Laos. Both France and Bhutan had interests in this part of South East Asia. The annexation of Burma brought the British closer to Siam, interfering into its territory and sovereignty. France, expanding its imperial territories, had reached by now the eastern borders of Siam. Thus, its situation was that of a buffer between two strong imperial powers - Britain and France. The reason for the British interests in this area was not just expansion of her empire. With the decreasing supply of oak, Britain required timber for the construction of building and furniture. India and Burma did not provide timber in large scale whereas Siam had teak in abundance. The annexation of Burma had already opened up Siam to the British who had an eye on its forest reserves. According to the treaty of Bowring (1855) between the Siamese king Mongkut and Governor of Hong Kong, Sir John Bowring, the former accepted British supremacy in his kingdom. It also gave assent to the British to indulge in trade activities without tariff with Siam and within Siam. "The government of India and the Foreign Office's primary goal from the mid 1860's to the early 1880s was to make sure that the monarchy in Bangkok ensured that Siam's northern chiefs adequately protected the rights of British interests".⁶⁴ By establishing monopoly over the forest resources, Britain expected to ward off French advances to this part of South East Asia.

Other than these frontier states, there was also the deputation from the Sultan of Muscat. The fact that the British invited the deputation from Oman shows the realization of the British of the growing dominance of the Persian Gulf in the international affairs. Geographically, Oman served as a gateway to the Gulf. If a rival power occupies this

⁶⁴ Gregory A. Barton & Brett M. Bennett, 'Forestry as Foreign Policy: Anglo-Siamese Relations and the Origins of Britain's Informal Empire in the Teak Forests of Northern Siam, 1883- 1925', *Itinerario*, Vol. XXXIV, Issue 2, 2010, pp. 65- 86.

region, it was going to be a constant threat to British routes to India. Though in the Durbar, only Muscat was represented, it is an undeniable fact that the British had its vested interests in this region. Thus, the presence of all these independent potentates in the Durbar shows how the British were securing for themselves a larger British Empire in Asia.

Summing Up

After an analysis of the Durbar it can be said that the summoning of the Delhi Durbar of 1877 was a part of the agenda which was pursued after the Queen's proclamation of 1858. The proclamation itself was solid evidence of the fact that the Revolt was a reaction of conservative India to the reformatory policies of the British. In the pre-1857 period itself, the model for an Indian Empire was already established. The proclamation reflected the changed attitude of the British and reversal of many high-handed policies. This was further elaborated and structured in the post-Revolt period as a response to the pandemonium unleashed by the Revolt. The technique of ruling India indirectly through the Residency system was a successful mechanism in the governance of princely India. The Revolt demonstrated the necessity of building a cordial alliance with this group of princely states. "Thereafter, the British relied on Indian Rulers, and the system of indirect rule, as one of the cornerstones of British rule in India".⁶⁵ This system of indirect rule was further consolidated by the political rituals of Durbars where the British exploited the yearning for favours and honours by native princes, and also their own desire of impressing the world with pageants. These two were carefully steered to develop a feudal aristocracy. Lytton had great faith in symbols and display of pomp and ceremony and he believed that the Orientals craved for distinction from the hands of the British government. He believed that the allegiance of the princes could be obtained by exploiting their susceptibility to the influence of symbolism. Writing to Prime Minister Disraeli dated April 30, 1877, Lord Lytton says, "Every Raja I have yet conversed with has been curiously and amusingly anxious to convince me the antiquity of his family, and the extent to which its importance has been recognised by the Suzerain Power at various times. Many of them have presented me with printed and illustrated genealogies published at their own expense... But what is worthy of notice is that in all of them I find evidence

⁶⁵ Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System, 1764-1858*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 445.

that small favours and marks of honour bestowed from time to time by the British Government on the head of the family (such as an additional gun to his salute, the right to a return visit from the Viceroy, or a more honourable place in durbar, & c.) are quite as highly prized and appreciated as the more substantial benefits (of augmented territory or revenue) conferred in earlier times upon their family by an Aurengzeb or an Akbar".⁶⁶ It was this outlook which enthused him to organize the Delhi Durbar of 1877 when Queen Victoria was proclaimed the Empress of India amidst the pompous display of medieval pageantry. Thus, with the approval of Disraeli, he presented before the Indians, a grand Durbar. With this Durbar, the British discontinued the practice of exchanging presents between the representatives of the government and chiefs of India. The ruling chiefs entitled to salutes were presented with medals in the name of the Queen. Giving of gifts from the side of the princes was completely absent.

Lytton considered it important to develop strong ties between the native princes and the Crown. It is interesting to note the invitees to the Durbar. Though it was meant to include the princes as native rulers who constituted the natural aristocracy, invitations were also extended to native gentlemen, landlords, editors and journalists and representative men of various folds. Invitations were given in relation to the British idea of the social order in India. The Queen's Proclamation of 1858 revealed the changed outlook of the British in administration and towards the various classes of the Indian society. Simultaneously, it also inaugurated a honorific hierarchy in India whereby various groups were hierarchically placed in different orders with decorations raising their status in the colonial sociology of India. These groups were in close alliance with the British and constituted only those who remained loyal to the British. The decorations bestowed varied from medals, badges, robes of honour or gun salutes which could be taken back if the recipient rebelled against the government. Fealty towards the Raj was the base of this honorific hierarchy. As a first step towards this, a separate order called the 'Star of India' was already initiated in 1861. In the post-Revolt period, when orders were created, it always targeted the native princes who constituted the majority section in each order from the Indian side.

The nationalists and the native press were alarmed at the huge amount of money spent on the Durbar when it should have been diverted to relief measures. Nevertheless,

⁶⁶ Lady Betty Balfour, *The History of Lord Lytton's Indian Administration, 1876-1880: Compiled from Letters and Papers*, London, 1899, p. 108.

nationalists and native press found in this Durbar, a beginning of the pan-Indian consciousness as all the native chiefs, for the first time, met each other on a common platform. It was a meeting ground for many Indians who hailed from different walks of life. This meeting helped in spawning a feeling of unity and vision for one India. It had its repercussions over the rest of India as local Durbars were held in all provinces and districts. At the same time, the princes and their rights were recognized and they were admitted into the framework of the Empire where Empress of India stood at its zenith. The British invited not just taluqdars and notable zamindars to the Durbar, but also other eminent citizens from different parts of India like Bengal and Bombay. This group falls with the fourth classification given by Cohn - the local. They also had the potential to be a threat to the British if not appeased, as the local population considered them to be their leaders.

However, the Durbar did not bring with it any special privileges to Indians. Except for a number of titles, medals and salutes, the native princes did not acquire any advantage or concession. In other words, their subjugated and submissive status was further reaffirmed. Their hierarchical status was reinstated through the difference in the number of salutes. The Durbar did not bring any concession with regard to the educated Indians' demand for their inclusion in high office ranks. It affirmed the fact that high and well paid offices would continue to be in the hands of the Europeans and empty titles and subordinate posts would remain with Indians. Thus, Indians continued to be deprived of their right to have a share in the administration of their own country. The demand for raising the minimum age for Indians to write the civil service exam was also not approved. Though a new ritual idiom was inaugurated in the post-Revolt period, Indians continued to be discriminated against the English in their own land.

The Durbar provided an occasion for the guarantee of territorial integrity in return for the fealty and submission of the native princes. It also propitiated the traditional landed class. The assumption of the title of Empress of India, of course, had a political motive in it. Viceroy Lord Lytton, who was very enthusiastic in summoning the Durbar, was focused on the military and political advantages that could be accrued by a positive relation with the native princes. He definitely believed in the potential of the native princes as a powerful aristocracy. On May 11, 1877, writing to Secretary of State, Salisbury, Lytton says, "I am convinced that the fundamental mistake of able and experienced Indian officials is a belief that we can hold India securely by what they call good government; that is to say, by improving the condition of the ryot, strictly administering justice,

spending immense sums on irrigation works, & c. Politically speaking, the Indian peasantry is an inert mass. If it ever moves at all, it will move in obedience, not to its British benefactors, but to its native chiefs and princes, however tyrannical they may be. The only political representatives of native opinion are the Baboos, whom we have educated to write semi seditious articles in the native Press, and who really represent nothing but the social anomaly of their own position".⁶⁷ The Revolt of 1857 was the expression of the discontent of the native princes with the British policy of expansion and annexation. The proclamation of 1858 assured them of the British decision of non-expansion of territories and the Durbar of 1877 confirmed it. The British had also understood the importance of the native aristocracy and realized how a deposition of them could prove dangerous. They were also in the process of bolstering their position and did not want the empire to be rocked by another mutiny or revolt. This idea was carefully combined with the belief in the efficacy of symbols and used to appease the native princes. The Delhi Durbar of 1877 was a culmination of this policy.

The Durbar had political and symbolic significance. It was also a part of the foreign policy as the Russian interests were steadily growing in Central Asia and in such a political situation it was all the more important to acquire the support of the ruling princes. Thus, Lytton had the important agenda of checking the Russian influences in his foreign policy plan to which he combined the task of consolidation of the Indian Empire by seeking the fealty of the native states. It finally concluded in the Imperial Assemblage of January 1, 1877. At the same time, Lytton believed that they could be utilised as a counterbalance against rising nationalism. After all, the Revolt revealed the capacity of the princely states as a support against the insurgents. Even when Lytton admitted the potential of the native princes and invited and honoured them in his Assemblage, he never had any plan of investing them with any additional political power. He realized the significance of their allegiance to the British Crown, but neither bestowed any power nor considered them to be an equal power.

The adulatory response, given by the invitees immediately after the proclamation was read in the Durbar, shows that the British accomplished what they wanted; to present the image of the British authority as they envisaged. The fundamental objective of securing their loyalty and support was, thus, achieved. Other than a change in the nomenclature from 'Queen' to 'Empress', the Durbar did not had any far reaching effect

⁶⁷ Ibid.

and the British claim that the desire of the natives to be closely united with Britain was achieved with the assumption, is a bit exaggerating.

The decision of Lytton to discuss famine relief measures in the Durbar was part of the legitimisation process. Firstly, Lytton wanted to avoid allegation in this form that only merriment happened at the Durbar with abundant food and drink when India was in the grip of a severe famine. Secondly, by the nineteenth century, famine policies and famine relief measures had become a determinant of the efficacy and legitimacy of the colonial state. The famine of 1876-78 alarmed the colonial state that it changed the way how the state perceived famines. The frequent occurrence of famines, pestilence, death, displacement of population, crop failure and monsoon failure were serious concerns for the state. With the important responsibility of retaining the benevolent image of the colonial state, the officials now understood the essentiality of taking precautionary measures to avert famines, rather than provide assistance after its occurrence. This realization led to the formation of a Famine Commission with Richard Strachey as its President. Thus, an efficient famine policy was always central to the colonial policies in India. In the present situation, it was all the more important for Lytton to prove the efficiency of the state in handling the famine when it was indulged in week-long celebrations.

The Durbar of 1877 gave an opportunity for the British to display their might and authority to the Indians and to reinforce that they are the legitimate rulers after the Mughals. It also allowed them to make the native rulers demonstrate their loyalty and see their fellow princes doing the same. This tactfully manoeuvred ideology supplemented with political rituals created the difference between the rulers and the ruled. The significance of the Imperial Assemblage is a question which had drawn diverse opinions from historians. J.T.Wheeler perceives the assumption of the title Empress of India as the final scene in the establishment of the British Empire in India. I repudiate the notion that the Durbar was the climax of the British rule in India. The significance of the Durbar lies in this fact that though it was criticized for its extravaganza, Lytton's assemblage was the result of the newly developed ritual idiom. The two succeeding durbars of 1903 and 1911 were a continuation of this scheme. The hue and cry regarding this Durbar had not completely settled when India witnessed another Durbar in 26 years at the same venue. It is to this second Durbar that we turn our attention in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Delhi Durbar of 1903

The Durbar of 1903 was another addition to the ritual based political culture of the British in India. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 came as an immediate reason for its summoning, unlike the reason for the first Durbar. A coronation ceremony already occurred in Westminster Abbey, London on August 9, 1902 installing Victoria's son Albert Edward as the new monarch. As the new monarch, he took the regnal name Edward VII. In spite of a coronation at London, a Durbar was convoked at Delhi announcing his accession to the Indians and to the world. This time it was not an 'Imperial Assemblage', it was particularly called a 'Durbar'. The contemporary works and other documents also refer to this Durbar as 'Coronation Durbar'. Delhi again became a venue for another Durbar after 26 years. In these 26 years, the British rule in India was more consolidated and established deeply and firmly. The various entanglements with the neighbouring states in 1878-1902, established Britain as a powerful imperial power. The spheres of influence surrounding the boundaries of Empire secured her position in India from other imperial powers. Though skirmishes happened periodically in the frontiers and Russophobia haunted the *Raj*, it was able to uphold its position globally. Within India, the changed attitude that was inaugurated with the Queen's proclamation continued. Preservation of princely goodwill was deliberately maintained. Princely states had become an integral factor in the imperial organisation of India by now and the alliance with them provided stability to the British rule. Ian Copland says, "First, maintaining the princely states relieved them of direct responsibility for a large part of the subcontinent (about one-third). This had important cost-saving implications. Secondly, the princely alliance connected British rule, however, tenuously, with Indian tradition".¹ Though Victoria's death came as a background for this Durbar, the developments in the post-1877 period also played a role in the decision of the British to convene the Durbar of 1903. The British were in the confident phase of their imperial rule that they believed that the powerful imperial image could be upheld through one more Durbar. Thus it is of significance to trace the events that added to the consternation and confidence of the British in the post-1877 period.

¹ Ian Copland, *India 1885-1947: The Unmaking of an Empire*, Harlow, 2001, p. 9.

4.1. British Rule at its Pinnacle: Events between 1877-1903

The later years of Lord Lytton's viceroyalty, specially the years after the Durbar estranged the natives of India from the British. The policies implemented by him contributed to this alienation. One of them was the formation of the Statutory Civil Service in 1878-79. The Charter Act of 1833 had laid down that admission into civil service would be open to all subjects of the Crown, irrespective of nationality, through a competitive examination. The Charter Act of 1853 further reaffirmed this when it confirmed that high offices or Covenanted Civil Service would be open to all irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Yet the higher administrative posts were held by men of British origin. As the examination was held in England, it was practically impossible for Indians, except few, to travel and write this exam in England due to financial reasons. Though promises were made to include Indians, the chart depicted in page 143 shows the actual representation of Indians in the government service.

Lytton held the opinion of excluding Indians completely from the Indian Civil Service. He believed that India could be administered efficiently only with a group of loyal British officers. He proposed a plan to completely keep out Indians from the civil service as a retort to the educated Indians' demand of their inclusion in the service. However, his proposal was not accepted by the Home Government. As a substitutive step to his original idea, a Statutory Civil Service was formed in 1878-79. According to the new initiative, one-sixth of the posts in Covenanted Civil Service and important posts in Uncovenanted service were open to Indians who were to be nominated by the local governments approved by Viceroy in Council and the Secretary of State. The nominated candidates, who were under a probationary period of two years, had to clear special exams for their final appointment. Statutory Civil Service was not equal in status and salary when compared to the Covenanted Civil Service. Lytton also reduced the minimum age to appear for the civil service examination from 21 years to 19 years. The Service was unsuccessful and later it was abolished according to the suggestions of the Aichison Commission. According to the recommendations of the Commission, Indian Civil Service was now divided into three classes - the Imperial, Provincial and Subordinate Service. Antagonistic feelings were unleashed against the government when Lytton passed the Vernacular Press Act in 1878. The Act bestowed power to a collector or a magistrate to command the editors of the vernacular language newspapers to enter into a bond promising not to publish any article that would arouse anti-government sentiments or hostility

between different races, castes and religions. The editors were also instructed to submit proof to the government before publication. Through the Act, Lytton tried to curb the freedom of the vernacular press. This measure of Lytton was also repealed four years later. Another discriminatory measure that was introduced was the Indian Arms Act of 1878. This restricted Indians from possessing arms without licence whereas Europeans and Anglo-Indians could possess arms without licence. Due to the anti-popular measures introduced by Lytton, there was a failed attempt to assassinate him in 1879 at Calcutta. England underwent a general election in 1880 where the Conservative party headed by Disraeli was defeated. This led to the resignation of Lytton.

The next appointed Viceroy was Lord Ripon (1880-1884) who represented the new Liberal government headed by William Ewart Gladstone. He took charge in 1880 and in the next four years of his Viceroyalty, India witnessed liberal administrative measures. The repressive Vernacular Press Act was repealed and the vernacular press was given freedom to write and publish articles on social and political matters. Ripon's period also saw the decentralization of administration. Reformative measure was taken when the government passed a law in 1881, restricting the working hours of children, between seven and twelve years of age, to nine hours. A big hurricane that came up during his period was the Ilbert Bill controversy which again was a liberal step aiming to discard judicial inequalities and disqualifications based on race. A fierce protest was exhibited by the European community in India that finally the government had to surrender. It was decided that if a European was brought for trial to a district magistrate or sessions judge, he or she would be tried by a jury comprised of half Europeans or Americans.

Ripon was succeeded by Lord Dufferin in 1884. Afghan issue became prominent during his period when Russia advanced towards the northern boundaries of Afghanistan. The fall of Merv alarmed the British once again awakening them to the need of drawing a fixed boundary line for Afghanistan. Russia started mobilising forces from Trans-Caspia towards Panjdeh. Herat was only 120 miles away from Panjdeh. The Indian government started arranging troops at Quetta in case Herat was attacked. The situation was that sensitive that any development in this region could trigger a war between Russia and Great Britain, not just in this region, but also in other parts of their respective empires. The Gladstone government was under severe pressure to take a bold step. Nevertheless, a war was averted due to the efforts of Lord Dufferin and Abdur Rahman, the Amir of Afghanistan. Realizing that if a war broke out, it would take place in his territory, the Amir

announced that he did not covet Panjdeh. Any war in the territory of Afghanistan would lead to an immense loss of lives and property of Afghanistan. Thus, a war was evaded and after a series of deliberations a boundary line for Afghanistan was drawn and a settlement was signed at St. Petersburg in July 1887. Though war forestalled, it had its own repercussions in India in financial aspects. The war preparations and the increase in the numerical strength of the army, both British Indian and native, led to an 'extra burden of two millions on the Indian exchequer'.² The Panjdeh incident again demonstrated the support of the native states of India. The princely states of India, specially the Nizam of Hyderabad offered men and money towards war efforts. The Imperial Service Troops was the outcome of these war preparations. From Panjdeh, the attention now shifted to the eastern frontiers of India. The British had already occupied the Lower Burma. However, Upper Burma maintained its independence and remained out of the British control. Upper Burma, at this point of time, was ruled by Thebaw who maintained treaty relations with Italy, Germany and France. The colonies of France in Indo-China surrounded the eastern frontiers of Upper Burma. In 1883, a Burmese mission was sent to Paris for closer economic alliance with France. The French, who had interests in this area, sent an envoy to Mandalay in 1885. The area was coveted by China as well. The British too had their vested interests in Upper Burma. The proximity of this area to China felicitated Britain's trade relations with China through Thebaw's territories. The British started exerting force on Thebaw to accept a British envoy at Mandalay, cut off all relations with other foreign countries and grant trading rights to the British in Upper Burma and with China through Burmese territories. On the failure of Thebaw to accept an envoy at Mandalay, the British invaded Upper Burma leading to the third Anglo-Burmese war. Burma was defeated and the king surrendered. On January 1, 1886, a declaration was made whereby Upper Burma became a part of the British Empire in Asia with administration through a British Chief Commissioner. Another major development during Dufferin's period was the formation of Indian National Congress, in 1885 with its first session at Bombay, which was to play a leading role in Indian freedom movement later.

Lansdowne succeeded Dufferin in December 1888. Due to the fall in the rupee value and financial insufficiency due to the Burmese annexation, financial situation of India was on the verge of bankruptcy. Thus, Lansdowne was forced to impose again salt

² P. E. Roberts, *History of British India Under the Company and the Crown*, London, 1952, (First published in 1923), p. 476.

tax at an increased rate. Also developments across the world were in such a way that different powers like Great Britain, Russia, France and China were affected by each other. Russia's plan of extending her Asian railways, France's presence in Indo-China and the annexation of Upper Burma "had drawn closer the web of international relations of all the powers affected".³ Thus, it was necessary for the British to secure their empire in India by maintaining spheres of influence around their territories as a kind of barricade. The presence and honouring of these spheres of influence in the Durbar of 1903 had great significance owing to these international developments. Rather than direct control, allegiance of these states to the British was crucial in the sustenance of empire and colonies. The British obsession to secure north-west, eastern and north-eastern borders was an extension of the imperial objective of securing the colonies. With this motive intact, they interfered in every issue claiming it to be their right to restore peace in the protected states. The British interference in Manipur following an outbreak (1890-91) was part of this agenda. Troops were sent from Assam and following a series of attacks, a minor king was installed on the throne of Manipur. All the insurgents were suppressed and some executed. Considering the minor status of the ruler, a British political agent administered the affairs of the state. Efforts were taken to establish peace with other British protectorates like Shan states beyond Irrawaddy river, Karenni and Lushais. The Afghan problem came up frequently and the British decided to inaugurate a new policy called Forward Policy with regard to this state. The new initiative was a tactical and assertive plan to establish British hegemony in Afghanistan. After a series of talks with Abdur Rahman, Afghanistan and the British entered into a treaty agreement whereby Durand line was re-established as the demarcating line between Afghanistan and British India.

Elgin succeeded Lansdowne in 1894. The British had barely managed to secure its position in spite of a financial deficit that famine occurred again in India. Inadequate rains in 1895 contributed much to the agonies of the famine of 1896-97. The areas affected were United Provinces, Central Provinces, Berar, Bengal, Bihar, Madras, Bombay, Rajputana, Hyderabad, Central India Agency and Upper Burma. The situation was grave and adding to it the first case of bubonic plague was reported in Bombay in August 1896. Plague posed a serious challenge to the colonial state. The plague measures were that unpopular

³ Ibid., p. 487.

that it led to riots in different parts of Bombay and also to the assassination of a British officer in 1897 who was in charge of plague relief measures.

Nature of Appointment	Bengal		NWP		Punjab		Madras		Bombay	
	E	I	E	I	E	I	E	I	E	I
Judges of High Courts & Chief Courts	9	3	5	1	3	2	5	1	4	2
District & Sessions and Divisional Judges	26	3	24	2	15	2	21	0	15	1
District Magistrates, Collectors & Deputy Commissioners	40	5	49	0	38	2	22	0	23	0
Members of Board & Commission	11	0	10	0	6	0	4	0	3	0
Chief Engineers, Superintendents & Executive engineers including Irrigation Branch	34	1	56	2	60	4	48	2	40	9
Higher Education Officers	27	4	12	0	8	2	22	2	20	7
Higher Police Officers	59	2	49	1	55	0	33	0	28	0
Civil Medical Officers	57	8	47	1	31	1	25	2	41	4
Special Gaol Officers	14	0	7	0	4	0	7	0	4	0
Forest Officers	13	0	19	0	10	0	27	2	26	1

*E= Europeans, I= Indians

The figures above show the estimate of year 1897, twenty years after the Durbar of 1877.

Source: *England and India: A Record of Progress During A Hundred Years 1785-1885* by Romesh C. Dutt, p. 151.

4.2. Arrival of Curzon

Curzon took over the charge succeeding Elgin in January 1899. The twentieth century dawned with much discontent and dissatisfaction in India against the British policies. There was general indignation due to the government's repressive plague measures and inefficient famine relief measures towards the end of the nineteenth century. It was at this stage that India was receiving a Viceroy like Curzon who had lofty imperial ideas. He was a man who had immense knowledge of India. He was the Under-Secretary for India and for Foreign Affairs in Salisbury's government. He had travelled to India even before his appointment as the Viceroy of India. His journey to China, Persia, Afghanistan, Japan and Korea made him familiar with the continent of Asia. "No viceroy not an ex-civil servant ever took up his office with so full and extensive a knowledge of the problems to be faced in India".⁴ Curzon took charge when India had not fully recovered from the famine and plague. In two years, India witnessed one more severe famine in 1899-1900. The areas affected were Bombay Presidency, Central Provinces, Berar, Ajmer, Punjab, Baroda, Bombay, Rajputana, Kathiawar agency, Central India Agency and Hyderabad. Areas of Bengal Presidency, Madras Presidency and the North-Western Provinces were also affected. With the outbreak of famine, cholera and malaria also spread. Plague continued to persist taking the lives of many. Towards the end of Curzon's first term of viceroyalty, 'the total number of deaths amounted to more than 900,000'.⁵ In spite of the grievous situation, there was a marked improvement in the financial condition of India from 1899. Surpluses were generated leading to a remission of taxation. This improvement in financial condition was declared in Curzon's speech delivered at Delhi durbar in 1903. "If...the present situations continue, and if, as we have good reason to believe, we have entered upon a period of prosperity in Indian finance".⁶

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the British had their interests in the Persian Gulf. The Gulf was an area of British exploration and commercial activities right from the seventeenth century. Though this land locked area between Gulf of Aden and Gulf of

⁴ Ibid., p. 514.

⁵ Ibid., p. 538.

⁶ Stephen Wheeler, *History of the Delhi Coronation Durbar held on the first of January 1903 to celebrate the Coronation of His Majesty Edward VII Emperor of India*, Delhi, 1991, (First published in 1904), p. 122.

Oman was never annexed, the British maintained a general control over the sea routes trying to keep away the presence of other European powers in this area. In spite of the British precautionary steps, there were constant efforts by other imperial powers to enter this area. Curzon's period witnessed interference in the affairs of Gulf and Persia. One of the states with which British had treaty relations was Oman. In spite of this arrangement, the Sultan of Oman, granted in 1898, a coaling station at Bandar Jissah to the French with rights to fortify it. When in 1899, Curzon came to know about this development, he immediately sent a naval force to Oman. The Sultan was forced to revoke the concession made to the French. In 1900, Russia made an attempt to gain a coaling station in the northern shore of the Gulf, which again was thwarted by the British. British also had alliance with the ruler of Kuwait ensuring that other imperial powers did not get an opportunity to pursue their colonial interests in this region. Another area of British interest and intervention was Persia. Britain established her hegemony in southern Persia and the Czar held his sway over the northern part of Persia. With the fall of Khiva and Bokhara, the boundaries of the Russian Empire already reached the borders of northern Persia. It was by now obvious that the whole of Shah's empire would be added to the Russian Empire. Curzon was alarmed that if northern Persia was occupied by Russians, they may advance towards southern Persia and then towards Persian Gulf. He, realizing that the supremacy of Britain as a world power would be challenged if such an annexation happens, immediately visited the Gulf in 1903. Further deliberations happened with Persia whereby Britain acquired rights to build consulates, roads and trading centres in Persia. The Afghanistan issue was also settled when a treaty was signed between Curzon and Habibullah, son of Abdur Rahman. "Curzon believed that India was no longer a matter of imperial concern only but was a part of the direct conflict between the Great powers".⁷ It was this belief that made him actively involve in affairs of Persia, Afghanistan and Persian Gulf.

The political atmosphere in India was more vibrant with many political organizations being founded. Many Hindu organizations had begun to attract young men and invigorate them into action. Secret societies flourished in Bengal. Until Curzon's arrival, intense politico-religious upheaval was largely confined to Western India. Indian National Congress, at the time of Curzon's arrival had completed more than a decade of its

⁷ S. Gopal, *British Policy in India: 1858-1905*, Cambridge, 1965, p. 228.

existence and was in dull condition with little funds for activities and organization. Indian soldiers were by now sent abroad for war campaigns in South Africa, Somaliland and China (Boxer Rebellion). The period following the death of Queen Victoria witnessed native princes being invited to royal occasions in England. When Edward VII accessed the throne after the death of Queen Victoria, princes of India were invited to the Coronation ceremony held at Westminster Abbey, London, on August 9, 1902. Ruling Chiefs of Gwalior, Jaipur, Kolhapur, Bikaner, Idar, Cooch Behar, and Agha Khan attended the Coronation in London.

After assuming office, Curzon undertook a tour of India visiting Delhi, Bombay, Bhopal, Sanchi, Gwalior, Agra, Sikandra, Fatehpur Sikri, Mathura, Vrindavan, Kanpur, Lucknow and Varanasi. In the Durbar held at Lucknow in 1899 for the reception of Talukdars and other Durbaris of Awadh, he said, "I regard a Durbar as an occasion of no ordinary significance; not merely because of its picturesque and stately ceremonial, or of its harmony with the vernacular traditions of an ancient polity, as because of the opportunity which it furnishes to Viceroy to meet, in becoming surroundings, the leading men in the community, and to exchange with them those formal assurances which to my mind are invested with a much more than conventional courtesy, in as much as they are the real foundation stones of the stable fabric of Her Majesty's Indian Empire".⁸

It is in this backdrop that the second Durbar of 1903 was being summoned by Curzon again at Delhi on January 1, 1903 to celebrate the accession of King Edward VII as Emperor of India. When the preparations were going on for the coronation at London, Curzon had announced on February 14, 1902 that he intended to hold an imperial Durbar on January 1, 1903 to celebrate the auspicious event. To this Durbar, he planned to invite all the high officials of British India and princes, chiefs and nobles of India under King's protection. The King was not able to attend personally the Coronation Durbar. "The duties of State are too absorbing to permit His Majesty to be absent from England for so many weeks as would have been required, and he was compelled to desist from granting a wish that would otherwise have had for him the greatest attractions".⁹ The King instead deputed his brother, the Duke of Connaught and the Duchess of Connaught to represent the

⁸ *Speeches by Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, Vol: 1. (1898-1900)*, Calcutta, 1900, p. 197.

⁹ Wheeler, *History of the Delhi Coronation Durbar*, p. 6.

royal family at the Durbar. The King's nephew, the Grand Duke of Hesse was also present at the Durbar as the Viceroy's guest.

One cannot look at the Delhi Durbar without accentuating the role played by Curzon in organising it. S.Gopal calls Curzon's Viceroyalty as an 'apogee of British Indian administration'.¹⁰ In his term of viceroyalty, "all the characteristics of British rule in India in the forty years after the revolt of 1857 found their full, and even exaggerated, development".¹¹ The idea of holding a Coronation Durbar, displaying the pomp and splendour of Empire, germinated in the mind of Curzon after the death of Queen Victoria in 1901. Though Edward VII, her successor approved it, objections were posed by the official circles in England questioning the propriety and reason for conducting a ceremony marking King's coronation alone in India, when it had to be conducted in other parts of British Empire as well. But, Curzon brushed aside such arguments. He retorted that Durbar was not a colonial function, but a highly revered Indian function and if this was to be recreated in other parts of the Empire, it would be absurdity and anachronism. In the legislative council in September 1902, he said, "To the East, there is nothing strange, but something familiar and even sacred, in the practice that brings Sovereigns into communion with their people in a ceremony of public solemnity and rejoicing after they have succeeded to their high estate".¹² Curzon admitted his indebtedness to Lord Lytton for his imagination and labours. He dispensed Lytton's idea of an Indian Privy Council, revival of Herald's College or an Indian Peerage and presentation of banners to the chiefs. But the celebrations throughout India, simultaneously with the Durbar at Delhi, were repeated as was the case in 1877.

Curzon regarded the planning of the Durbar as his own responsibility. Each minute detail was supervised by him. Hugh Barnes was appointed as the President of Central Committee in charge of the Durbar. Curzon reprised certain features of the previous Durbar and at the same time discarded some of the features and introduced new arrangements to its logistics. He chose the same site selected for the first Durbar. A major structural change initiated by Curzon was that he decided the amphitheatre to be in the form of a gigantic horse-shoe. The Viceroy would make an entry through the open end and

¹⁰ Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 223.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹² H. Caldwell Lipsett, *Lord Curzon in India: 1898-1903*, London, 1903, p. 120.

his dais would be built at the opposite extreme in the inner hollow of the circle. Curzon wanted the decorations to be completely in the style of Mughal architecture and accordingly the amphitheatre had Mughal architectural designs. The Central arena, i.e., the circular space within the open end was planted with grass and in the centre was the Royal Flagstaff where the royal standard was unfurled. This area was about 101,828 square feet. The massed bands were stationed here. The Viceregal dais was exactly on the same spot as that of Lytton's Throne Pavilion. The roof or canopy of the dais was in the shape of a saracenic dome. He was critical of Lytton for choosing European designs for decorations. "Neither was there in the structural design or in the decorations (which consisted exclusively of bunting, shields, flags, and streamers) anything suggestive of the East. So far as these features were concerned, the ceremony might have taken place in Hyde Park".¹³ A four sided pavilion was constructed which was a copy of Akbar's building at Agra. The entire building was painted creamy white. The circular arena within the boundaries of the horse-shoe theatre measured about 101,828 square feet, and the open ended entrance was 220 feet across.¹⁴ The Viceroy would now occupy a seat and sit in the midst of ruling princes and other officials reaffirming his significance and pre-eminent position in India as the direct representative of the King in India.

The Durbar was on a larger scale than the previous Durbar in terms of preparations, number of men employed for each work, number of camps and number of invitees. A special convoy from Persia had attended the coronation in London and thus, Shah of Persia was not directly represented at Delhi. South Africa and Commonwealth of Australia sent their representatives to Delhi. Governor-General of Portuguese India; Governor of French establishments; Consuls-Generals for Persia, Portugal, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, USA, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Sweden and Norway and Germany; and Consuls for Spain, Siam, Netherlands, Japan and Greece attended the Durbar and were treated as guests of the Government of India. There was a representation of chieftains of Aden protectorate due to the latest developments in Persian Gulf. *Sultan* of Lahej and *Amir* of D'thali were also present. Nepal was represented by its Prime Minister and the seven Shan Chiefs from Salween and Mekong region attended the Durbar. In pursuance of the tradition inaugurated

¹³ Government of India, Foreign Department, Secret I, File No: 1-3, Proceeding No.1, September, 1902, *NAI*.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

in 1877, this Durbar also had the presence of *Taluqdars* of Awadh and *zamindars* of Bengal.

A distinct feature of this Durbar was the presence of Japan. Japan's presence in the form of an envoy represented by General Baron Oku, Major Jui, Captain Ito and Lieutenant Udaka was of great importance in view of the international developments. The major powers of Europe like Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy had formed an alliance of friendship called the Triple Alliance in 1882. Britain viewed these developments with suspicion and mistrust. In a world of hostile imperial designs, it was essential for Britain to have the support and friendship of another nation to pursue and safeguard its own interests in the Far East. Japan by now had quit her phase of isolation and was actively pursuing imperial interests in Pacific Islands, Korea and China. The bond with Japan was also to counterbalance Russian expansion in the Far East. The mutual suspicion which Russia and Britain maintained had already led to many almost war like situations in the nineteenth century. Thus, in the twentieth century, Japan and Britain entered into an alliance on January 30, 1902. The pact was signed at London by Lord Lansdowne, former Viceroy of India and presently the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Hayashi Tadasu, Japanese minister. This treaty was the first of its kind between a European power and an Asian power. It was signed for a period of 5 years to be renewed later. The alliance constrained the signing powers to remain neutral if one of them was involved in a war. However, if one power was indulged in a war against any other powers, then the other signatory was to provide military assistance and other support. The alliance also ensured that either of the signatories would not to enter into separate alliances or pact with other Powers. The signatories promised to communicate frankly with each other when any of the interests affected by this treaty were in peril. It was according to this alliance that Japan took part in World War I on the side of the Allied Powers. But relations turned uneven in the post-World War I period due to American interests in the Pacific Islands and concern over Manchuria and Philippines. The not so friendly relation between USA and Japan had effect on Britain as well. The treaty was cancelled in 1921.

Curzon was particular in using the term 'Durbar' as he believed that it was a familiar assemblage convoked by the Mughals and other ruling chiefs on their accession to throne and "this is the name and form of the ceremony that is to this day held on similar occasions by every Native Chief in India, and because I propose to associate with the

present gathering some at least of the time-honoured features of Indian Durbars”.¹⁵ He believed that the Durbar helped in transforming the Viceroy from a constitutional formula to personal force. Curzon had a reputation of giving utmost importance to pomp and ceremony. Critics sarcastically called the Delhi Durbar of 1903 as Curzonian Durbar for they found in the acts of the Viceroy, a personal glorification of himself. He was called an ‘eighteenth-century aristocrat born out of his time’.¹⁶ “He certainly resembled an eighteenth century aristocrat in being in the grand manner, in his love of great entertainments and splendid houses and gardens”.¹⁷ Curzon also attached great importance to the traditions, customs and ceremonials of Viceroyalty which was clearly seen in the Durbar where he, as the representative of Crown, was the focus of all rituals enacted in the Durbar.

Curzon faced virulent criticism for spending huge sums of money on the Durbar. Many viewed it as a theatrical display which had no meaning and for which an enormous amount of money was spent. Curzon revealed the total expense incurred by the Government at the meeting of the Council at Government House at Calcutta on March 25, 1903, while discussing the Financial Statement for 1903-1904. The total expenditure against imperial revenues for the entire Durbar works was a little more than 12 ½ lakhs or £84,000. When the expenses incurred by local Governments were added, the amount was 14 ¾ lakhs or £99,000. The total expenditure for Durbar including, imperial and provincial was £1,80,000.¹⁸ Curzon justified the amount that had been spent on Durbar. He replied to the critics,

“Is there anyone who will tell me that this is an excessive charge upon a population of over 230 millions in British India, exclusive of the Native States, for celebrating the Coronation of their Sovereign? In Great Britain, with a population of 41 millions of people, they voted, I believe, £100,000 for a similar purpose, or a charge of less than ½ d, per head of

¹⁵ Minute by Curzon of May 11, 1902, Government of India, Foreign Department, Secret I, File No: 1-3, Proceeding No.1, September, 1902, *NAI*.

¹⁶ Marc-Bence-Jones, *The Viceroy of India*, London, 1982, p. 169.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.

¹⁸ The note attached to Curzon’s speech says that when all the accounts came, the amount increased to a little over £2,00,000.

the people. They also spent £70,000 in entertaining the representatives who came from India to attend the ceremony. In India we have spent £180,000 with a population of nearly 300 millions in all, or about 1/6th of a penny per head of the entire community. Is that too heavy a price for the people to pay for the Coronation of their Emperor"?¹⁹

Curzon spoke rhapsodically of the effects of the Durbar which he thought to be momentous. For him, the Durbar was a landmark in the history of the people and a chapter in the ritual of the state which "was meant to remind all the Princes and peoples of the Asiatic Empire of the British Crown that they had passed under the dominion of a new and single Sovereign... The sound of the trumpets has already died away; the captains and the kings have departed; but the effect produced by this overwhelming display of unity and patriotism is still alive and will not perish".²⁰ Curzon was upset that the critics could not contemplate the advantage of the occasion as they were surveying it only from the angle of finance. He asked them to look beyond the expense and see the real political importance of the event. He riposted to those who considered the Durbar as a theatrical display. "The one thing most needed in India is the sense of common participation in a great political system and of fellow-citizenship of the British Empire. The opportunities that exist of creating or fostering this feeling are few and rare: and the political advantages that will result... justify an expenditure greatly in excess of any that we are likely to incur".²¹ To those still concerned with expenditure he added,

"Our recoveries will also be larger. The railways will be much more utilised than they were in 1877; and the receipts will be proportionately increased. The bulk of the plant, building materials, tent equipage, and furniture in general, that are being ordered for Delhi will either be bought back by Government or offered for public sale. Indeed, I have suggested a Government auction immediately after the termination of the functions, at which I doubt not that Local Governments, Native Chiefs, Durbars, contractors, caterers, and others will gladly purchase the greater part of

¹⁹ *Lord Curzon in India: Being a Selection from His Speeches as Viceroy & Governor-General of India, 1898-1905, Volume II*, London, 1906, pp. 20-21.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22-23.

²¹ Minute by Curzon of May 11, 1902.

the material which we shall have on our hands. My own belief, therefore, is that the apparent heavy cost of the contemplated function is nominal only, and that in the result it will be reduced by recoveries and other reimbursements to not unreasonable dimensions”.²²

He justified that the amount spent could be accrued back in the form of recoveries through railway and telegraphic revenues. It is interesting to note that on one side Curzon justifies the large sum spent and asks the critics to look beyond the criterion of finance and on the other hand, he himself elaborates the spheres from where the amount could be recovered!

4.3. Commencement of Celebrations at Delhi

The ceremonies at Delhi were inaugurated with the state entry of the Viceroy and the Duke and the Duchess of Connaught on December 29, 1902. Preceded by escorts, the Imperial Cadet Corps, the Viceroy’s Body Guard, and their respective staff, the Viceroy and the Duke with Duchess began the procession on elephants. They were followed by the 51 Ruling Chiefs who also were a part of the procession. “Then followed 51 Ruling Chiefs similarly mounted and riding two abreast, His Royal Highness, the Grand Duke of Hesse,... the Governors, Lieutenant-Governors, and Chief Commissioners of every province of the Indian Empire, and the Commander-in-Chief, each with his escort, the Members of the Viceroy’s Council, the Lieutenant-General Commanding Bengal, and Chiefs from Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier, while the elephant retinues of the Chiefs brought up the rear”.²³

4.3.1. Indian Art Exhibition

The next day, on December 30, the Viceroy inaugurated the exhibition of Indian art which was organised as part of the Delhi celebrations in the Kudsia Gardens. The specimens were selected after an extensive tour of India by Sir George Watt and Percy Brown, the Director and Assistant Director of Indian Art Exhibition, respectively. Due to the declining taste and modern models being of low standard, a loan collection was set up with an intention to create standards and samples of the past. The exhibits of this section included specimens lent by Indian chiefs and from Indian museums and South Kensington

²² Ibid.

²³ Government of India, Foreign Department, Internal-A, File No: 160-162, Proceeding No. 58 of 1903, September, 1906, *NAI*.

Museum, London. The exhibits were arranged in a building specially constructed in saracenic design. The exhibits were divided into four sections. a) the Main or Sale Gallery; b) the Loan Collection Gallery; c) the Jewellery Court; d) the Artificers' Gallery or Workshops.²⁴ Each section was further classified into²⁵

I) Metal wares

II) Stone wares

III) Glass and earthen wares

IV) Woodwork

V) Ivory, horn, shell and leather wares

VI) Lac and Lacquer wares

VII) Textiles

a) Treatment after leaving the loom, such as dyeing, printing, etc.

b) Woven patterns

VIII) Embroidery, braiding, lace, etc

IX) Carpets, Rugs, etc.

X) Fine Arts

Certificates, awards and medals were granted to meritorious articles in each of the ten classifications of specimens. Purchases worth more than 3 ½ lakh rupees were made and the exhibition was closed on February 14, 1903. The three conditions that decided the arrangement of the exhibition were, (i) It was strictly laid down to be an arts exhibition, not an industrial or economic exhibition. Curzon, said, "We could have shown you timbers, and minerals, and raw stuffs, and hides, and manufactured articles, to any extent that you pleased. It would all have been very satisfying, but also very ugly".²⁶ (ii) Curzon

²⁴ Government of India, Foreign Department, Internal-B, File No: 261, Enclosure No.1, September, 1903, *NAI*.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁶ *Ibid*.

did not want any European or quasi-European exhibits. He wanted everything Indian. He declared, "I wanted only the work that represented the ideas, the traditions, the instincts, and the beliefs of the people".²⁷ (iii) Thirdly, Curzon only wanted the best. "I did not want cheap cottons and wax-cloths, vulgar lacquer, trinkets and tinsel, brass gods and bowls made to order in Birmingham, or perhaps made in Birmingham itself. What I desired was an exhibition of all that is rare, characteristic, or beautiful in Indian art, our gold and silver ware, our metal work and enamels, and jewellery, our carving in wood and ivory and stone, our best pottery and tiles, our carpets of old Oriental patterns, our muslins and silks and embroideries, and the incomparable Indian brocades".²⁸

He added, "Indian art will never be revived by borrowing foreign ideas, but only by fidelity to its own".²⁹ He reminded that the deteriorating Indian art could not be revived only by outside patronage. It also required encouragement and support from Indian chiefs, aristocracy and people of culture and refined taste. Curzon even fancied a movement among the Indian chiefs and nobility whereby they purify the art of modern tastes and revert it to old fashion, exquisite styles and patterns of their own country. Assistant Director Percy Brown stated in the report on the Indian art exhibition that while travelling all over India, he had to reject so many artists due to their imperfect work. "Goods, too, showing European influences of an inferior or unsuitable nature were repeatedly being brought forward and the difficulty of explaining the undesirability of these articles was often met".³⁰ Curzon believed that Indian art was still capable to awe the world and all it required were support and encouragement. The British tried to show that all that the deteriorating art needed was a helping hand or a paternal *Raj*'s patronage. It is interesting to note that the British decided what was 'Indian' about art! Julie.F.Codell says, "European ideas and production modes intervened to 'save' or 'revive' Indian 'traditions' as they had earlier 'degraded' them".³¹ Metcalf adds that the British put forward the notion that India

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Government of India, Foreign Department, Internal-B, File No: 261, Enclosure No.1, September, 1903, NAI.

³¹ Julie.F.Codell, 'Gentlemen Connoisseurs and Capitalists: Modern British Imperial Identity in the 1903 Delhi Durbar's Exhibition of Indian Art', in Dana Arnold (ed), *Cultural Identities and the Aesthetics of Britishness*, Manchester, 2004, p. 148.

now needed the British guidance to be educated back to their own 'traditions' and to aristocratic patronage. Sir George Watt in his book traces a lineage for this patronage.³² It began with the Mughal patronage followed by the East India Company, missionaries, connoisseuring bureaucrats and the British art schools.

There is no doubt about the fact that the British rule had contributed to the decline of Indian arts and handicrafts. Curzon claimed that the aim of the exhibition was to revitalize Indian arts, conveniently forgetting the fact that British rule itself was responsible for its degeneration. In the inaugural speech, Curzon stressed that through the exhibition he expected to "resuscitate these threatened handicrafts, to show to the world of what India is still capable, and, if possible, to arrest the process of decay".³³ Julie.F.Codell says that the purpose of the exhibition was 'to exonerate Britain of its role in the decline of Indian art production' and 'to demonstrate the well-intentioned paternalism and efficiency of British imperial management'.³⁴ How India had become a dumping market for machine made goods was also not mentioned by Curzon. Instead he had an exalted view of the exhibition. He believed that the honest and enlightened attempt of the government had shown the right path to the producer stimulating him to make the best of his skills.

Industrial exhibitions were also a part of the Congress propaganda. The organisation, with an aim to add vigour to their activities, associated their annual meetings with industrial exhibitions. It held an industrial exhibition at Calcutta and Ahmedabad in 1901 and 1902 respectively. Havell, the In-charge of the Government Art Gallery, Calcutta, says, "The Exhibition is apparently to be a permanent side-show to the political gathering of the Congress".³⁵ Just before the commencement of the colonial exhibition, the Congress also arranged an industrial exhibition at Ahmedabad as part of its annual meeting. Now the question arises why there was a sudden emphasis on the revival of Indian arts and handicrafts. Havell attributes three factors that are necessary for the development of handicrafts industry - natural resources; geographical and physical

³² George Watt, *Indian Art Exhibition, Delhi 1903: Being the Official Indian Art Exhibition, Delhi of the Delhi Exhibition, 1902-1903*, Calcutta, 1903.

³³ Government of India, Foreign Department, Internal-A, File No: 160-162, Enclosure No.5, September, 1906, *NAI*

³⁴ Codell, 'Gentleman Connoisseurs', p. 135.

³⁵ E. B. Havell, *Indian Art, Industry and Education*, Madras, 1907, p. 50.

conditions; and nature of the political situation and manufacturing capacity. India did not lack the first two factors. The new political structure, i.e the British rule affected arts and handicrafts industry and its manufacturing capacity. India's production capacity and trade relations were affected in a negative manner due to the advances made in the production techniques in Europe. Indian art and handicrafts deteriorated also due to the lack of patronage. The annexation and absorption of many princely states left arts and handicrafts without encouragement and patronage. The decline also linked to the general economic conditions of the artisans. The absence of patronage led to displacement of employment and loss of income leading to the deterioration of the economic condition of the artisans. Thus it shows that the Indian art and handicrafts were in a declined condition and an external brace was necessary for its rejuvenation.

But were the measures suggested by Curzon the judicious steps in that direction? For this one needs to have a closer look at the conditions of the artisans in the previous century. There was a direct link between the manufacturing capacity of art and handicrafts industry and economic production in the traditional economy. It was this link that was snapped with the arrival of machine made goods which were cheaper than the handmade goods. The cost of labour involved in arts and handicrafts were also much higher than the cost of labour involved in the machine made goods. Due to the advancements made in machinery, Britain was a prominent monopolising figure in the world market. There were other European powers also who were prominent in the market due to the technological advancements made in machinery. India was lagging behind in this aspect. The tools and devices of Indian artisans were primitive even at the advent of the twentieth century due to which she was relegated out of the market. Instead of making Indian artisans capable enough to face this competition, Curzon gave a romantic picture of Indian artisans being saved through colonial advice. He entrusted the princely states and rich men to solve the issue. "If Indian art,.. is to continue to flourish or is it to be revived, it can only be if the Indian Chiefs and aristocracy, and people of culture and high degree, undertake to patronise it".³⁶

Curzon praised Indian arts and handicrafts, but he did not make any practical suggestions as to whether the present condition can be tackled. If it could be resolved, how the government was going to do it. Nothing was suggested to improve the working

³⁶ Wheeler, *History of the Delhi Coronation Durbar*, p. 92.

conditions or lives of the artisans. What were of utmost requirement were better tools and machinery to work. The Viceroy was silent regarding this aspect as well. The decline of the nineteenth century had two aspects related to it – artistic decline and economic decline. The artistic decline was not in terms of artisanal creativity, but in terms of lack of investment in production, lack of encouragement and change in the nature of demand. Due to the availability of cheap machine made goods and adoption of western life style, the rich class of India started preferring western goods for the decoration of their homes and construction of buildings. This change in taste had an adverse effect on the manufacturing capacity of the Indian artisans leading to an economic decline. This either led to displacement to jobs forcing them to take up agriculture which was also in an unstable condition due to frequent occurrence of famines and droughts. This got them trapped in the vicious circle of debt, poverty and shrewd money lenders. Thus, for Curzon, the remedies were change in the artistic sense, taste and outlook of rich people. But changing the artistic choice and taste were not practical suggestions. What was required was technological assistance and clearance of the ignorance of the Indian weavers by giving them awareness of simple labour saving devices, if not sophisticated machinery; and how government was going to provide assistance to them. An exhibition of this kind should have focussed on the acute problems and suggested more of remedies or schemes, rather than give a hollow declaration like the objective of this exhibition was “to encourage and revive good work, not to satisfy the requirements of the thinly lined purse”.³⁷ It is surprising that in spite of an awareness of the declining condition of the arts and handicrafts industry and the related economic plight of the artisans, Curzon detached art from economic production. He envisaged a project of revival of Indian art through colonial gentlemanly patronage for the satisfaction of aesthetic sense. Britain’s technological advance was acceptable as an indication of the advance of civilization, but the same was ill omen for India. Indian efforts to adopt advanced technology, he predicts, would lead to its ultimate death. He added that unfortunately people want cheap ugly things leaving own models and traditions due to which ‘a great many of the old arts and handicrafts are doomed’.³⁸ Curzon believed that this doomsday can be saved only through colonial support and patronage by Indian princes, aristocrats and people of high culture and degree. One does not get an

³⁷ Government of India, Foreign Department, Internal-B, File No: 261, Enclosure No.1, September, 1903, NAI.

³⁸ Wheeler, *History of the Delhi Coronation Durbar*, p. 92.

understanding of how Curzon defines ‘high culture and degree’ here in this context. But it was clear that Curzon was referring to those who had the financial capacity to lend assistance to artisans as a leisurely extravagant hobby. He was mute to this fact as to how the Indian artefacts were going to compete with the European products in the world market, when they themselves lost the home market. He did not make any allusion as to how the traditional economy was going to be resuscitated or how was it going to recover the lost markets or how was it going to be integrated to the world market. Instead he announced the object-lesson of the exhibition was ‘to show what India can still imagine, and create and do’ without any genuine plan of action.³⁹ The technical ignorance of artisans, handicraftsmen and textile workers were also one of the hindrances to the revival of their work. When it was clear that the adoption of modern technological knowledge and its application can elevate the Indian art industry, Curzon declares Indian art can flourish only if “it satisfies the ideals, and expresses the wants, of the nation that has produced it”.⁴⁰

Now arises another point - Was Art going to have a longer life expectancy if it remained only for art sake? In other words, was art going to sustain itself devoid of commercial production. Curzon’s answer was positive to this if the British guide Indian artisans to the right aesthetic standards! Each specimen in the 10 classifications was selected by the British officials, not Indian artisans who were in this field for generations. The items exhibited at the exhibition were elaborate woodwork, metal work, items of ivory, cloth made of gold, brocaded silk and so on. That means, the items showcased were not items of daily use. In other words, the specimens exhibited were not affordable to common man and did not constitute the daily part of the life, except a rich man’s extravaganza. It is difficult to contemplate how far a small section of elite class, whom Curzon entrusted the mission of patronage was going to nourish this decaying industry where approximately twelve millions of people were involved. Curzon also called for an expulsion of the European influences. “I should like to see a movement spring up among the Indian Chiefs and nobility for the expurgation, ... the purification, of modern tastes,

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

and for a reversion to the old-fashioned but exquisite styles and patterns of their own country”.⁴¹

A mere call asking to buy Indian artefacts was not going to alter the lot of artisans. Ensuring self reliance and technical knowledge were the needs of the hour. There was also the necessity of improving hand manufactures along with adopting machinery. India was using primitive devices even at the end of the nineteenth century when steam driven machinery was widespread in textile and other sector elsewhere. Power looms were common by now and Indian weavers were not equipped with these. Inclusion of labour saving appliances, gadgets or devices was essential for the improvement of Indian art, handicrafts and textile industries. “The mechanical improvement of hand-loom is... one of the most important industrial problems to be dealt with in India”.⁴²

Art for art sake or commercial production, both required market and Curzon’s art exhibition had no genuine plan of action to investigate the reasons for the loss of market, both Indian and foreign and a solution for it. Curzon should have realized that artistic and economic improvements were not possible when the artisans were in the grip of poverty. Rather than exhibiting exotic models of Indian art, the government should have utilized the occasion of Durbar to launch monetary assistance programmes relieving the artisans from the financial agonies. These kinds of schemes would have been of real help enabling artisans to purchase affordable modern labour saving devices which would further ensure livelihood all the year round. Such steps would have been more encouraging and helpful than distribution of certificates, medals and awards. The nomenclature used by colonial administrators and Congress are to be noted. The exhibition of the government was ‘arts’ exhibition and the congress exhibitions were ‘industrial’ exhibitions. Curzon specifically mentioned that it was an arts exhibition underlining the fact that he wanted it to be an exhibition for the satisfaction of aesthetic sense under the British paternal guidance.

As mentioned before, the Congress at this point of time was showing interest in the declined condition of art, handicrafts and textile as part of their political awareness campaigns. In their exhibitions, the Congress held demonstrations of converting native looms to a little more advanced level by implementing indigenous knowledge. The

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Havell, *Indian Art*, p. 34.

Congress demonstrated improvised handloom apparatuses which became “now the prominent feature of the industrial programme of the Congress”.⁴³ Efforts were taken by many princely states like Mysore, Travancore and Baroda to improve handloom weaving. Thus, there were attempts to revive weaving industry by introducing modified models of handlooms. The Gaekwar of Baroda while giving his speech at the opening of the Ahmedabad industrial exhibition underlined that the cause of decline of Indian arts and handicrafts was the difference in the industrial methods and machinery employed by India and Europe. He called attention to the need to make a comparison of Indian home production and the imports from abroad. There existed a wide difference in this ratio and it was utmost important to take steps to remove the anomalies and increase the production and sale of Indian goods in the market. His speech alluded to the practical steps that could be taken to arrest the decline that was lacking in Curzon’s speech. He elaborated the necessity to improve communications, launch banking facilities and other co-operative agencies to improve the present degenerated phase of Indian arts and handicrafts. The necessity of capital investment was reaffirmed. Simultaneously, he asked the natives to be more active and competent enough to sustain in the market. Thus, Gaekwar’s speech was more of a pragmatic advice than asking Indian rich class to change their aesthetic taste as Curzon did. He reminded that India had to concentrate on the production of items of daily use like soap, furniture, leather goods and so on. Gaekwar had undertaken some initiatives in the industrial development of Baroda by founding “the technical institute Kala Bhavan, launching experiments to improve handlooms, introducing artisanal schools, starting demonstration factories, and providing scholarships to send promising students overseas to investigate new technologies”.⁴⁴

The colonial exhibition was widely discussed in the newspapers. Many criticized Curzon for squandering away large sum of money. The paper *Hitavadi* of January 9, 1903 criticised the exhibition saying that the showcasing of jewellery and cloth do not contribute in any way in the betterment of the economic condition of the country.⁴⁵ The exhibition should have focussed on materials of daily usage imported into India from foreign countries. The exhibition should also have encouraged the indigenous manufactures which

⁴³ Ibid., p. 63.

⁴⁴ Abigail McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India*, New York, 2009, p. 187.

⁴⁵ Report on native papers in Bengal for the week ending January 17, 1903, No. 3 of 1903, p. 69, *NAI*.

meet the everyday requirements of common people. It, on the other hand, encouraged those who can afford to buy luxurious artefacts. The common man did not gain anything from the exhibition. He would have gained something, had it shown how coarse cloth can be manufactured and sold at a cheaper price than Manchester cloth. *Hitavadi* compared the colonial exhibition to the Ahmedabad exhibition held by Congress and observed that the latter was more beneficial for the common man.

4.3.2. Honouring Mutiny Veterans

Though 46 years had passed since the Revolt, this event was still fresh in the memory of the British. One of the episodes of the ceremonies observed stands testimony to this fact and it was the march of the Mutiny veterans. This was an innovative part of this Durbar and was absent in the Durbar of 1877. The British once again, through this act reaffirmed that loyal service to the Crown, not recalcitrant behaviour, would always be acknowledged and recognised. As the number of soldiers was high, it was decided to confine the invitation only to the officers and non-commissioned officers (British, Eurasian and Indian) who were part of siege of Delhi and defence of Lucknow in 1857.⁴⁶ “Of these, 27 Europeans and Eurasians and 387 Indians responded to the appeal”.⁴⁷ They were treated as guests of Government and were under the command of Colonel A.R.D.Mackenzie who himself was a Delhi veteran. The fact that the Mutiny veterans being accorded a prominent place in the celebrations shows that the British acknowledge, reward and honour loyal service to the *Raj*. The march of the Mutiny veterans before the assemblage was one of the beginning episodes of the Durbar day. Majority of them were Indians.

Curzon says, “Then was seen a spectacle that will never be forgotten by those who witnessed it, that brought tears to the eyes of strong men and a choking in every throat. Preceded by a military band, there walked into the arena, in irregular formation, with no attempt at parade or symmetry, a group, a knot, a straggling company, of old or elderly men. Nearly all were grey-headed or white-haired, many were bowed with years, and were with difficulty supported by their comrades or by younger officers who conducted them round. In front marched a little knot of Europeans, headed by a splendid veteran, Colonel

⁴⁶ Government of India, Foreign Department, Internal-B, File No: 581-640, No.460-B, June, 1903, *NAI*.

⁴⁷ Wheeler, *History of the Delhi Coronation Durbar*, p. 112.

A.R.Mackenzie,C.B. Some were in stained and dilapidated uniforms, others in every variety of civil dress; but there was not a bosom that did not glitter with the medals that both explained their presence and bespoke their glory”.⁴⁸ Wheeler, the official historian of this Durbar describes the march of Mutiny veterans in the following words,

“Preceded by the band of the 1st battalion, Munster fusiliers, which, as the old 101st Foot, had shared their sufferings and triumphs nearly half a century ago, the veterans marched in. There was no order in the procession, save that the little knot of Europeans headed by Colonel Mackenzie walked in front. Some were in uniform, others in civil dress, but the medals told of their bravery shone on the breasts of all. Then followed a motley band of natives in every variety of costume and uniform, many white-haired or bowed with age and with difficulty supported by their comrades. In the rear of the procession walked a cluster of Sikh veterans, clad entirely in white. As the little body of heroes straggled round the broad road of the arena, to which none had hitherto been admitted but themselves, the entire audience rose to their feet and greeted them with cheers again and again renewed; and when the strains of ‘See the Conquering Hero comes’ to which they had entered, were succeeded by the notes of ‘Auld Lang Syne’, as the veterans reached their appointed seats, few eyes were dry, and there was a choking in many throats”.⁴⁹

In an address at the inaugural meeting of the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh in the autumn session of 1909, Curzon appreciated the participation of Indian subjects in the imperial wars of Britain. He specially mentioned the Boer war (1899-1900) and Boxer Rising in China (1900) where Indian contingents fought bravely. He said, “It was perhaps not an unfitting return for these demonstrations of loyalty that at the Delhi Durbar the place of honour should have been given to the Indian survivors of the Mutiny, who had upheld the flag of Britain half a century earlier”.⁵⁰ The service of Indian soldiers was

⁴⁸ Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, *A Viceroy's India: Leaves from Lord Curzon's Note-Book*, London, 1984, pp. 64-65.

⁴⁹ Wheeler, *History of the Delhi Coronation Durbar*, p. 113.

⁵⁰ *The Place of India in the Empire: Being an Address Delivered before the Philosophical Institute of Edinburgh by Lord Curzon of Kedleston on October 19, 1909*, London, 1909, p. 17.

important due to various developments in the international arena. It was necessary for Britain to strengthen its army in terms of men. With the advance of the twentieth century, Indian soldiers had fought battles outside India. Their participation in Boxer Rebellion was specially appreciated by the British. It was not that Indian soldiers were not required that they were not honoured in the Durbar of 1877. This segment was the brainchild of Curzon who felt it necessary to visually demonstrate benevolent nature of the British rule which honours courageous service of Indians to the Crown. Secondly, this was also to encourage more men to enrol themselves in the British Indian army. Even in the lower ranks, the employment in the army ensured regular source of income to Indians. The march of Mutiny veterans was followed by the entry of the Grand Duke of Hesse with his escort. The gun shots announced the approach of the Duke and the Duchess of Connaught. They arrived in a carriage amidst loud cheers and were escorted by a squadron of the 9th Lancers and a squadron of the 19th Bengal Lancers. Both mounted the dais while the massed bands played the national anthem. The people assembled remained standing till the Duke and the Duchess were seated.

Few minutes later, Lord Curzon and his cortege, along with his wife drove in a carriage to the dais. The guard of honour of the Gordon Highlanders presented the arms while the massed bands played 'God Save the King'. Viceregal flag was hoisted at the flag-staff and the Royal Field Artillery fired a salute of 31 guns. The Viceroy then saluted and bowed to the Duke and the Duchess of Connaught. The Duke saluted in return. The Viceroy, as the representative of the Crown had prominence in the proceedings of the Durbar. "The Viceroy's silver chair of state, with silver footstool, was in the centre, and slightly to the front. The Duke of Connaught's silver chair was a little to the left".⁵¹ Once all were seated, the Imperial Cadets led by Sir Pratap Singh presented a princely guard of honour.⁵² This guard of honour was absent in 1877. The Viceroy granted permission to open the Durbar and the massed bands started playing music. The herald and his cortege rode up to the dais. He was asked to read the royal proclamation. In 1877, the Urdu translation of the royal proclamation was read. But in this Durbar it was decided not to read out the Urdu translations of the proclamation or of speeches, "partly because of the

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 115.

⁵² Pratap Singh was the Maharaja of the princely state of Idar and a British Indian Army officer. During the Viceroyalty of Curzon, he was made the honorary commandant of the Imperial Cadet Corps.

delay involved, and also because there are few voices that can make themselves heard to more than a minority of the entire assembly”.⁵³ The royal proclamation was followed by another flourish of trumpets, bands played the national anthem and the guard of honour presented the arms. An imperial salute of 101 gunshots was fired broken at two intervals by *feu-de-joie*.

4.3.3. The Viceroy’s Speech

The second part of the ceremonies began with the speech of the Viceroy. Curzon in his speech recalled the Durbar of 1877 which happened on the same spot where Queen Victoria was proclaimed the first Empress of India. He considered that act as a vindication of Queen Victoria’s profound interest in her Indian subjects and as an expression of the unity of the Indian dominions under the paramountcy of the British Crown. He declared the possession of the Indian Empire as the biggest strength of British Empire. The unswerving loyalty of Indians was highlighted throughout the speech. He said, “All are animated by a single feeling, and all bow before a single throne”.⁵⁴ Curzon acknowledged the help offered by princes of India in the forms of offering soldiers and their own swords in the recent campaigns and appreciated the steps initiated against draught and famines. He foresaw for India a bright future and progress of expanding industry, prosperity, more facilities and widely distributed comfort and wealth, all of which would be realised only under the unchallenged paramountcy of the British. Other than the announcements that the government had decided to stop exacting an interest for a period of three years upon all loans that were made or guaranteed by the Government of India to native states in connection with the last famine; and the name of the Indian Staff Corps would cease to exist and they would be part of the Indian army of the King, there was no concession or announcement regarding appointment of Indians to the higher posts. When compared to Lytton’s speech in 1877, Curzon’s speech was strictly restrained in eulogizing the Durbar and emphasising the benefits of the British administration. Lytton, though did not guarantee increased participation of Indians in the administration, gave a promise to Indians that they would be recruited to government service if they adopt high public virtues. Lytton had addressed each section of Indian population, the British official community and frontier states, whereas in Curzon’s speech the native princes, chiefs and

⁵³ Government of India, Foreign Department, Secret I, File No: 1-3, Enclosure No.1, September, 1902, *NAI*.

⁵⁴ Wheeler, *History of the Delhi Coronation Durbar*, p. 120.

nobles are given more importance. He addressed them as pillars of King Edward VII's throne. The silence towards any important demands of Indians, in a way, affirmed like Lytton's speech in the Durbar of 1877 that Indians would be deprived of their right to serve in the high executive, judiciary and military posts of their country. Other than an exalted view of the Durbar, the Viceroy's speech had nothing new to offer. He emphasised, "Nowhere else in the world would such a spectacle be possible as that which we witness here today".⁵⁵ The King's message was also read out where the King renewed the assurance that the liberties, dignities and rights of all his Indian feudatories and subjects would be respected. He also asserted that the supreme aim and object of his rule were their advancement and devotion to their welfare. As Curzon resumed his seat, the herald and the trumpeters again showed up and called for three cheers for the King-Emperor. The multitude of 16,000 people rose and cheers were repeated thrice. This was absent in 1877. National anthem was played and the herald and his trumpeters retired.

4.3.4. Presentation of Ruling Chiefs

The ceremony of presentation of ruling chiefs marked the conclusion of the Durbar day. This was a new insertion into the ceremonies performed and was absent in 1877. Curzon said in his supplementary minute dated October 21, 1902, "My object in introducing this innovation into the programme has been to show to the Indian Princes and Chiefs that they are not mere spectators at an official pageant, but personal actors in the celebration of the Coronation of the Sovereign".⁵⁶ In this session, the native chiefs offered their messages of congratulation and paid homage to the sovereign. The presented chief, his name and style being announced by the Foreign Secretary, was received by the Viceroy and the Duke of Connaught in standing position. First, the Viceroy shook hands with him followed by the Duke of Connaught before receiving his message. The ruling chiefs did not present any *nazar*. It was already decided by Curzon that 'none of them will be asked to present and offer nazars'.⁵⁷ Exchange of gifts was not allowed.⁵⁸ The rule that was laid in 1861 regarding the interchange of presents between princes and chiefs of India and

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

⁵⁶ Government of India, Foreign Department, Internal-B, File No: 463-464, Enclosure No. 464, November, 1902, *NAI*.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Government of India, Foreign Department, Internal-A, File No: 1-60, February, 1902, *NAI*.

Queen Victoria was strictly followed in this Durbar. The despatch from Queen Victoria's Secretary of State dated June 17, 1861 to Governor-General of India stated that the Queen appreciated every mark of loyalty and affection of the princes and chiefs of India.⁵⁹ She instructed that such feelings should not be expressed by the presentation of costly gifts. The Secretary of State entrusted all the administrators of the provinces not to encourage such requests which were contrary to the rule. The chiefs advanced and offered their expression of fealty. Only the Begum of Bhopal, who took special permission as a lady in *purdah*, offered her congratulations in writing and laid it at the feet of the Viceroy in a casket. With all the addresses presented by the chiefs, the Durbar came to an end.

4.4. Grand Chapter of the Two Indian Orders

The investiture ceremonies of the 'Order of the Indian Empire' and the 'Order of the Star of India' were held in *Diwan-i-Am* or hall of public audience. As the investiture ceremony and the subsequent ball were expected to be attended by a large number of people, the hall of public audience was enlarged to three times its original size. Curzon took special interest in designing and executing the plan "ordering two replicas of the hall to be made in continuation of it".⁶⁰ It was decided that the entire building should be in the Mughal style. The ornate chair for the grand master of the orders of the 'Star of India' and the 'Indian Empire' was placed exactly beneath the throne platform of the Mughal King. The Viceroy was the grand master of both the Indian orders. The members of each order who were appointed were granted a riband and a badge. The Viceroy invested the member with the collar of each order and addressed the appointee in the following words.

"In the name of the King, Emperor of India, and by His Majesty's Command, I hereby invest you with the Honourable Insignia of the Order of the Star of India, of which Most Exalted Order His Majesty has been graciously pleased to appoint you to be Knight Grand Commander." Each member before receiving the investiture made reverence to the Viceroy. The companions, knights, commanders and grand commanders of the 'Order of the India Empire' and the 'Order of the Star of India' were appointed at this Grand Chapter. Among the people who was granted CIE, one among was Jagadish Chandra Bose. Wheeler considered this ceremony to be of great importance and added, "So ended the

⁵⁹ Ibid., Proceeding No. 17.

⁶⁰ Wheeler, *History of the Delhi Coronation Durbar*, p. 149.

grandest ceremony ever enacted in the Palace of Delhi since the Empire of the great Moghuls became the heritage of the Sovereigns of Great Britain”.⁶¹ Subsequently, a state ball was held in the *Diwan-i-Khas*, hall of private audience. “Persons who had witnessed the Imperial balls in the palaces of St. Petersburg and Moscow-admittedly the stateliest pageants in Europe-conceded that they had never seen anything to compare with this”.⁶² On the eve of the Viceroy’s departure, an evening party was given in the Viceregal tents to which all the ruling chiefs, high officials and distinguished visitors were invited. Wheeler commented, “never before had almost all the great potentates in India, Rajputs, Pathans, Mahrattas, Arabs, and Shans, been collected together in one apartment”.⁶³ In this Viceregal reception, the Duke of Connaught, as the Great Master of the Most Honourable Order, invested the Nizam of Hyderabad with the Grand Cross of that Order. He next invested Maharaja of Kolhapur as the Knight Grand Commander of the ‘Royal Victorian Order’ and presented gold medals to some of the chiefs who had attended the coronation at London in 1902. They were the Maharajas of Kolhapur, Idar and Kuch Behar.

4.5. Critique of the Durbar

The Delhi Durbar was reprimanded by the Press for its extravagant expenditure. Though Curzon was criticised for calling a Durbar in an unpropitious time as the country was still recovering from the famine of 1899-1900, the Durbar did happen in a pompous manner. The changed attitude which was reflected in the policies of the government in the post-Revolt period went a long way in determining the proceedings of the Durbar. The government recognised the rights of Indian princes to practise their own religion and acknowledged their lineage and legitimate right to rule. Now arises with this the question as to whether this Durbar was a successful event which had the fortune to be happily accepted by all Indians. As in the case of the previous Durbar, contradictory information was depicted in the archival documents and reports on native newspapers. The official documents announce the Durbar to be a big success whereas the newspapers criticise the Durbar from different perspectives. For getting information on press criticism, I have used the reports on native newspapers of Bengal Presidency. Hence, the information given on criticism is exclusively from this presidency’s report.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 170.

⁶² Ibid., p. 176.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 229.

4.5.1. Reaction of the Press

Editors of many newspapers, Indian and foreign were invited to the Durbar by the government after elaborate correspondence. Another interesting feature observed while going through the archival documents is that the papers which spread words of sedition against the government were completely avoided from the invitees list. The provincial governments did not even recommend such newspapers though they had a wide circulation. The anti-Congress paper *Akhbar-i-Saudagar* with a circulation of 2,500 copies was recommended by the Governor of Bombay to be invited. On the other hand, Tilak's papers *Kesari* with a circulation of 13,000 copies and *Mahratta* were not recommended by the government of Bombay to be invited.⁶⁴ Malabari, the proprietor of 'Voice of India' was invited in the category of English (Indian) newspaper representatives.⁶⁵ Another staunch pro-Congress paper *Gujarati* was also not recommended by the government for writing against the government and its proprietor and editor were reported to be disloyal.

The Press played a vital role in critically evaluating the Durbar. *Amrit Bazar Patrika* of December 27, 1902 alluded to the Durbar of 1877 which bestowed titles to the invitees and wondered whether this would be repeated in the coming Curzon's Durbar.⁶⁶ The paper reminded that if Indians were children in 1877, they are grown up men now and such toys as stars and medals would not amuse Indians any longer. *Pallivasi* of December 31, 1902 asked what was the necessity of a Durbar proclaiming the coronation of King Edward VII, when everyone knew that Queen Victoria would be succeeded by his son.⁶⁷ The paper scorned at the huge amount of money of a poor country going to be spent for a day's merriment. It shuddered at the thought that crores of rupees would be spent throughout India on the occasion of the Durbar. The paper stated that Indians would have been happy if the money was spent in the alleviation of poverty. It also asked Curzon, who had asked to rejoice on the occasion of Durbar, how a multitude can rejoice when they were in the grip of hunger. The paper begged to the representative of the Crown to remove

⁶⁴ Government of India, Foreign Department, Internal-B, File No: 332-349, Proceeding No. 337, July, 1903, *NAI*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶⁶ Report on native newspapers in Bengal for the week ending Saturday, January 3, 1903, Part II, No. 1 of 1903, p. 25, *NAI*.

⁶⁷ Report on native newspapers in Bengal for the week ending January 10, 1903, No. 2 of 1903, pp. 36-37, *NAI*.

the poverty of Indians. One interesting analogy is found in the paper *Dharma-o-Karma* of January 1, 1903. It compared Curzon to Lord Krishna who was the life and soul of the Rajasuya Yagna performed by Raja Yudhister. The *Rangalaya* of January 3, 1903 condemned the conducting of a Durbar amidst famine and announced that the real object of the Durbar was to showcase the influence and power of the British and the unrivalled administrative ability of Englishmen in India. The paper, in spite of the criticism, praised Curzon as a sovereign who ruled, spoke, assured and reassured like a real sovereign.

The *Amrit Bazar Patrika* of January 6, 1903 acknowledged the success of the Durbar and at the same time complained about the non-participation of Indians.⁶⁸ *Sri Sri Vishnupriya-o- Ananda Bazar Patrika* of January 7, 1903 published that though the official number of prisoners released was stated as 16,188; only 10,000 were released in reality and mocked at the clemency granted by showing such fake figures.⁶⁹ *Charu Mihir* of January 6, 1903 wrote that the Viceroy's speech did not touch upon anything related to the administrative policy of the government. *Bikas* of January 8, 1903 asserted that the Durbar had nothing for the welfare of the poor people. The situation was like that they stood at the door of the authorities begging for a handful of rice and they came back with sweet words in their ears and no rice to eat. "Lord Curzon invited us to the festive scene, but gave us nothing at parting. We are as poor as ever".⁷⁰ *Hitavadi* of January 9, 1903 called the Durbar to be a *tamasha* which the people went to see. There was no announcement of remission of taxes. The paper criticised the government for not granting any new privileges. The Durbar just wasted country's money and added to Curzon's glory. It condemned the money wasted (Rs. 33,000) on fireworks and made a sarcastic remark, "What a wonderful fun it was to see 33,000 rupees reduced to ashes in three hours time".⁷¹ *Rangalaya* of January 10, 1903 rebuked the Durbar where Curzon spent money like water. The paper also pointed to the absence of grants and non-repealing of Arms Act. *Basumati* of January 10, 1903 mentioned the money wasted on fireworks. "Fireworks, worth one and a half lakhs of rupees, proclaimed the glory and might of England. Alas! One and a half

⁶⁸ Report on native owned English newspapers in Bengal for the week ending Saturday, January 16, 1903, No. 2 of 1903, p. 77, *NAI*.

⁶⁹ Report on native papers in Bengal for the week ending January 17, 1903, No. 3 of 1903, p. 56, *NAI*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

lakhs of a poor, hungry and starving country! The hungry beggar saw from a distance the *tamasha*, the festivities and the disappearance of one-and-a half lakh of rupees in a few moments”.⁷² The *Bengalee* of January 11, 1903 published an article titled ‘Imperial Extravaganza’ wherein it condemned the Durbar as an ‘unmitigated sham’, a ‘colossal failure’, ‘incongruous’, ‘irreconcilable’, ‘unjustifiable’ and ‘useless’.⁷³ ‘Indian Empire’ of January 13, 1903 compared the speech delivered by Lytton and Curzon in their respective Durbars and asserted that Curzon’s was even worse than Lytton’s. It warned that the Durbar would be remembered only for its pageantry, grandeur and the mint of money it had cost.

4.5.2. Gandhi’s Perspective on Durbar

M. K. Gandhi makes reference to the Durbar in his autobiography. In December 1902, Gandhi was at India Club, Calcutta. While he was at India Club, he met few native chiefs who were invited for the Durbar. It is unclear whether he is talking about the Durbar at Delhi or celebrations that were going to happen at Calcutta as part of the nationwide celebrations. Gandhi had not given the names of the chiefs or the states. They were referred as ‘some Rajas and Maharajas’.⁷⁴ Gandhi wrote that he was surprised to see the native chiefs on the Durbar day in an attire which made them look like waiters or servers of a restaurant. “On the darbar day, they put on trousers befitting *khanasamas* and shining boots”.⁷⁵ Out of curiosity Gandhi enquired to one of them the reason for this different attire to which one of them replied that they were in a lamentable condition that in order to retain their wealth and titles, they had to face insult. This statement contained many unsaid realities of the period. It showed that the native princes were aware of their lost power and that they are now subordinate to the British *Raj*. They were acquainted with this fact that in the changed power structure, their status, at least as a reigning ruler on throne (though without any actual power to rule) and royal titles could be retained only if they acknowledged the British paramountcy. Secondly, the native chief told Gandhi that they

⁷² Ibid., p. 71.

⁷³ Report on native owned English newspapers in Bengal for the week ending Saturday, January 17, 1903, No. 3 of 1903, p. 78, *NAI*.

⁷⁴ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, Translated from Gujarati by Mahadev Desai, Ahmedabad, 1927, p. 211.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

had to face insult. This insult obviously referred to the affirmation of the subordinate status which they were going to receive at the Durbar through the seating arrangement and other bodily demeanour. The logistics of the Durbar itself demonstrated who was superior and who was inferior. Gandhi, still disturbed with their outfit which looked like that of a waiter, pointed this to the native chief to which he replied, “Do you see any difference between *khansamas* and us? They are our *khansamas*, we are Lord Curzon’s *khansamas*. If I were to absent myself from the levee I should have to suffer the consequences. If I were to attend it in my usual dress, it would be an offence. And do you think I am going to get an opportunity there of talking to Lord Curzon? Not a bit of it”!⁷⁶ Gandhi expressed his pity for this friend.

Gandhi also referred to another Durbar which Lord Hardinge summoned on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the Hindu University to which native princes were invited. Gandhi had testified that he himself had attended this Durbar where he was tormented “to see the Maharajas bedecked like women, - silk *pyjamas* and silk *achkans*, pearl necklaces round their necks, bracelets on their wrists, pearl and diamond tassels on their turbans and, besides all this, swords with golden hilts hanging from their waist-bands”.⁷⁷ The British had made it mandatory that when the native chiefs attended the Durbar, they had to come in their full traditional impressive attire, not in western clothes. They had to wear ornaments and all symbols of royalty. Gandhi considered these to be insignia of their slavery rather than insignia of royalty. When Gandhi took over the leadership of the national movement, he fashioned a new attire of *khadi* which became the spirit of the new movement. At the same time, he gave a call to return all the symbols of distinctions or badges bestowed by the government as an open defiance of fealty to the *Raj* and rejection of the honorific hierarchy created by the British. Gandhi’s attitude on political rituals was clear. He questioned and rejected the theory of authority and ritual idiom created by the British in every aspect, even through his own personal outfit.

Summing Up

After an analysis of the Durbar of 1903, it can be said that the Durbar in no way treated the native princes on an equal footing. The chiefs making reverence to the Viceroy stands testimony to this fact. The Durbar also underlined the fact that loyal service would

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 212.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

always be acknowledged. Cohn established that the British operated in India on the basis of an ordinal theory of hierarchy whereby different groups of India were ranked by precedence in relation to the representatives of the crown. This was, of course, decided on the basis of how cordial and loyal relationship they maintained with the British and the latter also made it a point to acknowledge, reward and honour such loyal services rendered. This was applicable not just in the case of native princes, but also with native gentlemen, landlords, editors of newspapers, journalists, other representative men or groups and soldiers of the army. Recognition came in the form of increase in pay, grant of a title, addition of gun salutes, appointments to different orders or even a certificate of recognition.

In Curzon's Durbar of 1903, we again find a commixture of Indian and the British ritual idiom. Curzon reprised many elements followed by Lytton and abandoned many features as well. Before elaborating the elements rejected, let us have a glance at the features reprised. Twenty six years passed since the first Durbar and though political conditions had changed, Curzon still convoked the same familiar assemblage called the Durbar to proclaim the coronation of the new king. He also made a state entry on an elephant with *howdah*. But, this was not the case in the succeeding Durbar of 1911 when the King personally arrived at Delhi for his coronation. King George V made a state entry on horseback. The ramification of this act is discussed in the next chapter.

Curzon persisted on discarding the European style of decoration and all the buildings constructed for the Durbar were in Indo-saracenic style. Thomas. R.Metcalf says, "Curzon himself employed Indo-Saracenic styles where they reaffirmed the conception of Britain as the legitimate ruler of a 'traditional' India".⁷⁸ The use of Indo-Saracenic style of architecture for the structural arrangements of the Durbar represented 'the incorporation of the princes into the Indic imperial structure of the British'.⁷⁹ He did not propose the formation of an Indian Peerage, Herald's College, gifting of banners and coats of arms as he found it be inappropriate and theatrical. It is surprising to note that Curzon found these elements to be inappropriate and found the circumstances propitious for convoking the Durbar spending enormous amount of money in a country which was just recovering from a famine! He wrote, "I do not deny that the Indian Chiefs possess pedigrees as illustrious,

⁷⁸ Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*, p. 201.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

and that they are as proud of their lineage, as any English noble. But I do not think that these traditions require, for their conservation, the varnish of a purely European invention. I do not think that Maharajas or Rajas will be any the better or the happier for being converted into Dukes, Marquises, Earls, and Barons. Nor do I think that they can attach any real or permanent value to coats of arms concocted by the liveliest use of a European imagination, and representing ideas that are essentially foreign to Indian history and practice”.⁸⁰ Curzon disapproved interchange of gifts and offerings at the Durbar.

Curzon did not propose to revive the Imperial Privy Council which did not materialise into reality in 1877. Instead he suggested a coronation medal to be granted to those who attended the Durbar. In the Durbar of 1877 also, medals were gifted. The medals, now designed to be gifted, were larger in size than the English coronation medal. They were 38.5mm diameter and were struck in gold and silver. The medal had, on its obverse, the crowned and robed effigy of the King facing right with ‘Edward VII’ being inscribed to the left of the King’s head and on the right ‘Delhi Darbar 1903’. “The striking reverse of the medal has a border running around the rim, containing an ornate design of roses, shamrocks and thistles”.⁸¹ Within this border there was an inscription in Persian which read ‘By the grace of the Realm, Edward King, Emperor of India, 1901’. The medal was suspended from a pale blue ribbon with a stripe of pale blue in the centre and narrow dark blue stripes at both edges. Gold medals were conferred upon the royal personages, members of the Governor-General’s Council, heads of local governments and administrations, ruling chiefs, special guests of government and institutions like British Museum (London), United Service Institution (London & Simla) and Victoria Memorial (Calcutta). Silver medals were also disseminated.

The European component of ritual idiom enacted in the Durbar was the investiture ceremonies of the two chapters of the ‘Order of Star of India’ and the ‘Order of Indian Empire’. To this, Curzon gave an interesting twist by arranging it in the *Diwan-i-Am* or hall of public audience of Shah Jahan’s Red Fort. An exact replica of *Diwan-i-Am* was constructed as its extension. The new appointees made reverence (particularly a bow) to the King’s representative and the warrant was read whereby the chief was appointed to the particular order. The investiture ceremony was complete when the recipient was decorated with a riband and badge of the respective order. While retreating, the recipients made their

⁸⁰ Government of India, Foreign Department, Secret I, File No: 1-3, Enclosure No.1, September, 1902, *NAI*.

⁸¹ Malcolm Rouse, *By Grace of the Lord of the Realm: The Medal Roll for the Delhi Durbar 1903*, Devon, 2002, p. 5.

reverence again. The ornate chair of the Viceroy, placed right under the throne platform of the Mughal emperor, affirmed Britain's legitimate claim to rule India as the righteous successor of the Mughals. The investiture ceremony made the native chiefs the vassals of the King within the framework of a medieval feudal vision.

Another trait to observe is that the terminology by which the native princes were addressed. The British never called any Indian ruler as 'king'. They addressed them 'Princes', 'Chiefs', with a prefix of 'Native' or 'Ruling'. Their territories were 'States' or 'Principalities' and not 'Kingdoms'. The investiture ceremony in the European fashion styled them as the 'Feudatories' of the newly coronated king. Along with the grant of insignia and other accoutrements of the orders, this Durbar also granted many titles to the native chiefs and noblemen. Many titles that were granted were same as that of the Durbar of 1877. The general trend followed was that the Hindu rulers were given the titles of *Raja*, *Rao* and *Rai* and Muslim rulers were bestowed with titles like *Nawab*, *Khan* and *Mir*. The Buddhist rulers of Burma states were given the title of *Sawbwa*. The titles conferred in this Durbar were *Sawbwa*, *Maharaja-Dhiraj*, *Maharaja*, *Maharani*, *Raja*, *Nawab Bahadur*, *Nawab*, *Nawab Begum*, *Shams-ul-Ulama*, *Mahamahopadhyaya*, *Dewan Bahadur*, *Sardar Bahadur*, *Dewan*, *Khan Bahadur*, *Rao Bahadur*, *Rai Bahadur*, *Khan Sahib*, *Rao Sahib* and *Rai Sahib*. Some of the new titles were *Kyet-Thaye-Zaung Shwe Salwe Ya Min*, *Thuye Gaung Ngwe Da Ya Min* and *Ahmudan Gaung Tayeik Za Min*. The honorary gun salutes were revised, many chiefs' salutes were increased and honour of knighthood was conferred on many noblemen.

It would be wrong to assume that Indians did not have any expectation from the Durbar. There were instances when requests were made to the officials for a raise in pension, grant of land or any other concessions even after the Durbar. The letter dated September 3, 1903 (no: 917, Nainital) from W.H.L. Impey, Chief Secretary to the government to L.W.Dane, Secretary to the Government of India mentioned a petition from Mirza Muhammad Paiman Shikoh, a member of the ex-royal family of Delhi and Mirza Muhammad Buland Bakht, a dependent of that family.⁸² The petition stated that the allowance that was granted by the East India Company to the petitioners' grandfather had been reduced so much that they could not support their family containing many members with that amount. The villages which they possessed in Meerut and Delhi districts had

⁸² Government of India, Foreign Department, General B, File No: 5-6, No. 917 of 1903, November, 1903, *NAI*.

been confiscated by the government. They requested their allowance to be increased and the villages to be restored to them on the occasion of the coronation of the King held at London and Delhi. The letter (no: 1590, dated October 12, 1903) to W.H.L Impey showed that their pensions of Rs.346 and Rs. 347 respectively, a year was approved to be increased.⁸³

It was not just the members of the ex-royal family who had expectations from the British on the occasion of the Durbar. The Congress also expected boons from the British as part of coronation celebrations. The Durbar was discussed at the eighteenth session of the Indian National Congress held at Ahmedabad on December, 23, 24 and 26, 1902. The President, Surendranath Banerjee in his presidential address, acknowledged the event to be of unique importance to the people of India.⁸⁴ For the first time, he found, in the history of India's relation with Britain, Indian representatives being present for the coronation of an English king. Nevertheless, he called the Durbar 'hollow albeit brilliant state pageantry'.⁸⁵ By making a reference to the Delhi Durbar of 1877, which was condemned as an 'expensive pageant of doubtful utility', Banerjee stated that time had passed when pageants could astonish and impress the public mind of India.⁸⁶ India had passed the stage of childhood and had entered upon a period of vigorous adolescence where substances could be discriminated from the shadow. The educational movement which has brought this result was becoming wider and deeper bringing within its scope a wider community. The downward filtration as said by John Stuart Mill was in vigorous operation in India and he asked the British to take a note of the fact. He foreboded that the mere pageant would not satisfy public opinion. He expected the Durbar to be consecrated by the touch of a higher statesmanship. If it was intended to be a great historic event, he expected it to be "commemorated by some boons which would remind India and her children for all time of the occasion, the principal actors therein. The pomp and glitter of the show, the fine dresses and equipages, even the oriental magnificence of the scene, set off to the best advantage by the choicest and rhetoric which the English language can supply will not avail to rescue the Durbar from the corroding influence of time and oblivion. These things

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Government of India, Home Department, Public-Part B, File No: 270-271, September, 1903, *NAI*

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 70.

will be swept out of view amid the onward rush of events. They will be forgotten; the historic recollection will retain no trace of them”.⁸⁷

Thus, we find that Congress expected boons in some form or the other, though the pomp and glitter were written off as baseless fabric of a vision. By boon, it meant a popular concession which would enlarge the sphere of people's rights and enhance their self respect, or which would exalt the purity of the system under which justice was administered. An expectation of bestowal of a permanent royal boon on the people was reflected in Surendranath Banerjee's presidential address. The Congress observed that all the ceremonial held in connection with the sovereign had been signalized by a substantial concession to the people. It enumerated three Durbars which were associated with some concessions or promises. They were the Durbar held at Allahabad by Lord Canning on November 1, 1858 when the Crown took over the direct administration of India. Bannerjee stated that the proclamation of November 1, 1858 removed racial disabilities and made merit the sole test of qualification for high offices in India. It wiped out the badge of political inferiority. It declared that under the direct government of the Crown there were to be no inequalities, based upon distinction of race or creed, and that all British subjects in India were to enjoy equal rights and possess equal facilities for serving the state. But surprisingly, the Congress did not make any mention regarding whether this was actually put into practice. The next occasion was the Delhi Durbar of 1877 where Queen Victoria was proclaimed the 'Empress of India'. Lord Lytton once again affirmed the principle of the proclamation of November 1, 1858. This solemn reaffirmation of the principle of equal treatment was followed by the creation of a Statutory Civil Service which sought to render partial justice to the claims of the Indians for high and responsible offices. But Bannerjee did not mention the fact that it was abolished later. The third was the Jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria in 1887 at the Calcutta Durbar by Lord Dufferin followed by an enlargement and restructuring of the Legislative Councils in 1892 which were placed upon a partially representative basis.

Having regard to the traditional policy of the British government, the people of India looked forward with confidence to the bestowal of some boon or concession commemorative of the occasion. The Congress acknowledged that the East had a tradition where royal celebrations, especially those which commemorated the assumption of sovereign authority, were proclaimed to the people with beneficial gifts to evoke their

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 72.

gratitude, strengthen their loyalty and secure their attachment to the new sovereign. The British also sustained this immemorial usage of the East. Thus, the Congress appealed to Lord Curzon to follow the precedent and the immemorial usage of the East and convert the pageant into a great historical event which would excite the love and reverence of the people, cement their loyalty, draw them closer to Britain and strengthen those ties of attachment between the two countries, upon which the greatness of the British Empire and the prosperity of India alike depended. Though the Congress was criticizing the Durbar as hollow pageantry, it is surprising to note that it was not questioning any other aspects of the Durbar like the huge amount invested on it. The references to the three occasions, prior to the three Durbars, seem lofty void of an understanding of the actuality.

The British had always utilized media as a means to disseminate the news of the Durbars or any ceremonies. An official painter called Val. C. Prinsep was commissioned by the government to make a portrait of the Durbar of 1877. Photography was in an advanced stage by 1903 and this new technology was used to capture the moments of the Durbar and preserve them for memorialisation. The government's official souvenirs and works were published with the photos of the ceremonial moments, amphitheatre, the Viceroy, officials in the Durbar Committee and native princes adorned with the mantle and badge of 'Star of India'. The people who came to attend the Durbar also had cameras. Early Kodak films enabled people, not just professional photographers, to take snapshots of the Durbar moments. Bourne and Shepherd, was assigned with the task of making the official photographic album of the Durbar. Indian based firms and photographers also were present. In addition to photography, film, a new technology had developed towards the end of the nineteenth century. The new media was deployed to spread the news of the British monarch's assumption to the throne and a Durbar conducted in India to celebrate the solemnity of the event to the world. Considering the developments at international level, it was necessary to utilise the visual propaganda for the colonial project. The Durbar of 1903 was filmed. A multitude of photographers and cameramen rushed to Delhi ahead of Durbar. Considering the fact that the technology of film was in its infancy period in 1903, film historian Stephen Bottomore argues that it was shot by novice men and also by photographers. Gaumont, a French Company filmed the Durbar and released a footage called 'The Delhi Durbar'. Other than Gaumont, an American Biograph Company also filmed the Durbar. Curzon was very enthusiastic in having a video coverage of the Durbar. He was happy regarding the fact that through this media, it would be now possible for

those Britons to watch the Durbar who were unable to attend and witness it personally. But at the same time, he put restrictions on the positions of camera and cameramen. He made it very clear that the cameramen should not perch themselves anywhere in the Durbar arena or near the Viceregal throne. I have not been able to watch the surviving official video in any of the video sharing sites, whereas official video footages of the Durbar of 1911 exist in the public video sharing sites. Nevertheless, a video footage is uploaded on the internet showing the spectacle of 1903. But we do not know who shot this, though the site claims that it was filmed by Robert. W. Paul.⁸⁸ The video shows the state entry and procession on elephants. But the problem with the video is that due to cameras being positioned at long distance from the procession ground and also due to early technological imperfections, the faces of people are not very clear. The said video also does not give any written indication as to who is passing by on elephants and carriages. It is strange that Curzon, who had looked into the minute details of the Durbar, did not foresee this factor that if cameras were fixed at a long distance, it would lead to the issue of non-recognition of the actors of the stage. Even the succeeding Durbar of 1911 was shot from a far range.

The film shots were not without flaws. But it cannot be blamed as deliberate and intentional as the film industry was in its early stage of development. The technology was new and it was gaining attention due its difference and peculiarity of being able to capture movements. Zooming and syncing had not developed due to which it was very important that the cameraman had a clear idea what was he going to record. It was also a time consuming process to reload the film. Early filmmaking was silent. May be this was the reason that attention was given only to movements - procession and state entry, though in black and white. The proclamation and the Viceroy's speech were not filmed. Before the advent of films based on fiction, these kinds of films based on non-fiction and its screening were extremely popular. Cameramen strived to capture movements, marches and parade rather than speeches. These shots of movements appealed the audience in the early days. Secondly, processions or marches were easy to shoot. The cameramen already knew the schedule and route of state entry. Thus, it was easier for them to locate a convenient position on roof top of buildings and record the events.

⁸⁸ Robert W. Paul was (1869-1943) an early British silent filmmaker. There is also no information whether this was shot by someone else for him. Film historian Stephen Bottomore states that he produced and screened four reels of the Durbar, out of which two survive even today.

The film companies screened the films in Britain, USA and France. The aim of these filming and screening were three. Firstly, it was a business venture and screenings brought profit for the filmmakers. They grabbed the opportunity to record this spectacular event and were able to reap profit through its screening. Secondly, the screenings disseminated the imperial message that Britain was still mighty and powerful. The new media was utilised to bolster its own position as an imperial power. Thirdly, the screenings confirmed to the world the exotic oriental image of India which the British tried to spread. Photography and print media were already utilised for advocacy and now the new budding media was used for this imperialist propaganda. The special treatment and arrangements given to film firms and cameramen in the Durbar of 1903 are attestation of this fact. Most of the efforts to film the Durbar came from the West. Indian presence was there, but not in a considerable scale. Bottomore mentions of a man named Save Dada, a photographer and dealer who filmed the Durbar. But no indication is known as to whether the footages shot by him still exist. The filming of Durbars, pageants and ceremonies was an early phase in the evolution of film and development of the non-fiction or news film genre. With the development of the sound films and fiction genre of films, the popularity of these kinds of non-fiction films diminished and they became part of the documentary film making. Nevertheless, visual media still plays a role in bringing to the audience the ceremonies of royalty, even in the period of non-existence of the British Empire and colonies.

The belief in the efficacy of political rituals did not change much as is evident from the summoning of another Durbar in 1911 when the King and Queen actually arrived in India in person for their coronation. However, the state of affairs was not same as that of pre-1903 days. The British *Raj* had reached the climax of its confident phase of administration and India had turned much more restless due to the policies implemented by Curzon. The next Durbar came as an antidote to the series of the turbulence and disorder triggered in the 1905-1911 period. These events, along with the Durbar of 1911, are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Delhi Durbar of 1911

Eight years after the Durbar of 1903, India witnessed the last Durbar, convoked at Delhi on December 12, 1911 under the viceroyalty of Lord Hardinge. King Edward VII expired on May 6, 1910 and his son and heir, George V was declared the new King. George V was coronated at Westminster Abbey, London on June 22, 1911. The royal proclamation dated March 22, 1911 announced that an imperial Durbar would be held at Delhi on December 12, 1911 to celebrate the solemnity of King George V's coronation. He and his consort Queen Mary had visited India in 1905-06 as Prince of Wales and Princess of Wales.¹ "From the first moment of his accession he decided that, after his coronation in London, he would travel to India and crown himself as Emperor at Delhi".² Thus the royal couple arrived at Delhi to be coronated personally. This was the first Durbar where a British monarch and his consort actually came to India to attend a Durbar. The pageant of 1911 was also called the Coronation Durbar, though a coronation in its actual sense did not happen. The King and Queen began their voyage to India in *Medina* from Portsmouth on November 11, 1911.³ They arrived at Bombay on December 2, 1911. India at this point of time was in complete unrest, vehemently protesting the unpopular measure of Partition of Bengal initiated by Lord Curzon. The period also saw Swadeshi and Boycott movement and also a series of political assassinations. It was at this juncture that Lord Hardinge took over the charge as the Viceroy of India in 1910. As soon as he reached India, he realized the political exigency of the situation and found it essential to mollify the prevalent turmoil. The Durbar of 1911 announced the revoking of Partition and also a re-territorialisation of the political map of India whereby a new capital city was proclaimed. The British government took the momentous decision of shifting the capital from Calcutta to Delhi, the Mughal capital city. Delhi was elevated to the status of the capital of British India from a provincial city in Punjab.

¹ In the following pages 'King' and 'King-Emperor', 'Queen' and 'Queen-Empress' would be simultaneously used.

² Harold Nicolson, *King George The Fifth: His Life and Reign*, London, 1952, p. 166.

³ Medina was the ship used by the royal couple for their sail to India.

5.1. Developments between 1903 and 1911

Curzon, who had already pointed to the home department the necessity of involving in the Persian Gulf and Persia, got now occupied with another neighbour, Tibet. Tibet was surrounded by Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan in the south, Kashmir in the west and the Chinese Empire in the east. Tibetan government was an aristocratic theocracy led by two Lamas- Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama. Nevertheless, Dalai Lama possessed more powers over political matters and Panchen Lama was the second important Lama. China always tried to establish its suzerainty over Tibet. Britain also had its own interests in this area. The relations between Britain and Tibet date back to the eighteenth century, when Warren Hastings sent an envoy to visit the Panchen Lama of that period. At the time of Curzon's appointment as the Viceroy of India, Tibet showed a tendency to free themselves from China's domination and maintain friendly relations with Russia. This coincided with the rise of power of a strong Dalai Lama who began to assert his political power and who was also influenced by Dorjjeff.⁴ An envoy was sent to Russia in 1898 to collect religious donation from the Tsar for the general welfare of the Buddhists of Tibet. A mission was sent to Britain in 1900 and 1901 as well. "The Russian press hailed these events as heralding the spread of their country's influence in Tibet".⁵ The Government of India was alarmed observing the course of events, though Russia assured that these visits from Tibet had no political significance. Britain had been trying long to establish trade rights in Tibet. Curzon requested the home government to send a mission to Tibet to initiate talks. The phobia that Russia and Tibet were entering into friendly relations and Russia would invade British India led Curzon to send a military mission to Tibet under Colonel Francis Younghusband in 1903. The military expedition resulted in the Treaty of Lhasa (1904) whereby the British obtained trading rights in Tibet with the establishment of trading stations at Ya tung, Gyantse and Gartok. Tibet was to pay an indemnity of seventy five lakhs of rupees with an annual payment of one lakh rupees. Chumbi Valley was to be occupied till Tibet paid the full amount. However, the war indemnity amount was reduced later from seventy five lakhs to twenty five lakhs. With the Lhasa expedition, Britain got exclusive rights over Tibet turning it into a British protectorate. Tibet's freedom to initiate any diplomatic relations or invite any other foreign powers was completely curbed.

⁴ Dorjjeff was a Mongolian Buryat who wielded power and influence in the Tibetan administration.

⁵ P. E. Roberts, *History of British India Under the Company and the Crown*, New Delhi, 1983, (First published in 1923), p. 530.

Curzon resigned in 1905 and he was succeeded by Lord Minto in the same year. Curzon's term of office as the Viceroy saw many measures which alienated Indians. The first was the reforms in the Calcutta Corporation in 1899, Universities Act of 1904 and the most controversial measure being the Partition of Bengal. The changes made in the Calcutta Corporation consolidated the British hold over it by reducing the strength of Indian representation in it. Calcutta was a centre of business enterprise and reduction of Indians in the corporation removed the possible Indian obstacle in delaying the grants in favour of the European businessmen at Calcutta. The Universities Act, initiated by Curzon, was criticized by the nationalists who wanted the emphasis to be given on mass education. The Act restructured the decision making bodies of the universities by reducing the number of elected members in the Senate. Numerical strength was also determined for the universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. With this Act, the government got the right to nominate and appoint majority of the members of the governing bodies. The much despised measure of Curzon came in the form of Partition of Bengal. The province of Bengal was a big administrative unit constituting Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Eastern and Western Bengal. The size of this unit was so enormous that there were proposals to divide this entity even before. But those did not materialise into reality. The plans of territorial reorganization came up again in 1903 and Curzon approved the plan put forward by Lieutenant Governor Andrew Frazer in June 1903. The talks and deliberations which followed finally culminated in a clear cut partition of Bengal in 1905 where by Bengal was divided into two provinces - Western Bengal, Bihar and Orissa constituting one province and Eastern Bengal and Assam constituting the other. Whether the partition of Bengal was for administrative convenience as explained by Curzon or part of the divide and rule policy as pointed out by Indians, there is no denial of the fact that the partition came at a wrong time. The above mentioned policies and measures added fuel to the existing discontent and helped the rising nationalism to shape into an intense movement with a coherent plan of action. As soon as the government's plan to divide Bengal was made public, it led to a wide range of anger and protest. Bengal was by now a nerve centre of the growing restlessness. The government did expect opposition to the new plan, but they did not expect that the movement would gather a great momentum and extent. They expected the opposition to be within the traditional protesting methods like sending petitions and summoning public meetings. But, contrary to the government's expectations, the protest adopted new strategies and techniques by including within its wave great number of people. The anti-partition movement in the conventional modest manner of summoning

meetings, filing petitions and propaganda through press did not produce the desired effect. It had now become necessary to find another way of protesting and that came in the form of the swadeshi and boycott movement whereby emphasis was to be given to everything indigenous by boycotting the British goods, education and government service. But in spite of the mass protest, the government went ahead with its proposal and Bengal was partitioned on October 16, 1905. The swadeshi and boycott movement also achieved great vigour due to the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905. The victory of a small island nation over the great imperial power motivated the nationalists.

There was a group within the Congress which was not happy with the kind of techniques applied by the moderates. 'Curzon's hardline policy strengthened the position of the Extremists' and they wanted to launch intense agitation and large scale strikes against the government.⁶ But the moderate group was not ready for this and the clash of opinions between the two groups was visible in the Benaras session of the Congress held in 1905. The next session of the Congress was at Calcutta and there were differences of opinion between the two regarding many resolutions on the course of the swadeshi and boycott movement and swaraj. The final split occurred in the Surat session of Congress in 1907 where differences of opinion again arose, this time on the question of the President. "Both sides came prepared for a confrontation".⁷ Extremists wanted Lala Lajpat Rai as their candidate and moderates suggested the name of Rashbehari Ghosh. The two groups separated to be joined later in 1916. The Surat split brought a structural change in the Congress as a precaution to keep the extremists away from the future sessions. In its Allahabad convention of 1908, the moderates decided to adhere to lawful means of protest and it also laid down the principle that the next session was open to only those members who were part of any recognised body which was in activity for more than three years. There was considerable awakening among the Muslims of India that they also started realizing the need to be organised within an organization. The formation of the All India Muslim League in 1906 at Dacca was the culmination of this realization. The Muslims who were distanced from the government employment and other services alienated themselves from the swadeshi movement and opposed the same. The separatist tendencies and ideas estranged them from the pan-Indian nationalism. The British also encouraged

⁶ Amal Tripathi, *Indian National Congress and the Struggle for Freedom: 1885-1947*, Translated from Bengali by Amitava Tripathi, New Delhi, p. 36.

⁷ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, New Delhi, p. 137.

them to aspire and seek ideologies distinct from that of the majority population or the Congress. The events following the partition of Bengal brought a series of political assassinations and attacks on the British officers. Regulations were passed whereby possession of explosives and manufacture of explosives were declared illegal and punishable.

The year 1907 also witnessed an important event in Britain's international relations. Britain and Russia met in a conference to settle the three major issues - Afghanistan, Persia and Tibet, which were always reasons for distrust and suspicion between the two. This Anglo-Russian alliance was of great significance as it led to an accord between the two imperial powers settling three issues of Asian politics. Both the countries agreed not to interfere in the internal governance of Tibet and not to make any encroachments into her territory. They also agreed to approach Tibet only through the Chinese government. Thus, Tibet was completely passed on to the Chinese hands. Though Britain lost power over Tibet, through this convention, Britain ensured non-interference of Russians into Tibet thereby avoiding an intrusion of Russia into British India. Afghanistan issue was settled when Russia announced that the specified region was not its sphere of influence and any political ties with Afghanistan would be conducted only through the British government. Afghanistan was accepted as a British protectorate. Nevertheless, both the countries accepted each others' trading rights in Afghanistan. Persia was at this point of time undergoing demands for constitutional reforms and dissolution of autocracy. The convention divided Persia into three parts - a Russian sphere of influence in northern Persia, British sphere of influence in south-eastern parts of Persia and a neutral sphere in central Persia.

The imperial rule in India also entered its fiftieth year in 1908 and on this occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the assumption of the British administration by the Crown, King Edward VII gave a message to the princes and people of India. This was read by the Viceroy at Jodhpur on November 2, 1908. The King, in retrospection, briefly described the achievements of the British rule in India. He proudly proclaimed that the promises that were given in 1858 had been fulfilled in these fifty years. He added that the promises of good administration and promotion of good works were successfully executed for the material convenience of the people. The rights and privileges of the feudatory princes and ruling chiefs were protected and sustained as promised. "No man among my subjects has

been favoured, molested, or disquieted, by reason of his religious belief or worship”.⁸ The King claimed that efforts were taken to remove racial factor as a condition for appointment to the posts of public authority and power. He assured that greater share would be given for Indians in legislation and government. By this he was hinting towards the new legislative act which was passed in the next year as Indian Councils Act of 1909. The general elections of 1909 brought the Liberal government to power. The new Secretary of State, John Morley was enthusiastic along with the Viceroy Minto to initiate the Indian Councils Act of 1909 or Minto-Morley Reforms. The Act provided an enlargement of the Executive Councils of Madras and Bombay and increased seats in the Viceregal and provincial legislative councils. It also introduced separate electorate for the Muslims. The Congress was not satisfied with the new reforms. The class representation was criticized by them as a consensus of opinion was difficult to be formulated as each class had their own interests in divergence with others.

5. 2. Royal Couple in India: Arrival at Bombay

Elaborate arrangements were made to welcome the King and Queen at Bombay. “At Apollo Bandar, where Their Majesties would land, an actual “Gateway of India” was erected in the form of a white pavilion in the Saracenic style, consisting of a domed porch, a central nave and two side aisles, with gold-tipped minarets. This was erected just above the pier-head steps, and inland from it, at a distance of two hundred and twenty-five feet, was another smaller pavilion surrounded by a bright display of banners emblematical of the British Dominions and surmounted by a Royal blue silk canopy and an Imperial crown”.⁹ This pavilion, for the King and Queen’s thrones, faced towards land and the semicircular amphitheatre built to seat three thousand people. The Governor-General of India, attended by the Naval Commander in Chief and the Director of the Royal India, Captains of the warships at Bombay, Governor of Bombay, Chief justice of Bombay, Bishop of Bombay, members of the Governor’s Council, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay and the General Officer commanding the 6th (Poona) Division of the Army were received by the couple on board.

⁸ <http://www.csas.ed.ac.uk/mutiny/confpapers/Queen'sProclamation.pdf> ,p. 4, Accessed on June 1, 2015.

⁹ Government of India, *The Historical Record of the Imperial Visit to India 1911: Compiled from the Official Records under the Orders of the Viceroy and Governor-General of India*, London, 1914, p. 37.

The King and Queen, when disembarked the ship, were received at Bombay by Lord Hardinge, Governor of Bombay and other high officials of Bombay. Few ruling chiefs were present and they were presented to the King by Lord Hardinge. A guard of honour followed which was inspected by the King. When the royal couple occupied the throne dais, the President of the Municipal Corporation, Sir Pheroze Shah Mehta, stepped forward with a gesture of deferential respect and read an address to the King. His address merely expressed the profound loyalty of the city of Bombay to the British Empire and welcomed the King and Queen to Bombay. The King, in his reply, expressed his happiness in visiting India for a second time with the Queen-Empress and thanked the reception accorded to them. He also recalled how Bombay, once the dowry of a British Queen, had turned into a jewel of the British Crown. There was a procession throughout the city and an interesting thing to note was that most of the decorations were Indian in character with Hindu and Jain writings. The King and Queen also received several messages through telegraph. All India Muslim League, on behalf of seventy million Muslims of India, paid its loyal homage to the King and prayed for his long and distinguished reign. Dadabhai Naoroji also sent a welcome note to the royal couple. The royal couple left for Delhi on December 5, 1911.

5.3. State Entry

The preparations for the present Durbar were more elaborate and comprehensive than the two previous Durbars. The Viceroy had formed a Durbar Committee for the management and supervision of work related to the Durbar and its President was Sir. J.P.Hewett, Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces. Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior, Maharaja of Bikaner, Maharaja of Idar and Nawab of Rampur were also part of this committee. The state entry was more ostentatious than the previous two Durbars. Large number of troops stood in seven sections from Salimgarh to the Ridge Pavilion connecting the Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Chandni Chowk, Mori Gate, Boulevard Road and Ridge. The King and Queen arrived in train and were received by Lord Hardinge and Lady Hardinge. The arrival of the King, the visible embodiment of the Empire was acknowledged and celebrated with great grandeur. The royal standard of Great Britain and Ireland was hoisted at the Delhi Gate of the Fort and an imperial salute of 101 guns was fired. "The salute was divided into three portions of 34, 33 and 34 guns, and at the end of each a *feu de joie* was

fired by all the troops, going along the left line from the Fort to the camp and returning by the right- a flash of full ten miles”.¹⁰

The King was in the uniform of a Field Marshal of the Imperial Army with the ribbon of the ‘Star of India’. Many high officers and few Indian chiefs paid respect to the King. The King with Governor-General and Commander in Chief inspected the guard of honour. He conversed with three senior veterans of the army. “Major Allum of the Bengal Horse Artillery since 1839, who was present at the battles of Maharajpur in 1843, Moodkee, Subraon, and Ferozshah in 1848, Ramnagar, Chilianwallah, and Gujrat in 1849, and the rebellion at Meerut in 1858; Subadar-Major and Honorary Captain Miran Baksh, Sardar Bahadur, late of the 56th Punjab Infantry, who took part in the siege of Delhi and the relief of Lucknow in 1857; and Resaldar-Major and Honorary Captain Jagat Singh, Sardar Bahadur, late of the 16th Cavalry, who served in Afghanistan and Bhutan”.¹¹ All these proceedings took place at Salimgarh. The next was the presentation of the princes which took place in a big pavilion. The chiefs were presented to the King by Sir Henry Mc Mohan, the master of the ceremonies. The Nizam of Hyderabad was the first to be presented. The chiefs made reverence to the King.

The King’s official entry began as soon as he mounted a horse and rode into Delhi through Mori Gate. Hundred and one gun salutes were fired. But the King was not recognised by the people as he rode on a horse, instead of an elephant. In the Durbars of 1877 and 1903, the Viceroys made their official entry on an elephant with a *howdah*. Hardinge wrote in his memoirs about this incident in the following words. “As we passed through the densely crowded streets I noticed that the people did not recognize the King, who after all was a small man, was dressed in a red coat like other Generals and was riding a small horse. He also did not make any kind of demonstration to the people. At the same time as I passed along the people cheered and I could hear them say, “There is the Lord Sahib, but where is the King?” I therefore rode up to the King and suggested to him that he should salaam to the people since by that alone they would recognize that it was he who was the King”.¹² Fortescue writes that as the King was in the attire of a Field-Marshal, the gathered people thought that it was a general or staff-officer. He adds that critics

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 67.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 70.

¹² Lord Hardinge of Penhurst, *My Indian Years: 1910-1916*, London, 1948, pp. 46-47.

suggested, “King ought to have worn a special dress; he ought to have ridden an elephant; he ought to have driven with the Queen; he ought to have ridden a horse with a Royal Standard before him; he ought to have had four, eight, a dozen standards all round him”.¹³ However, Fortescue opines that from an oriental perspective, it would have been better if the King rode a horse, accompanied by Governors and Lieutenant-Governors who walked afoot. The King later expressed his unhappiness for not receiving a proper response. George V was followed by the Queen in a carriage of six horses with postilions and two golden topped umbrellas. The next in order was the Imperial Cadet Corps which had participated in Lord Curzon’s state entry in the Durbar of 1903. It consisted of members from princely Indian houses. Then followed, Lady Hardinge and others, in four landaus and a whole regiment of Indian cavalry, the 11th King Edward’s Own Lancers. After the passage of the cavalry, the procession of native princes started, their number being one hundred and sixty one. The procession took hours to pass through the prescribed route. As in the previous Durbars, the King’s entry into Delhi was associated with Indian symbols of royalty. Signs of royalty carried in the procession were umbrella, *chanwar*, *morchal* and gold sticks. Other ceremonial paraphernalia included nine spears, drums and banners. Some chiefs carried the banners that were granted to them in the Durbar of 1877 as Government of India had already approved it. The memorandum dated November 28, 1911, issued by A.D. Bannerman, Officer on Special Duty of Foreign Office Camp, Coronation Durbar, to all the Officers in Charge of Indian chiefs’ camps stated that those chiefs to whom banners were presented in the Durbar of 1877 by late Queen Victoria may, if they desire, carry the banners in the state entry procession at Delhi.¹⁴ When the government approved symbols of recognition granted by the colonial government, simultaneously, it also restricted and regulated the use of any kind of symbols of recognition which mimicked the royal insignia used by the King. A case of copying royal decorations was brought to the notice of Sir. A.H. Mc Mohan, Secretary to the Government of India by E.V. Gabriel, Secretary of Coronation Durbar Committee where the Raja of Kapurthala used *chobes* surmounted by royal crown and an elephant *howdah* ornamented with similar symbols.¹⁵ This increasing tendency of aping royalty was very

¹³ John William Fortescue, *Narrative of the Visit to India of their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary and of the Coronation Durbar held at Delhi on 12th December 1911*, London, 1912.

¹⁴ Government of India, Foreign Department, Deposit-I, File No: 48, Proceeding No. 48, December, 1911, *NAI*.

¹⁵ Government of India, Foreign Department, Secret-I, File No: 68-69, Proceeding No. 68, May, 1911, *NAI*.

much monitored by the British and in view of the imminent Durbar, the Viceroy instructed to look into the matter if the native chiefs tried to assume, “uniforms and emblems, etc distinctive of royalty or identical with those employed by the Government of India”.¹⁶ The government decided to follow the measures which were taken in the Durbar of 1903. They included actions against

- a) The use by native chiefs and nobles of scarlet liveries for their coachmen, syces, *chaprassies* etc.
- b) The wearing by native gentlemen in the service of native chiefs of uniforms similar to those of a British officer on the staff or of a political officer.
- c) The employment for the local military and police forces of native chiefs of uniforms resembling those of the India army or of the police in the British provinces.
- d) The increasing use by native chiefs, on writing paper, etc., of a crown closely resembling the royal crown in England.¹⁷

As the procession ended, the Vice-President of the Legislative Council of the Governor-General delivered an address of welcome to the King and Queen to which the King expressed his thanks. With the return of the King to the imperial encampment, the first day of ceremony came to an end.

5.4. The Durbar Day

As the present Durbar was on a larger scale than the preceding two, it was obvious that the number of people who would gather would be enormous. Out of convenience and tradition, the area chose for the site of the camps was the same as that chosen by Lord Lytton and Lord Curzon. The number of camps exceeded the number in the Durbars of 1877 and 1903. “The total number of separate camps to be dealt with was no less than four hundred and seventy five, composed of more than forty thousand tents”.¹⁸ The British wanted the events of the ceremony to be reported clearly and extensively. Thus, separate

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Government of India, *The Historical Record of the Imperial Visit*, London, p. 96.

camp arrangements were made for the press. Few of the provincial camps were built at one of the attack scenes of 1857 where John Nicholson led the charge.¹⁹

Another new feature was the establishment of new roads and railway lines with an increased use of motor cars. New roadways of more than 108 miles were constructed and existing ones were renovated and widened. New railway lines were constructed with facilities for arrival at and departure from Delhi. Important sites of ceremonies were also connected by railway. A light steam tramway in camps relieved the traffic on the roads. Special stations and new platforms were also constructed. "Within the space of four days no less than a hundred and ninety special trains from all parts of India concentrated on the camp in addition to a normal daily traffic of two hundred and fifty- six trains"²⁰ Maharajas of Jaipur, Gwalior, Indore and Bharatpur supplied their transport corps to the Durbar Committee. A central camp garage, petrol depots and workshop were all set up for the occasion. Communication arrangements like telephones, telegraph and post were on an elaborate scale.

The tradition started by Lord Curzon was repeated in this Durbar as well - the act of inviting and honouring army veterans. This time the criteria included not just those who fought in the Revolt of 1857, but also those who served the British army in various battles across the world. The army veterans numbered nearly nine hundred, out of which thirty one were Europeans and the rest Indians. The veterans included medal holders of Sikh wars, Crimean wars and the Persian wars, siege of Delhi, defence of Lucknow, members of the 'Royal Victorian Order' or any Indian order and those who were on duty at the court of St. James. They were given utmost importance in various ceremonies. The official records say the attendance of ruling princes as no less than one hundred forty eight. They made their entry in procession accompanied by their entourage. The King met the chiefs who were entitled to gun salutes. The issue of giving return visits during the Durbar was in discussion when the preliminary preparations had commenced. As the King-Emperor himself was in India, talks started regarding who among the native princes would be eligible to receive return visit from the King. The government came up with a convenient plan to avoid jealousy among the native princes. Letter number 90 D dated Fort William,

¹⁹ John Nicholson was a military officer who played a vital role in the siege of Delhi, one of the decisive episodes of the Revolt of 1857.

²⁰ Government of India, *The Historical Record of the Imperial Visit*, London, p. 99.

March 4, 1911 from the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department to the Residents at native states (Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda, Kashmir) & Political Officers of Bombay, Punjab, Central India, Rajputana, Fort St. George stated that the possibility of King-Emperor paying return visits to native princes was never contemplated. It also added that the Viceroy would pay a return visit to all chiefs entitled to that honour on behalf of the King-Emperor.²¹ Thus, the Viceroy paid return visits to those who were eligible for that. Though the British reaffirmed that the relationship between them and Indian princes had risen from a position of subordination to partnership, the ceremonies observed in the Durbar and the seating arrangement manifested the other way round. Seating arrangement was a matter of discussion for the Durbars of 1877 and 1903. Each time, the colonial government came up with plans and arrangements that avoided any kind of special position or seat demanded by the native princes. They were seated territorially without being given any special importance. In the present Durbar also, as the King himself was arriving, claims of prominence were made and the Viceroy made it very clear that, “Do not believe for an instant that it is right that the Chiefs should have a chair alongside His Majesty. It is absolutely wrong, and the Chiefs do not dare to set forward such a pretension... They sit on a lower level, and not alongside but at right angles to me”.²²

Troops lined the roads divided into five sections, each section commanded by the British officers. The troops lined were massive and the total number paraded on the Durbar day, including the Imperial Service Troops, was nearly fifty thousand. The music chosen and played by the band was apt for the occasion. Performers were drawn from both the British and Indian regiments, the number constituting over 1,600 performers. They played popular patriotic music. Once the troops were all settled, veterans of the army came marching to the tune of ‘See, the conquering hero comes’. The troops saluted them and the people rose as a mark of respect. As they occupied their seats, the band played *Auld Lang Syne*. The blow of the bugle announced the entry of the procession of the Governor-General. The 1st King’s Dragoon Guards were followed by the carriage of Lord and Lady Hardinge and their escort. “The procession traversed the area at a trot, passing from the Kingsway along the front of the outer semicircle as far as the Central Road, down which it

²¹ Government of India, Foreign Department, Secret-I, File No: 3-4, Proceeding No. 3, May, 1911, *NAI*.

²² Government of India, Foreign Department, Deposit-I, File No: 18, Proceeding No. 18, September, 1911, *NAI*.

turned, bending outwards once more along the inner circle road between the segments of the troop...to the same steps at the same side of the Homage Pavilion".²³ The assemblage rose as the cortege entered and remained standing till the Viceroy occupied his seat. Lord Hardinge was in the uniform of the highest rank with the ribbon of the 'Star of India' and Lady Hardinge was wearing the symbols of the 'Order of the Crown of India', Queen Victoria's second Jubilee medal and King Edward's coronation medal. In the meantime, the band played 'Scipio'. Lord and Lady Hardinge were received by the master of the ceremony and the members of the Governor-General's staff. They were conducted to their seats on the right of the dais where they were attended by their pages. Twenty minutes later, the first gunshot of an imperial salute announced the arrival of the royal couple's carriage. The band played now Meyerbeer's 'Coronation March' from *Le Prophete*. The couple were in their imperial robes and the King-Emperor wore his imperial crown made specially for the occasion. Major General Sir Pratap Singh was present in the escort. The pages attached to the King and Queen were the children of the different Native Princes. The King and Queen occupied the royal pavilion facing the princes and other representatives. Lord and Lady Hardinge shared the pavilion with them. The Durbar was declared open by a blow of trumpets and beat of drums and the King addressed the assemblage. He expressed his happiness of being in India. His speech was restricted to customary expression of thankfulness and satisfaction.

This was followed by a march of the Imperial Cadet Corps. The next main event happened in the homage pavilion - paying of homage by the ruling chiefs. Before the turn of the princes began, Lord Hardinge came forward and kissed the King-Emperor's hand. The members of the Governor-General's Executive Council led by Commander in Chief came forward, ascended the dais and made their obeisance by bowing, while the Commander in Chief gave a military salute. Then was the turn of the princes. Nizam of Hyderabad was the first to pay homage. He came forward, bowed and gave a Muslim way of salutation, followed by Gaekwar of Baroda and the Maharaja of Mysore till the last of the ruling chiefs present. Some of the chiefs kept their swords at the feet of the King as a gesture of fealty and submission. One different expression of obeisance was expressed by the chiefs of Bhutan and Sikkim. They laid two white scarves at the feet of the Emperor

²³ Government of India, *The Historical Record of the Imperial Visit*, p. 156.

and Empress. "The scarf is put round the neck of an inferior and handed to an equal, but only laid at the feet of an acknowledged overlord".²⁴

The next set of ceremonies was back in the royal pavilion. The royal proclamation announcing the celebration of the solemnity of coronation was read by the Delhi herald. At the end of the firing of 101 salvos, Hardinge announced the imperial boons which included a grant of fifty lakhs for the advancement of education; half a month's pay to all non-commissioned officers in the army, Royal Indian Marine and to all permanent employees of departments or non-combatant establishments whose pay may not exceed the sum of Rs.50. All loyal native officers were now declared eligible for the award of 'Victoria Cross'. Appointments to the 'Order of British India' were increased to fifty-two and one hundred in the first class and second class respectively. Indian officers of the Frontier Militia Corps and Military Police were also announced eligible for the above mentioned order. Special land grants and remissions of land revenue were conferred on few native officers of the Indian army for their long and distinguished service. Allowances assigned to the widows of deceased members of the 'Indian Order of Merit' were extended from three years to their remarriage or death, with effect from December 12, 1911. Half a month's pay was granted to all permanent servants in the civil employment of government whose pay did not exceed Rs.50. All those who were granted or hereafter going to be granted titles of *Dewan Bahadur*, *Sardar Bahadur*, *Khan Bahadur*, *Rai Bahadur*, *Rao Bahadur*, *Khan Sahib*, *Rai Sahib* and *Rao Sahib* were to be granted badges of honour. Holders of title or to be holders of titles of *Mahamahopadhyay* and *Sham-ul-Ulma* were to be granted annual pension. Other concessions were the grant and restoration of revenue free land in the North-Western Frontier Province and Baluchistan. *Nazarana* payments on succession to the states were revoked. Sundry debts of estates in Kathiawar, Gujarat and by Bhumia Chiefs of Mewar were cancelled and remitted. Extra appointments in the 'Order of British India' were also announced by Hardinge.

5.5. Royal Announcements

The Viceroy's speech was followed by the King's announcement of transfer of capital from Calcutta to Delhi and the formation of a Governorship for the Bengal Presidency with a Lieutenant-Governorship in Council administering Bihar, Chota Nagpur

²⁴ Ibid., p. 164.

and Orissa and also the formation of a Chief Commissionership of Assam. “In other words, Lord Curzon’s partition of Bengal, which had caused so much agitation, was revised, and a new and different partition projected”.²⁵ Hardinge had acknowledged modification of partition of Bengal as a step to appease Indian political community. The partition was ‘regarded by all Bengalis as an act of flagrant injustice’.²⁶ The decision that the King should announce the news of reversal of partition was intentional. The British wanted the Durbar to be associated with a boon and also wanted to create an impetus in the imagination of the natives. They also maintained complete secrecy regarding the two announcements. Hardinge calls it a ‘bombshell’.²⁷ The announcements were taken by surprise and followed by loud cheers. The Durbar came to a conclusion with the departure of the King and Queen. The multitude rushed to the place where they were sitting and started prostrating at the feet of the thrones. People made attempts to touch the edges of the carpet where the royal couple was standing. A state banquet was given to the couple which was attended by high officials and ruling chiefs.

5.5.1. Transfer of Capital

The King-Emperor announced at the Durbar the secretly kept decision that the capital of India was going to be relocated from Calcutta to Delhi. The people were greatly surprised as there was no hint or public forewarning that such an announcement would take place at the Durbar. From the homage pavilion, the King announced to India, “We are pleased to announce to our people that on the advice of our Ministers, tendered after consultation with our Governor-General in Council, We have decided upon the transfer of the Seat of Government of India from Calcutta to the ancient Capital of Delhi”.²⁸ Though the announcement created waves of surprise, this was not a hasty decision. There were months long correspondences before the proposal was finally ratified. The British felt Delhi to be the new apt capital for the imperial British India and Calcutta to be of less strategic importance. With the rising tide of nationalism Calcutta, the capital of British India, was felt as a glitch. Calcutta was the seat of the central government and at the same

²⁵ Fortesque, *Narrative of the Visit to India*, p. 165.

²⁶ Lord Hardinge, *My Indian Years*, p. 36.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.52.

²⁸ Government of India, *The Historical Record of the Imperial visit*, p. 174.

time, the headquarters of the province of Bengal. Due to this nature of convergence, Calcutta was always involved in the activities of both the governments in a way affecting the unperturbed governance of the Government of India. The geographical importance of Calcutta also declined with the consolidation of railways and development of an inland system of railway network. Thus, the government found it necessary to relocate the capital of British India or seat of the government to another location. Reasons or situations which made Calcutta as the choice of the seat of government had changed and it was not so important now to have a capital at the coastline. In the wake of the recent political activities and chaos unleashed due to partition of Bengal, it became clear to the British the essentiality of detaching the seat of the central government from complex ramifications of any decision pertaining to a province. The government said, in the letter dated August 25, 1911, while writing to the Secretary of State for India regarding transfer of capital that, "While its removal from Bengal is an essential feature of the scheme we have in view for allaying the ill-feeling aroused by the partition amongst the Bengali population".²⁹ The government felt that Delhi should be the capital of the Indian Empire for geographical, historical and political reasons and if this proposal was accepted by the Home Government, it should be announced by the King at the imminent Durbar. The new constitutional reforms initiated by the Indian Councils Act of 1909 were also quoted by the government as a valid reason for the necessity of transfer. According to the new act, if any matter of important concern was to be decided, it should be done through majority non-official votes in the Imperial Legislative Council. Though the government was making an emphasis on the new act, it was actually foreseeing an impending fact that with the application of the provisions of the act, Indians would make further demands to the government and in due course of time, the just demands of Indians could not be ignored. Thus, before such situations arose in Bengal, they found it wise to detach the seat of the central government from Calcutta and at the same time maintain supreme authority. Though devolution of power was going to be permitted, the hold of central authority was not to be slack. In future, when self-government was going to be granted empowering the provincial governments to decide its own affairs, India may have a number of provincial administrations, autonomously deciding its own matters. Thus, it was all the more important to establish the Government of India above all these provincial governments and at the same time establish itself as the sole government with the right to interfere in matters

²⁹ Ibid., Appendix V, p. 316.

of misgovernment and decide matters of imperial concern. For such an administrative arrangement to turn into reality, it was indispensable that the central government was not equated with any provincial government. The initiative of transferring the capital from Calcutta was a step towards this realisation. The enlargement of Legislative Councils had made it vital to initiate a reform whereby the Supreme Council and Government of India were delinked from the influence of local matters or opinion. The association of the Government of India with the Bengal government was defective for both the governments. The British also found another benefit for this new proposal. It was a fact that Bengal occupied a prominent position on the map of British India. By shifting the capital from Bengal, British expected to curb the jealousy of other provinces that were unhappy about the importance and pre-dominance attached to Bengal. Due to this jealousy and other regional or political variations, the public opinion of other regions always contrasted with that of Calcutta.

The Government of India had two capitals - Calcutta and Shimla. During the summer season, the Viceroy and state officials relocated to Shimla to escape from the scorching heat of Calcutta. This meant that the capital of India was located at two places in a year. Thus, the climatic factor was emphasised pointing to the requirement of having a capital at one place during all seasons through the year. As such a situation was impossible considering the heat of north India, the government chose Delhi as the apt place which fulfilled all the practical conditions. It was a city of historical importance and its salubrity was convenient for the British officers. While writing to the Secretary of State for India, the government tried to convince the Home Government that Delhi was the best choice. Moreover, Shimla was closer to Delhi than Calcutta. Thus, the annual migration from Delhi to Shimla during the summer season would take less time, less cost and would be a less tedious journey. The journey in train from Calcutta to Shimla took forty two hours. If Delhi was made the new capital, this journey would be cut short to fourteen hours. Due to this, the cost of hill allowance could be reduced considerably. Delhi was also centrally located and it provided as a junction for the railway network. The government also stressed the fact that it was essential to have a capital at a centrally located place. Railways, Postal and Telegraph departments would also benefit from the relocation of the capital to a central position. The government acknowledged that the only department that would suffer with this transfer was the Commerce and Industry as business and industrial interests were

centred around Calcutta. But, still this was not an irrevocable loss as this department would now be closer to Bombay and Karachi after the transfer.

Other than administrative and climatic advantages, there were political advantages that were to be accrued from this new arrangement. Both the prominent communities of India – Hindus and Muslims attached great significance to Delhi. The myths and legends of Hindus had Delhi as background. Mahabharata depicts that it was in the plains of Delhi that Pandavas and Kauravas fought the epic battle. It also says that Indraprastha was the capital.³⁰ The government believed that the Muslims of India would be elated and gratified if Delhi was restored back to its position as the imperial capital. With the transfer of capital, the government hoped to satisfy not just the Hindus and Muslims, but also the general population of the country and the native princes of north India. The British taking over Delhi had historical and political significance ensuring the permanency of the British rule. Associating themselves with Delhi would give them a Mughal past and portray them as the rightful rulers to rule India. The government also acknowledged that a possible opposition may come up from the European commercial community located at Calcutta. The change of capital would lead to a loss of prestige and influence which they held till now. But the government hoped to dispel the disappointment of the Bengalis by the creation of a Governorship of Bengal. This administrative modification came as a great disappointment to the ‘Bengali national aspirations’, Bengali Muslims and the European community in Calcutta.³¹ The Bengalis lost the influential position of being the residents of Calcutta, the headquarters of the Government of India.

“The decision to move the seat of Supreme Government from Calcutta was intimately linked both to partition of Bengal and to its revocation”.³² Though the British quoted several other reasons, the underlying reason was clear to all. The dispatches from the Government of India to the Secretary of State of India gave political, administrative and climatic reasons. But still, the question arises, why Delhi? Why not Bombay which was a growing commercial centre and a thriving port? The British stated that “On geographical, historical, and political grounds, the capital of the Indian Empire should be

³⁰ It is assumed to be situated three miles from modern Delhi, but there is no certitude.

³¹ R. E. Frykenberg, ‘The Coronation Durbar of 1911: Some Implications’, *Delhi Through the Ages: Selected Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, (ed), R.E.Frykenberg, Delhi, p. 369.

³² Ibid.

at Delhi”.³³ It was also necessary that the supreme government should not be connected with a provincial government and the capital of a central government should be detached and independent without getting entangled into any local politics and affairs.

5.5.2. Annulment or Modification of Partition?

Along with the news of the transfer of capital, came the announcement of the administrative modification whereby the partition of Bengal was rescinded and a new governorship for the presidency of Bengal was created. Calcutta was becoming the nerve centre of anti British campaigns and the partition of Bengal in 1905 was the greatest mistake within the larger framework of the divide and rule policy. The British found in the Durbar the best opportunity to revoke this unpopular move and wanted it to be announced directly by the King. “The Durbar of December next affords a unique occasion for rectifying what is regarded by Bengalis as a grievous wrong”.³⁴

The partition of Bengal, though unleashed opposition and agitation, it benefitted the Muslim population of Eastern Bengal and Assam. But the Bengalis of the province vehemently protested against this measure. Thus it was utmost necessary for the government to come up with an alternative arrangement without revoking the *status quo ante* as a way to pacify the bitter sentiments. The reversion to pre-1905 situation was impossible due to administrative and political reasons. There is no denial of the fact that pre-1905 Bengal was an unmanageable enormous entity. Thus a reversion would be an administrative burden for the government. Secondly, the Muslims of East Bengal who had benefitted from partition and who were loyal to the British would be greatly disappointed if *status quo ante* was restored. Hence, it was necessary for the British this time to come up with a plan without hurting the sentiments of the Muslim population and at the same time appease the Bengalis. The government came up with a new plan of creation of convenient and manageable administrative units, satisfying the hurt feelings of the Bengalis, guarding the interests and aspirations of the Muslims of East Bengal and thereby propitiate the general Muslim sentiments. It was also obligatory on the part of the government to demonstrate the modification of the partition as a consideration of the political and administrative appropriateness, and not as bending to the recent agitation and protest.

³³ Government of India, *The Historical Record of the Imperial Visit*, Appendix XXV, p. 316.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

Thus, the government came up with the following plan which was announced by the King at the Durbar.

- a. Reunification of all the Bengali speaking divisions, namely Presidency, Dacca, Burdwan, Rajshahi and Chittagong into one Presidency under the administration of Governor in Council.
- b. Creation of a Lieutenant-Governorship in Council constituting of Bihar, Chota Nagpur with the capital at Patna.
- c. Restoration of the Chief Commissionership of Assam.

The government realized that with the enlargement of legislative councils, the Bengalis found themselves in an insecure position as they were outnumbered by Biharis and Oriyas. In the legislative council of East Bengal, the Muslims and residents of Assam outnumbered Bengalis. Thus, the Bengalis were now not able to exercise their influence in either of the province which they considered their right due to their number, wealth and culture. This grievance of the Bengalis was not going to die in future as an enlargement of councils can happen. Foreseeing the future, it was important that the government initiated a plan now itself without further aggravating the situation. The second aspect of modification of partition was the creation of a Lieutenant-Governorship in Council for Bihar, Chota Nagpur and Orissa. This, in other words meant, detaching the Hindi speaking areas, except Orissa, from the Bengali speaking areas. The grant of a separate administration to the Hindi speaking areas would give them a greater representation in various opportunities of education and employment. The slogan 'Bihar for Biharis' was in circulation due to the excessive presence of Bengalis in government appointments. The growing notion among Biharis that Bihar would not develop until it was separated from Bengal would be tranquilized with the creation of a new Lieutenant Governorship. The Oriyas were also a community distinct from the Bengalis. Thus, the British found it wise to attach Orissa and the Sambalpur district with Bihar and Chota Nagpur. The third aspect was the restoration of the Chief Commissionership of Assam. Assam was a backward area and considering its backwardness and developments in the north-eastern borders, the area needed to be administered through a Chief Commissioner like that of North-West Frontier. The necessity of the transfer of capital was also related to the modification of partition. The conversion of Bengal into a Governorship would lead to an undesirable situation where the Governor-General of India and Governor of Bengal would reside at the same

place, Calcutta. This would lead to an unwanted rivalry and hostility between the two British men of high rank to decide who had the ultimate power in the jurisdiction of Bengal. Thus, transferring the headquarters of government of India would avert such unwanted rivalries.

The official dispatches agree that such a move was essential considering the recent constitutional and political developments in Bengal. The consequences of the partition of Bengal gave a blow to the *Raj* making it the most unpopular measure undertaken. Thus, it was necessary for the British to undo the harm already caused. At the same time, a reversion to the *status quo ante* also was not feasible. Hence, rather than an annulment of partition, the alternative proposal was a modification of the partition considering various political and administrative factors. Also the colonial government did not want to picture itself surrendering to the recent pressure and protest. Thus, a convenient modification was announced by the King as a boon on the Durbar day.

5.6. Other Ceremonies

A new addition to the ceremonies was the *jharokha darshan* of the King and Queen from the Red Fort's balcony window in the bastion known as Mussaman Burj in similar fashion as that of the Mughal Emperors. This ceremony was conducted in the afternoon of December 13, 1911 and was attended by religious leaders. After the *jharokha darshan*, the royal couple viewed the public from a small overhanging balcony on the terrace on the way to the Rang Mahal. The couple was surrounded by their Indian pages. From here the couple viewed the procession of the representatives from various districts and states with their bands and banners. They performed an act of reverence when they reached before the couple. In order to give a special nature to this, and for the entertainment of the people who would assemble to see the royal couple, the British combined it with a fair, completely on Indian standards. The fair was known as *Badshahi* or *Shahinshahi Mela* (Imperial Fair). There was a bazaar at the centre with shops selling jewellery, silk, carpets and other luxury items. Free eateries were also arranged. There were entertaining contests in all Indian sports like wrestling, doda, kabaddi, gatkafarri, saunchi, ram fights, kite flying and tugs of war. Merry-go-rounds, bioscopes, theatres, dancers, conjurers, acrobats and Indian musical performances were other attractions. A literary contest was conducted where Persian, Urdu and Sanskrit poems were recited eulogizing the King and Queen. More than a lakh poor were fed and sweets were distributed to children. Daylight

fireworks and fire balloons sparkled the sky. “The whole of the vast area below the Fort was like a sea of colours stretching away in all directions as far as eye could reach. These were vivid and distinct where the processions were being marshalled, for each group had its own distinctive hue of headdress; but elsewhere they blended softly as only Eastern colours can, and changed with constant motion like a huge kaleidoscope”.³⁵ A scene completely contrary to this happened on the same day. A garden party was arranged on the ground behind the Fort to which both the British and ruling chiefs and nobles of India, who were present at Delhi, were invited. A display of historical artefacts was arranged in Mumtaz Mahal. The collection included old scriptures, arms and armour, relics of the Revolt of 1857 and old Indian paintings.

Army, the biggest strength of the British, was also employed in various ceremonies of the Durbar. One of the main ceremonies where the military wing played a major role was the torchlight tattoo on the polo ground. The ceremonies involving regiments had been happening before and after December 12, 1911. An open air parade was also held on December 10, 1911. One of the picturesque ceremonies was the presentation of colours held on December 11, 1911 where seven British and three Indian regiments received new colours from the King.³⁶ This ceremony underlined the importance that the British attached to symbols and insignia where a colour signified emblem of duty and fidelity to God, King and Country. This was followed by inspection of veterans by the King and Queen. The veterans included thirty three Europeans and seven hundred sixty seven Indians. Among Indians, 113 had participated in the military operations of the Revolt. The day assigned for the review of the army was December 14, 1911. The site chosen for this was a parade ground near Badli-Ki-Serai, another Revolt operations site where 75th Infantry and 1st Bengal Fusiliers exhibited their gallantry. “Approximately fifty thousand men were on parade, the details being: British officers, 1, 177; Indian officers, 894; British ranks, 15, 050, with 106 guns; Indian ranks, 31, 669, with 42 Maxim guns. The number of horses was 9,945, of mules, 2,562, and of camels 206”.³⁷ The King, who arrived for the ceremony, was in the uniform of a Field Marshal with the sign of ‘Star of India’ and was

³⁵ Ibid., 187-188.

³⁶ The word colour means the flag of different regiments.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 199.

received with an imperial salute. A reception was held after the state banquet which was attended by 4000 guests, including all ruling chiefs and representatives.

Though the main event of the Durbar ended on December 12, 1911 itself, there were many other ceremonial functions and gatherings that the royal couple attended as part of their visit to India. One among them was the King Edward memorial ceremony held on December 8, 1911 where King George laid the foundation stone of the Edward Memorial. On December 9, 1911, there was a reception of Indian ladies by the Queen where forty ladies from different parts of British India met her. The Indian ladies made their obeisance to the Queen in this reception. The King also met personally deputations from the Madras Presidency and Delhi Municipality on December 13, 1911. On the same day, the King paid a visit to the naval camps. This was a new addition to the present Durbar as navy was not represented in the preceding Durbars. This was to make the world realize the growing importance and strength of the British Indian naval force. When circumstances were taking an unexpected turn in Oman, Curzon had sent a naval fleet to Oman in 1900, not military troops. "At Delhi there were nineteen officers and a detachment of men from the *Medina* and other warships, comprising one hundred bluejackets and one hundred Royal Marines".³⁸ The investiture ceremony, where honours were distributed, was held in the reception pavilion of the King-Emperor's camp on the evening of December 14, 1911. The same ceremony was conducted in the *Diwan-i-Am* of Red Fort in Curzon's Durbar. But due to inconvenience, the same venue was not used this time. Knight Grand Commanders and Knights Grand Cross of various orders were appointed in the investiture ceremony. The Queen, who herself was invested with insignia and mantle at the ceremony, arrived with the King in a glittering procession with mace bearers and carriers of sceptre. Investments were made to various orders like the 'Bath', 'Star of India', 'Indian Empire', 'Royal Victorian Order', Imperial Service Order and *Kaiser-i-Hind*. Investments of *Kaiser-i-hind* were 261, including Lady Hardinge. Begum of Bhopal and Maharani of Bhavnagar were invested with the Imperial Order of the Crown of India.

A police review was held on December 15, 1911. Nearly two thousand seven hundred men paraded on the polo ground. After inspecting and receiving salutes, the King awarded seventy seven members of the police force with police medals. Gallantry award, called the Albert Medal was also awarded for acts of heroism shown in avoiding

³⁸ Ibid., p. 201.

explosions at the arsenals of Hyderabad (Sind) and Ferozepore in 1906.³⁹ The next event was laying the foundation stones of the new capital on December 15, 1911. The next day, i.e. December 16, 1911, was the day of the state departure. On the same day, the King awarded the medal of the 'Royal Victorian Order' to the Indian officers in ceremonial attendance. Other than these, commemorative medals numbering to 26,000 were also distributed by King George to those present at Delhi as well as in every Indian district. These medals were made of silver, similar in pattern to that of the medals given during the coronation at London. The Delhi coronation medals were larger with the following Persian words engraved, *Darbar-i-George-i-panjum Qaisar-i-Hind pādshah ú Málik-i- dayar -i- Ingliz*.⁴⁰ The heads of local governments and administrations, ruling chiefs and high officials received the medals in gold. Others were awarded a commemorative clasp with the word *Delhi* engraved on it. Football, hockey, boxing and other military tournaments were also conducted as part of the Durbar. A reception for the leaders of different religious communities was held by the royal couple. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs attended this reception and the Sikhs gifted a bound copy of Guru Granth Sahib. The royal couple also met ruling chiefs to bid farewell. The proceedings followed for the state departure were same as that of state entry, except for the fact that the corteges of the governors and ruling chiefs were omitted and route was made short. From Salimgarh station, the King left for Nepal and Queen left for Agra.

As in the case of the two previous Durbars, local celebrations at an all India level were an integral part of this event too. These celebrations were at much more larger scale this time. December 7, 1911, the date for state entry and December 12, 1911, the Durbar day were declared public holidays all across India under the Negotiable Instrument Act.⁴¹ Local celebrations were on the day of the Durbar, December 12, 1911 and they were at two levels – in British India and princely India. The pattern of celebrations was same throughout British India. Celebrations began with the reading of royal proclamation at headquarters of local government and administration, district headquarters, headquarters of sub-division, *tahsil*, *taluk* and, wherever feasible, at villages throughout India. The proclamation was read both in English and vernacular by available senior civil officer at

³⁹ A British medal bestowed for saving life.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 223.

⁴¹ Government of India, Foreign Department, Internal-B, File No: 283-285, Proceeding No. 3264-3288, August, 1911, *NAI*.

the headquarters of each *taluk* and *tahsil* with a firing of 101 gun salutes. The village headman read it in the villages. The reading of proclamation at headquarters of local governments and districts was conducted in a formal Durbar and certificates of honour were also distributed. All government buildings were illuminated and portraits of the royal couple were exhibited.

In Princely India, celebrations on similar lines were replicated. Many concessions and favours were bestowed upon the people by the ruling chiefs which included release of prisoners, grants, remission of debts and revenue and increase in pay. At Delhi, on December 13, 1911 there was a religious procession after which Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Arya Samajists assembled at their respective places of worship. There was also a unified group prayer at Delhi where Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Jains and Arya Samajists simultaneously offered prayer for the betterment of the royal couple.

5.7. Defiance of Gaekwar of Baroda

The breach of protocol and defiance shown by Gaekwar of Baroda while paying obeisance and homage to the newly coronated King-Emperor is referred as the Durbar Incident. Baroda was a princely state, second in ranking in the hierarchical arrangement by with a conferment of 21 gun salutes. The ruling prince of Baroda was Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwar III (period of reign: 1875-1939). He was acclaimed for incorporating western liberal ideas in the administration of the state and thereby leading the state to modernity. He introduced educational, judicial, agricultural, industrial and social reforms in Baroda. Widow remarriage was legalised in his state in 1902. He played a major role in the establishment of Bank of Baroda.

In spite of these developments, he was under the observation of the Government of India for sedition. In 1889, the government brought to the Gaekwar's attention that the two state officers of Baroda were seen in the list of delegates of the National Congress' meeting at Broach. The government clearly stated to Baroda that it was unacceptable that the native chiefs were connected to any political agitation outside their state territories. Thus, the government warned Baroda not to be associated with any of the anti-government campaign or activities. The government was referring to the incident when the names of Rao Bahadur Mahadeo-lal Nundlal, Judge of Suddar Court, Baroda and Rao Bahadur Harilal Hurshadrai Dhruva, Judge, Baroda appeared in the delegates list. The government strictly cautioned that the Gaekwar should not encourage his officers to attend the

Congress meetings or any other organisations' meetings which propagated anti-government sentiments. Baroda gave a reply stating that it was not aware of the fact that the aforesaid men were attending the Congress meetings as delegates. Yet, Baroda assured that in future state officials would not attend the Congress meetings, except as spectators. The conflict between the Gaekwar and government reached its climax during Curzon's period. The viceroyalty of Curzon saw full scale estrangement between the two. It is a fact that Curzon maintained a school masterly treatment with the native princes of India. While writing to Lord Hamilton, on August 29, 1900 Curzon, said, "I do not at all deprecate the remark that to a large extent we act as their schoolmasters. It is not only true, but it is inevitable. For what are they, for the most part, but a set of unruly and ignorant and rather undisciplined school-boys"?⁴² Curzon laid a new restriction that the native princes had to consult with the government if they had to go for a foreign trip for any reason. In other words, the native princes required the permission of the British to leave India. It was true that most of them spent considerable time away from their states for a continued and prolonged period of time. With this new regulation, Curzon expected to restrain the whims and fancies of the princes. "Supposing we allow Native India to be governed by a horde of frivolous absentees... what justification shall we have in such a case for maintaining the Native States at all? No, in my judgement".⁴³ In 1904, Sayaji Rao wanted to leave India for a long rest in Europe and planned to return next year. But the Resident of Baroda replied quoting the rule laid down by Curzon in 1900 that if he wished to leave, he had to get the approval from the Government of India. Sayaji Rao was greatly irritated with the government's stance and gave health issue as his reason for leaving India. The government wanted him to stay back to receive the Prince of Wales who was supposed to visit India in 1905 and stated 'that his health was not so bad' to prevent an early return from Europe.⁴⁴ Resident Colonel Meade ultimately stated that the Gaekwar could not leave India without the permission from the Government of India. He warned that, if he left India without government's permission, then the government would not take him as a prisoner, but unpleasant consequences might follow his decision. Sayaji Rao felt this as an unwanted interference in his personal liberty and expressed his discontent and dissatisfaction with

⁴² Adrian Sever (ed), *Documents and Speeches on the Indian Princely States: Vol. 1*, Delhi, p. 346.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ https://cultural.maharashtra.gov.in/english/gazetteer/VOL-II/MAHARAJA_SAYJIRAO.pdf, p.559, Accessed on June 1, 2015.

the British. He annoyingly stated he could not understand whether 'he was a servant or a master'.⁴⁵ The government also indicated how the administration of the state was going to be managed if the chief was away for a prolonged period. The Gaekwar gave an alternative arrangement of administration to be followed in his absence to the government, which needed to be approved by the government as he 'felt that his own wishes carried very little weight'.⁴⁶ The last line contained undertones of Sayaji Rao's frustration and exasperation. He adamantly stuck to his plan and was not ready to compromise. He stated in his memo dated March 25, 1905 to the government that "my arrangements for departure to Europe are completed, and I am asked to stop. There should be no interference with the departure... I do wish to welcome the Royal visitors. I have no idea of opposing the Government in the matter because of any recalcitrancy. But my health prevents and I have said so frankly".⁴⁷ The Gaekwar retorted, "Am I considered a servant? If that is the intention let it be said so, and I can see how to shape my course".⁴⁸ In spite of the obstacles, he left India according to his plan.

Sayaji Rao had his own perceptions on the accusation of sedition matter. Writing to his Dewan on June 14, 1907, he wrote, "I don't attach much importance to the sense of restlessness in India. It is a storm in tea pot, a logical outcome of certain forces. To realise them one must visit other civilised countries".⁴⁹ He, whenever possible, in his letters made sarcastic remarks about the British government. He openly stated to Major Pritchard, the Resident of Baroda on September 4, 1906, that he enjoyed staying in Free America 'which makes people contented and loyal'.⁵⁰ One can notice that in the letters and the language of Gaekwar, there was subtle sarcasm and open defiance due to the experiences of interferences in his personal freedom and mobility. The government always watched him with suspicion. It continuously came up with charges against the Gaekwar for inadequate legislative measures to curb sedition in his state and accused the state's officers as extremists who took advantage of their positions for anti-government propaganda. It

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 560.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 561.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 561-562.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 565.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 562.

observed these activities as a menace to the smooth functioning of Baroda as well as for the administration of the neighbouring provinces of British India. The government was also concerned about the growth of secret societies, conspiracies, seditious meetings and manufacture of bombs in the state of Baroda. It believed that the Gaekwar was not taking adequate measures to control and punish the nationalists which enabled them to pursue their anti-government propaganda with impunity. His nonchalant approach towards these activities and his open and blunt attitude towards the government made him a suspect in the eyes of the government. The British firmly believed all the anti-government feelings in his state to be a reflection of Gaekwar's own sentiments.

In spite of all these confrontations, Gaekwar announced his loyalty to the British when Lord Minto visited Baroda in 1909. The pro-nationalist sentiments of Sayaji Rao caused distrust among the British. He was the one who gave the inaugural address in the industrial exhibition of the Congress in 1902 held at Ahmedabad. Other than this, the Gaekwar also willingly attended the rallies and meetings of the Congress when invited. The arrival of Hardinge brought further estrangement between the two due to his close alliance with the Congress. Sayaji Rao returned from another European trip one month before the Delhi Durbar of 1911. At this point of time, the British accused Kaserao Jadhav and Keshavrao Deshpande, two district commissioners of Baroda for encouraging seditious activities. The Gaekwar was criticized for not taking action against them. Hardinge, who was not so happy with the developments, sent a letter to the Gaekwar asking him to publicly take an anti-nationalist stance, curb the freedom of the press and punish officials who attended and supported seditious meetings in Baroda. Hardinge also wanted to monitor the law enforcement wing of the Baroda state by including British officers. But Sayaji Rao did not give a reply to the Viceroy's letter. Instead he demoted one of the officials and Deshpande resigned with a receipt of Rs. 10,000 as retirement gift. The government was enraged with this act, but did not take any action against him due to the imminent Durbar and its preparations

Now the question arises why did the Gaekwar behave so in the Durbar? Manu Bhagavan says that he "judiciously selected a form of conduct that would allow him both to make a statement against the invented traditions of the Durbar and to get away with it: subtle but significant alterations in dress and ever-so-slightly deficient show of

obeisance”.⁵¹ Was it retaliation to the treatment that he felt in the government’s hands in the past decade that he chose to react in this manner? Or did the government over react because it was Gaekwar of Baroda who breached the protocol? How the government would have reacted if the same behaviour came from the Nizam of Hyderabad? Even if Gaekwar intended to show disrespectful behaviour, why did he apologize later? Was it just nervousness in the royal presence? To answer these questions, one needs to watch the video. The footage of Gaumont shows Maharaja of Mysore as Gaekwar of Baroda with an intertitle ‘How the Gaekwar of Baroda paid homage to the King George’ and the footage by Pathe shows the right person. The Gaekwar of Baroda came in very simple and plain attire sans jewellery, contradictory to the general picture of the princes of India. He did not wear the British bestowed symbols of honour, the ‘Star of India’ which were supposed to be worn in these kinds of ceremonies. He walked forward with a gold topped walking stick. By his very appearance, he challenged the prescribed norms set by the British to follow in such a political ritual. “The Gaekwad...had made his most blatant and daring show of contempt for the British”.⁵² He bent once before the royal couple, instead of one bow each for the King and Queen. After this gesture, he took two steps back facing the couple and then turned around and walked away from the pavilion breaking the prescribed seven steps. In accordance to the prescribed norms, one was not supposed to show his or her back to the monarch. The footages of the Durbar Incident ‘were played repeatedly in cinema halls to draw attention to the Gaekwar’s insult to the King-Emperor’.⁵³ As he had attended the previous two Durbars, the British could not accept the breach of decorum. The gesture in the Durbar unleashed the greatest controversy of the time. It was true that he did not give ‘adequate’ and ‘appropriate’ obeisance as determined by the British protocol, rules and norms. Hardinge, who was already upset with the Gaekwar wrote in his memoirs, “Immediately before the arrival of Their Majesties he was seen to take off all his jewels and when he...approached to make his obeisance to the King it was noticed that he was wearing the ordinary white linen everyday dress of a Mahratta with only a walking-stick in his hand. He made a very inadequate obeisance and turning round abruptly walked back to his seat. His lack of good manners contrasted with the conspicuous courtesy of his

⁵¹ Manu Bhagavan, ‘Demystifying the ‘Ideal Progressive’: Resistance through Mimicked Modernity in Princely Baroda, 1900-1913’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, May, 2001, p. 406.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 400.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

brother Princes”.⁵⁴ Later, Sayaji Rao wrote to Hardinge asking whether he would be received by the Viceroy to give an explanation regarding the recent incident at the Durbar. But Hardinge refused to meet him until an official apology was given explaining the reason for his disrespectful behaviour to the King at Delhi. The Gaekwar pestered Hardinge with requests, but he remained firm. Hardinge’s attitude was strict and he demanded from a full apology explaining “his attitude of disrespect to the King at the Durbar for which there could be no possible explanation that he could offer”.⁵⁵ He also added the reason for his stern behaviour that the Gaekwar while in Europe “associated with Indian extremists who could not return to India and his State was a hot-bed of sedition and contained printing presses where seditious literature was printed for dissemination throughout India”.⁵⁶ Finally, an apology was presented to the Viceroy explaining the reason for his behaviour to be nervousness and confusion. If Sayaji Rao’s act was deliberate, why did he apologise? To this one can state that he was aware that the government was infuriated due to the developments in Baroda and the Durbar incident added to the disgruntlement. He was conscious of the consequences if an apology was not given. He knew that the government would dethrone him. Thus, avoiding such an unwanted circumstance of loss of power, he presented an apology with an announcement of unswerving loyalty to the Crown and acceptance of the British paramountcy. The incident was widely discussed in newspapers. The English press came out with spiteful articles attacking him and accusing Baroda as a breeding ground of sedition. Nevertheless, few celebrated the incident and announced the Gaekwar as a national icon. Without caring for what was being written about him, he was in a mood to apologise without giving explanation to critics or supporters.

The British also did not take any action as they were aware that he was a popular figure. Any action against him perhaps may trigger a revolt like situation in Baroda, later spreading to other parts of India. Due to his cordial relation with the Congress, they feared that any dethronement measures would lead to a country wide agitation organised by the Congress. Thus, they were not ready to take the risk and did not dethrone Sayaji Rao. Even after the apology, Baroda continued to be under close watch. The years 1912 and 1913

⁵⁴ Hardinge, *My Indian Years*, p. 51.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

passed under the shadow of suspicion. Nevertheless, he was not deposed due to the distraction of the World War I. Two perspectives existed on Gaekwar's gesture - one stream viewed him as a 'troublesome loyal feudatory' and the other as a 'courageous libertarian'.⁵⁷ Though deposition was averted, this incident provided "an opportunity to interpret a political act exclusively within a realm jointly constituted by British and Indian actors".⁵⁸ Why did he behave so in the Durbar? Only the Gaekwar knows the answer. Nevertheless, whatever thought drove Sayaji Rao in behaving so, the incident came as an open challenge to the ritual idiom, protocol and ordered hierarchy prescribed by the British from supposedly a 'collaborator' to the indirect rule.

5.8. The Imperial Hunting in Nepal

There were initial plans of visiting Nepal when the King visited India as Prince of Wales. But that trip did not happen due to the outbreak of cholera. But this time, immediately after the Durbar and other ceremonies, the King left to Nepal for hunting. Large scale arrangements were made in the thick forest and jungle for the imperial hunting. Ceremonies preceded hunting. After the church service, the King inspected the volunteer corps of the Behar Light Horse on December 17, 1911 at the British district of Shahabad. The King then proceeded to the Judge's house, the 'little house' – a Revolt related site where Boyle, along with seven Englishmen and fifty Sikhs resisted four regiments of mutineers. Indians who took part in the siege were gifted with money.

The King and party left for Nepal in a steamer from Digba Ghat and reached the boundaries of Nepal on December 18, 1911 at Bikna Thori. He was received by the Maharaja of Nepal, the British Resident and other high officials. The state entry into Nepal was made striking with large triumphal arch and a procession of thirty five vehicles and thirty elephants. Parched rice and red powder were showered on the King as an expression of welcome and 101 gun salutes were fired. After the conclusion of state entry, the imperial party advanced into the jungle on elephants and at the end of the day four tigers and three rhinoceroses were shot. Elaborate arrangements were made for the King's camps at Sukhibar. In fact, a bungalow itself was constructed with all facilities. The surrounding encampments included hospital, laundry, post and telegraph offices, car parking area, stables and spots for taxidermy. The encampments which stayed back in jungle were

⁵⁷ Charles W. Nuckolls, 'The Durbar Incident', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, July, 1990, p. 539.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 557.

twelve thousand with six hundred elephants and two thousand attendants. The King halted at Sukhibar for five days, and each day was occupied in hunting, making it one of the elaborate game hunts or *shikar* of the British in Asia. Other shooting location was Kasra.

The British showered boons on Nepal whereby King George V personally invested the Maharaja of Nepal with the emblem of Knight Grand Commander of the 'Royal Victorian Order' and also granted him the coronation Durbar gold medal. Likewise, the Maharaja's brother and the Commander in Chief of the Nepal army were appointed as the Knight Commander of the aforesaid order. The King also gifted two thousand rifles with ammunition to the Nepalese army. Brothers, sons and relatives of the Maharaja were presented with a personal souvenir. Others like officers, mahouts and shikaris associated with the *shikar* received gifts. The Maharaja of Nepal gifted the King with a collection of animals. "This collection consisted of over seventy varieties, ranging from a young elephant and a rhinoceros calf to the wild ass of the Tibetan border, also the rare *shou*, which is now, with many others of the animals which survived the journey to England, in the gardens of the Zoological Society in London".⁵⁹ Specimens of Nepalese art, which were presented, were taken back to the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington. The next day of Christmas was spent in hunting after the church service. The game hunted on this day was also enormous. Nepalese army had remained loyal to the British during the Revolt of 1857 and the King visited two Mutiny veterans of the Nepalese army. After the last day of hunting, the King left Nepal on December 28, 1911 amidst the firing of 101 gun salutes. The total game in Nepal was thirty nine tigers, eighteen rhinoceroses and four bears.

This particular *shikar* of King George V had more ideological underpinnings, than just a sport, similar to the choreographed political rituals like a Durbar. The British plan of welding an imperial hunting with the coronation Durbar programme was not unintentional. Nevertheless, it was not in Indian soil. Hunting had always been an integral part of the colonial way of life. Big game hunting was always a matter of pride and esteem and when a white man hunted, it was no less than a ritual. "An examination of the structure, context, and meaning of hunting in... northern India during the "high noon" of empire, 1898 to 1930, reveals that hunting played a significant role within the wider framework of colonial

⁵⁹ Government of India, *The Historical Record of the Imperial Visit*, p. 231.

expatriate cultures”.⁶⁰ Hunting always took place in a grand scale for adventure, recreation, food or for trophy. One should not forget the fact that hunting existed both in the British society and Indian society. Like ceremonies of Indian origin were reinterpreted, or given a twist, hunting was also given a new twist. Hunting also had its own symbolic undercurrents. Big game hunting showed the skill of the British in killing dangerous and large animals like lion, tiger, rhinoceros, leopard and wild buffaloes; superiority of technology as rifles and double barrelled guns were used for shooting and also the courage and bravery of the British to the natives. It also gave a message that the natives always required a white man to protect them and their habitations from dreadful beasts. Hunting was also an activity that everyone could not afford. Rifles and guns were expensive and not all Indians could afford it, except for native princes and rich Indians. Tiger hunting on elephant back was considered the most ‘luxurious variety of hunting’.⁶¹ As it incurred immense cost, supplies and labour, it was an undertaking of a person who was powerful or prominent; say a British officer or a wealthy person. In Nepal, King George V hunted with an enormous entourage and nearly two hundreds of elephants in full imperial glamour and power. Many times, the hunts were also a great show which attracted nearby villages making it a public extravaganza. Thus, it is not surprising that the visit to India was an amalgamation of Durbar ceremonies and big game hunting. The King, the embodiment of the Empire and exemplary of the British virtues, being present and killing man eaters bestowed a pageant status to the hunting in Nepal. This hunting ritual had overarching significance like control over nature, wild beasts and the natives within the colonial ideological framework. Big hunting and public ceremonials were all part of the ‘invented tradition’ whereby the British projected an image of themselves, not just as the ruling class, but also as agents who warded off the threat to natives and guarded their habitation by killing the wild beasts. Eric Hobsbawm says, “Traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented”.⁶² Even during the tour of Queen Mary in Rajputana, hunting was a part of the itinerary. When she was visiting the princely state of Bundi, the Queen along with the imperial party ventured into the jungle of

⁶⁰ William. K. Storey, ‘Big Cats and Imperialism: Lion and Tiger Hunting in Kenya and Northern India, 1898-1930’, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall, 1991, p. 136.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 160.

⁶² Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983, p. 1.

Bundi to hunt tigers. Though the Queen did not participate in the actual hunting, she watched the game from a platform constructed on a tree.

5.9. Durbar in Reels

As in the Durbar of 1903, the visual media played a role in disseminating the imperial message. Durbar was recorded, reported and restaged 'and were of great interest to the media in Britain and elsewhere'.⁶³ The Durbar of 1911 occurred at a time when cinema industry had developed considerably from its initial appearance in late nineteenth century. The video coverage of this Durbar was on a larger scale when compared to the previous Durbar. The Durbar was a visual celebration for the cinema companies with prospective aim to flourish their business. Five film companies were given the official permission to record the Durbar- Barker Motion Photography, Gaumont, Pathé, Warwick Trading Company and Urban. Each company came up with advertisements claiming better coverage and films at cheapest price. Gaumont was the first company to play the video clipping back in London. Gaumont's video is uploaded in the video sharing website - YouTube. For the coverage of the Durbar, the condition that was set by the government was that the cameras and cameramen should be invisible and cameramen and should blend into the crowd. They were instructed to take shots from such an angle that they went unnoticed and roof top arrangements were made for them. "Presumably it was thought better that a few cameramen should roast in the sun rather than ruining the aesthetic effect of the ceremonial".⁶⁴ The films were developed on site within the completion of each location shooting and also were sent to London. The video coverage followed the King to Nepal and then to Calcutta. Harry C. Raymond for Barker shot the rest of the official events. Special screening was arranged on January 6, 1912 at Government House, Calcutta. There was actually competition by each company to screen the footage first at various cities of India like Delhi, Calcutta and Lucknow. There was also a rush to bring back the films to Britain as quickly as possible and screen it first before the rival companies' screening. Screening happened in other countries like France, Germany, Australia, Ireland and United States of America.

⁶³ Stephen Bottomore, 'Have You Seen the Gaekwar Bob?: Filming the 1911 Delhi Durbar', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol.17, No. 3, 1997, p. 309.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 318.

The footage shot by Natural Colour Kinematograph Company needs special mention as it was the last to screen the footages with an interesting twist.⁶⁵ Kinemacolor cameras recorded the entire India tour of George V of 1911-1912 with Delhi Durbar as the central attraction. "It has acquired a legend over the years, being given at least a passing mention in most histories of British film, and certainly in any historical account of colour cinematography".⁶⁶ The team of Urban filmed the arrival of royal couple at Salimgarh station and state entry. Other firms also used kinemacolor cameras which were stationed in different arena of the ceremonial site to get a full and clear visual of the pageant. The review of troops and official entry into Calcutta on December 30, 1911 were also filmed by the kinemacolor cameras.

The films of Delhi Durbar were exhibited in London. "Urban organised the kinemacolor footage into a two and a half hour programme (16,000 feet), a previously unheard of length for a single film show. With introductions and intervals it stretched to three hours in full, and this at a time when few cinema programmes ran longer than ninety minute".⁶⁷ He edited the footage and the shows were screened at 2:30 PM and 8:00 PM. The full footage was called 'With Our King and Queen Through India' and the main film was titled 'The Coronation Durbar at Delhi.' The film was first screened on February 2, 1912 at Scala theatre with music and lighting effects amidst wide publicity. The whole Durbar experience was recreated at the Scala. There was a clever business tactic behind this as well. Urban's screenings got more popularity than other company's screenings.⁶⁸ Even King George V and Queen Mary with other members of the royal family attended the screening at Scala on May 11, 1912. The royal family attending the screening added further publicity to the screenings. "It laid out in purely visual terms the pomp and precedence of the imperial system, appealing to what was understood as being an Indian love of the ceremonial, but which struck an equal chord in the British".⁶⁹ Photography and newspapers also played a vital role in circulating the news of the Durbar. The British had

⁶⁵ It was founded by Charles Urban in 1909.

⁶⁶ Luke McKernan, 'The Modern Elixir of Life: Kinemacolor, Royalty and the Delhi Durbar', *Film History*, Vol. 21, No. 2, Early Colour Part 2, 2009, pp. 127-128.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

⁶⁸ Luke McKernan says that Urban's film is, however, lost today. But one fragment of it was found in the Russian State Documentary Film and Photo Archive, Krasnagorsk.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

arranged official photographer and artist to capture the moment, Ernest Brooks and George Percy Jacomb-Hood respectively. The European Press and Indian Press were given special accommodation within the camp.

5.10. Royal Couple at the Capital - Calcutta

The King and Queen after returning from their respective trips proceeded together to Calcutta, the capital of British India on December 30, 1911. The state entry into the city of Calcutta was given a new approach. Though the couple arrived at Howrah station and a state entry by road could have been arranged, this option was not chosen. Instead state entry was arranged through the river Hooghly. The Calcutta entry was specially designed to give a Job Charnock past, recalling the founding of Calcutta by an Englishman.⁷⁰ From the railway station, they embarked on a steamer and a spectacle through water was arranged for the visitors gathered. The royal couple's steamer was escorted on either side by a row of streamers. The spectators stood at the either bank of the river to view the cruise of the royal couple across the river of historical importance. Hundred and one gun salutes were fired from one of the streamers in honour of the couple. After the procession through Hooghly, the couple landed at Princep's Ghat where a formal ceremony was arranged. An amphitheatre was built with a seating capacity of three thousand people. A dais was constructed facing the river with two golden thrones for the royal couple. They were greeted by high officials and the ruling chiefs of this region were presented to the royal couple. They made obeisance to the couple. A homage ceremony in the similar fashion of the Delhi homage ceremony was replicated here whereby members of the Lieutenant-Governor's Council, representatives of local bodies and members of Corporation of Calcutta paid homage to the couple. The reason for visiting Calcutta was to remind the people of Calcutta not to be dismayed by the new announcement of the transfer of capital and also to assure that their city would continue to remain as the premier city of India. Attempts were made to make the ceremonies at Calcutta tremendous and impressive. In replying to the welcome address of the Chairman of the Corporation of Calcutta, the King added that the incomparable position which Calcutta enjoyed due to its history, population and as a commercial and trade hub would remain unaltered. He also

⁷⁰ Job Charnock was an administrator of the English East India Company in the seventeenth century who is credited to have founded the city of Calcutta. However, in 2003 a new theory came up stating that villages existed even before the arrival of Charnock and that he only contributed to its development.

expressed his hope that city would prosper further under the benevolent administration of the new Governor in Council. The speech was followed by an inspection of guard of honour of the 1st Calcutta Volunteer Rifles by the King. Immediately after the inspection, an elaborate and colourful procession began with the King and Queen in their imperial carriage. Enormous multitude assembled along the procession route to have a glimpse of the royal couple. “The line of march was about two miles in length and was lined throughout by troops”.⁷¹ The decorations along the procession route was also a mix of European elements and oriental elements with ionic capitals and various Indian design with emblems like ‘a salaaming elephant, a Bengal tiger, a peacock, and cobras supporting an Imperial crown’.⁷²

A military parade was held on January 2, 1912 at Calcutta in commemoration of the assumption of the title of ‘Empress of India’ by Queen Victoria in 1877. January 1, 1912 was avoided as it was a mourning day for the Muslims being the tenth day of Muharram. The King rode a horse in the uniform of a Field Marshal with the insignia of the ‘Star of India’. He was accompanied by his entourage and followed by Queen in her carriage. Military spectacles had its own implications, both at Delhi and Calcutta. They were executed with two motives; to make the natives of India and people across the world realize the military might of the Empire and to catch public fascination. Martial music accompanied the steady movements of the soldiers. Music played an important role in accentuating the effect of this visual magnificence. The blow of bugles and trumpets, drums, national anthem and other military music played at various intervals by military bands had its own significance to the overall completion of these spectacles. “Military bands were important in the staging of all ceremonial events”.⁷³ The music chosen were the ‘British Grenadiers’, Coronation March, ‘Entry of the Gods into Valhalla’, selections from ‘Faust’, Grieg’s march from ‘Sigurd Forsalfar’, Fucik’s ‘March of the Gladiators’ and march from ‘Scipio’ and Coronation Fantasia.

The rest of the days in Calcutta, had gatherings where Indian officers of the regiments of Calcutta and army veterans were presented to the royal couple. Garden party and levee

⁷¹ Government of India, *A Historical Record of the Imperial Visit*, p. 249.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Trevor Herbert & Helen Barlow, *Music and the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century*, New York, p. 216.

constituted the other gatherings. It is interesting to note that all the Durbars had sports activities of British origin as part of the Durbar programme. A polo tournament was conducted in Calcutta on January 3, 1912 with native princes like Maharaja of Kishangarh, Raja of Ratlam and Kumar Ratan Singh as part of it. The royal couple also attended the King's Cup horse race. A torchlight tattoo involving the troops was performed in the night where East Yorkshire Regiment, Black Watch, Middlesex Regiment, Rifle Brigade, 27th Punjabis and the 88th Carnatic Infantry participated.

Another strategy employed by the British for leaving a permanent mark of the Empire was erecting commemorative monuments and statues. This tour of India by George V witnessed the construction of King Edward memorial at Delhi and inspection of the progress of the construction of the Victoria Memorial at Calcutta. The foundation stone of this building was laid by George V when he visited India as Prince of Wales. An investiture ceremony was replicated in Calcutta too in the throne room of the Government House, where thirty six persons were honoured followed by an imperial Court where Indians were presented to the royal couple. The ceremonial importance of this gathering was highlighted with the presence of the King in the uniform of an admiral of the fleet with the ribbon of the 'Garter', the insignia of the 'Star of India' and the 'Crown of India'. Queen also adorned the same regalia.

A pageant in full pomp and splendour was convoked in the afternoon. In this assemblage, religious difference of the natives on the basis of religion was allowed to be demonstrated when the British intentionally avoided an arrangement of joint procession of the Hindus and Muslims. It is to be noted that by the beginning of the twentieth century, the conscious efforts of the British to widen the gulf between the two communities were reflected in the constitutional reforms as well. The Indian Councils Act of 1909 was a testimony to this which bestowed separate electorate to the Muslims. This conscious effort to establish that the two communities were two different people with two different ideologies was extended in Calcutta as well. The procession of Hindus represented an episode from Ramayana. "The cortège in the pageant was composed of a long line of richly caparisoned elephants, state chariots, dancing horses, and the symbolic paraphernalia in customary use at the Dasehra, most of these things having been sent to Calcutta by the generosity of various Ruling Princes".⁷⁴ The procession of the Muslims was staged to show the *Nauroz* (New Year's Day). Immediately after the aforesaid

⁷⁴ Government of India, *The Historical Record of the Imperial Visit*, p. 256.

procession, the royal couple entered along with their entourage. A short procession was executed where the ruling chiefs also participated with their emblems of royalty. A *peshkash* of hundred and one gold mohurs was offered by Nawab Sir Wasif Ali Mirza on behalf of the people of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam. But the King did not receive this *peshkash*. “The offering was touched by the King-Emperor and graciously remitted”.⁷⁵ Different from the Durbar at Delhi, an Indian band played the music on instruments which played Indian pieces and the national anthem. Calcutta pageant was attended by a multitude of spectators. As the royal couple left, people rushed forward to touch the thrones and pay obeisance to it. Some were seen ‘to lift the dust trodden by the feet of the Sovereign and place it on their heads’.⁷⁶ The rest of the days witnessed native dances, inspection of guard of honour by the King and reception of a deputation from the University of Calcutta. The deputation consisted of fellows and registered graduates in academic attire numbering to three hundred thirty three, including three women graduates. In the address to the King, the Vice-Chancellor of the university, by acknowledging the progress India has made in her traditional knowledge, underlined the necessity to be equipped with the knowledge, science and skill of the West to advance and progress in the present age.

The King in his reply reaffirmed the necessity to hasten the march towards Western science along with the conservation of ancient learning. He reminded the great responsibility ahead of the university in improving the quality of learning ‘without which learning is of little value’.⁷⁷ The reply had the tone that India required a benevolent patron to improve her education and make her civilised, and definitely that patron was the British Crown. The announcement at Delhi had already declared Rs. 50,000 as financial grant for the improvement of education. King added, “Six years ago I sent from England a message of sympathy. Today in India I give to India the watchword of hope”.⁷⁸ The hope was that by adopting Western education and making wise utilization of the financial assistance, let India produce ‘loyal’, ‘manly’ and ‘useful’ citizens who would flourish in all fields. The King used three words – loyal, manly and useful, and that too in Calcutta. The usage of

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 257.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 258.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 261.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

‘loyal’ is comprehensible as the British always wanted to create a group of Indians who would remain faithful to them. The usage of ‘manly’ and ‘useful’ is perplexing. It raises the question, was the King actually confirming the notion already disseminated by the British that Bengali men were effeminate and inefficacious. Was the King underlining the fact that only Western education can make the effeminate Bengalis, manly and turn the useless into useful? The King said, “And it is my wish, too, that the homes of my Indian subjects may be brightened and their labour sweetened by the spread of knowledge, with all that follows in its train, a higher level of thought, of comfort, and of health”.⁷⁹ This reception was also not devoid of ceremonies. The fellows in the deputation made reverence to the King. In conformity to the convention, the poor of Calcutta were given food and clothes. Many local charity institutions also received donations on this occasion. January 8, 1912 was the day fixed for departure from Calcutta and ceremonies which were performed at the time of the royal couple’s arrival were repeated at their departure time as well. Guards of honour were staged. At Prinsep’s Ghat, a guard of honour was already present and the royal couple was received by Lord Hardinge and Lady Harding and other officials according to the protocol. Following the farewell address, a procession was formed till the jetty. Hundred and one gun shots were fired and the royal couple left the Ghat. Similar ceremonials were repeated on board. From Calcutta, the royal couple proceeded to Bombay via Nagpur. The King and Queen were ceremoniously welcomed with streets decorated with bunting. The couple visited the Sitabaldi Fort.⁸⁰ After attending a big gathering and knighting few in Nagpur, the couple left for Bombay and arrived at the Victoria Terminus on January 10, 1912. In full ceremonial procession the royal couple reached Apollo Bandar from where they departed after a farewell address and ceremonies, thus concluding more than a month of visit to India.

The Durbar and its segment of military spectacles were used as tools to declare Britain’s rightful claim not only over India, but also as effective devices to indirectly declare its suzerainty over India’s neighbour, Bhutan as well. The government offered financial assistance of Rs. 10,000 to the Maharaja of Bhutan to enable him to attend the Durbar at Delhi.⁸¹ In the letter no. 31 E.-C., dated Gangtok, February 18,

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Sitabuldi Fort is located in Nagpur, Maharashtra. It was the site of the Battle of Sitabuldi (1817). The Fort was decisive in the victory of the British East India Company during the Third Anglo-Maratha War.

⁸¹ Government of India, Foreign Department, Secret-I, File No: 8-14, Proceeding No. 8, May, 1911, *NAI*.

1911(confidential), C.A. Bell, Esq., Political Officer in Sikkim explained to the Secretary to the government of India in the Foreign Department why the presence of Maharaja of Bhutan was required at the coronation Durbar at Delhi. He gave two reasons,

a) Because it will be a token of his subordination to His Majesty the King-Emperor and another argument against the Chinese claim to suzerainty over Bhutan. The importance of this need not, I think, be urged on the Government of India.

b) Because it will show him a large number of British and Indian troops and impress him still further with a sense of our power. Stories of so many lakhs of soldiers effect nothing, but seeing the men on the ground carries belief and the Maharaja of Bhutan is quick to learn lessons of this kind.⁸²

The reasons quoted by Bell were clear evidences of what the British aimed at by the deployment of troops, to awe not just the natives, but also the neighbouring states and indirectly show the military strength and capacity of the troops of the Empire in case of an attack. The motive was to impress the world with the power and influence of the British. The use of military had become important in the process of evolution of state rituals, be it a parade or review or a torchlight tattoo. It was carefully incorporated into celebrations of different nature like anniversary of a battle, coronation, accession to the throne, birthday and other celebrations of royal significance. It was used as an impressive medium of display in the Durbar which was evident from the presentation of colours to regiments and the number of times the guard of honour and its inspection were performed during the entire tour and. The reviews were enacted as an “elaborate public manifestation of the military spectacle and usually included more than one corps performing together”.⁸³ The colour of the uniforms, the steady and accurate movement of the soldiers elicited public attention. The reviews, through its coherence, had an intention of generating pride in the minds of the natives, as subjects of the Empire and thereby evoke unswerving loyalty to the Crown. In Britain, during wartime, “the review played an especially important role as a

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Scott Hughes Myerly, ‘The Eye Must Entrap the Mind: Army Spectacle and Paradigm in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 26, No.1, Autumn, 1992, p. 106.

means of boosting morale”.⁸⁴ Military ceremonials also reaffirmed the difference between the ruler and the ruled. Along with the message of cautionary use of arms, the steady movement of the soldiers to the tunes of music, evidently, demonstrated the discipline, efficiency, hierarchy, precision and conformity of the British order in contrast to the Indian order. Holger Hock also finds a connection between the use of ceremonies and consolidation of imperialism. These ceremonies were required for the ‘Britons to imagine and justify their national and imperial enterprise’.⁸⁵

Summing Up

After an analysis of the three Durbars, one can see that though the three varied in its splendour and cost, the overall framework of the Durbars remained the same. When I say overall framework, I mean the state entry, reading of proclamation, the Viceroy’s speech, country-wide celebrations, grant of titles, concessions, review of troops, appointments to various orders, investiture ceremonies, release of prisoners and concluding ceremony. But within this overall framework of ritual enactment, certain additions and removal of ceremonies happened, especially in the second and third Durbars. Nevertheless, the Durbar of 1877 acted as a general guide for the succeeding two Durbars. Along with changes in the structural arrangements, the Durbars of 1903 and 1911 witnessed insertion of few segments. The Durbar of 1903 saw the march of the Mutiny veterans which was absent in the Durbar of 1877. In the Durbar of 1911, the British made this segment more elaborate by including not just the Mutiny veterans, but also the army veterans. The Durbar of 1903 witnessed the presentation of ruling chiefs which was absent in the previous Durbar. The same segment was made more elaborate in the Durbar of 1911 when the King and Queen were present. This time, it was called payment of homage and was conducted in the specially built homage pavilion for this purpose. This Durbar also had certain additional ceremonies like *jharokha darshan*, presentation of colours, imperial fair and hunting due to the presence of the British monarch and his consort.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 107.

⁸⁵ Holger Hock, *Empires of the Imagination: Politics, War, and the Arts in the British World, 1750-1850*, London, p. 23.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The British always claimed that Indians had an appetite for symbols of recognition and ceremonies of royalty. This was always given as a reason for justification of ostentatious Durbars and receptions whenever the British met Indian princes. However, this is a matter of disagreement because both the British and Indian had their own tradition and history of political rituals. The British, when arrived in India, were exposed to a new or rather Indian idiom of ritual. Thus, a convenient interweave happened whereby the essence of each part determining authority and legitimacy was maintained. Each symbol or insignia used by the Indian royalty or later appropriated by the British had its own symbolic significance. All the Durbars had a commingling of the ritualistic aspects of both the British and Indian ritual idiom. There was an attempt to include oriental elements and the British kept using the term 'oriental pomp' to describe a ceremony of this kind, though it was to celebrate the coronation of the British monarch. These pageants may look futile and empty today. But they had their own significance in the history of British India, at least, till the mid-twentieth century. Even today in Britain, the ceremonies of royalty were held with the same zeal as was held during the colonial days. Pomp is associated with any country's rituals of royalty. So, the claim that political rituals were only an oriental phenomenon cannot be accepted. The British themselves had their own elaborate state rituals where the configuration of social stratum was clearly seen. In India's case, be it the creation of a colonial sociology where a social hierarchy was created as Bernard S. Cohn argues or be it David Cannadine's argument of British wanting their societal hierarchical order to be superimposed, a hierarchical order existed in colonial India. Thus, prefixing the term oriental is not right as rituals and hierarchy existed in both the social orders. The act of people rushing and prostrating at the thrones after the royal couple left overtly demonstrated that a concept of divinity was attached to the persona of the King. But this deed cannot be just bracketed as an Eastern way of showing submissiveness as the British also had a kind of decorum, if not similar, of kissing the hands of the monarch. The performance of curtsy is also a part of their royal etiquette. In the Durbar of 1911, Lord Hardinge kissed the hands of the King. The respect, esteem and significance attached to

kingship were the same in both the traditions. But the ways of its expression and acknowledgement varied.

The British had a different mode of decorum and demeanour in public ceremonies. With the consolidation of the British power in India, it became necessary for the British to establish, endorse and prove the British decorum to be valid and debase India ritual practices. The British at different intervals had brought restrictions on different Indian practices; be it monitoring the presentation of *nazar* or determining for conditions on decorations of emblems, efforts were always made with legal backing to oversee such practices. All these measures led to a vital question- who had the right to invalidate a ritual practice. This question was welded with the concept of 'power' making the British the rightful authority to validate or invalidate any ceremonial practice. The granting of gifts attained a new interpretation of marking the subordination of the receiver. Nicholas.B.Dirks considers the grant of these gifts to be fundamental signs of sovereignty and believes the gift giving process to be a technique to keep intact the same. This addresses the issue of who had the power to grant gifts and titles. The British made it very clear that they were the authority who had the power and might to bestow gifts and titles. It was this approach which the British were tactfully applying in the case of the Durbars where medals and banners were lavishly distributed to the chiefs with an expectation to be reciprocated by their loyalty and support. Through this ritual, the British redefined the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. It is interesting to note the invitees to the Durbars. Cohn highlights the enactment of colonial sociology which viewed India in terms of group - natural and social. Though it was meant to include the princes as feudal rulers who constituted the natural aristocracy, invitations were extended to native gentlemen, hereditary landed class, editors and journalists and representative men of various folds. The invitations were given in relation to the British idea of the social order in India. All the three Durbars had attendance from both the groups.

The British wherever possible, through their arrangements tried to emphasise the difference between the ruler and the ruled not just in ritual performance and spatial arrangements, but also in the organization of various other activities or segments of the Durbar. Initiation, generation and elaboration of difference lay at the base of the colonial project. The depiction of Indians as the 'other' who believed in pomp and festivities of oriental nature was the agenda of all the three Durbars. The synchronous arrangement of a *mela* or *bazaar* kind of event and the garden party on the British standards in the Durbar of

1911, without concealment conveyed the difference by which Indian and the British merriments were conducted. The former was obstreperous and tumultuous; and the latter was tranquil and unruffled. There was no other direct and straightforward strategy other than this to show the difference between the ruled and the ruler. It also reaffirmed that there could be no room for similarities between the two. Thus the creation of the 'other' was an important colonial tactic. The Delhi Durbars portrayed India as the 'other' anachronistic entity worth to be objectified, preserved, dominated and guided by the British to civilization and modernity.

There is no doubt about the fact that the British perspective towards India changed after the Revolt. All the three Durbars need to be studied in the backdrop of the changed agenda whereby the British decided to propitiate, preserve and utilise the native princes as a counterweight against the ascending wave of national awakening. The Durbars came as rightful devices in conserving them in a ceremonial ambience where they felt their position and power undisturbed and assured, but definitely subservient to the British Crown and its direct representative, the Viceroy. To this strategy of preserving the native princes, was incorporated the strategy of maintaining hierarchy. The concept of hierarchy was executed in the Indian societal structure on the basis of different parameters. Caste and race had already entered the colonial understanding of categorising people. It had already found place in the surveys and census conducted under the auspices of the colonial government. The same kind of layering was implemented for the princely states as well where the native princes or ruling chiefs were ranked and divided into different categories on the basis of gun salutes and other symbolic endowments. The gun salutes granted to different native chiefs were not uniform. This again helped in creating a hierarchical arrangement where one was placed over the other. Each Durbar added gun salutes whereby the position of the native princes went up in social status and rank. Even the seating arrangement of the ruling chiefs and the payment of homage were engineered in such a way which again manifested the vertical hierarchy amongst themselves. Commemorative medals were minted to eternalize the memory of the coronation and these medals were cherished and preserved as prestigious family heirlooms by Indians. Lord Lytton commented, "The decorative details of an Indian pageant are like those parts of an animal which are of no use at all for butcher's meat, and even unfit for scientific dissection, but from which augurs

draw the omens that move armies and influence Princes”.¹ This statement sounds ironic and incongruous as Lytton himself, a British man, as the Viceroy of India, was the one who initiated this tradition of convening Durbars at Delhi. The Durbars called at Delhi, the Mughal capital city, made it explicable that the British monarch was at the apex of the social order. They recreated a medieval feudal illusion where serfs paid allegiance to their overlord. The homage ceremony in the Durbar of 1911 demonstrated this illusion where the native princes, as ‘natural leaders’ of India paid their homage to their overlord King and overtly demonstrated their steadfast loyalty to the British monarch. Though, through the Durbar, the British tried to recreate a feudal vision and atmosphere, it was not a feudal imagination in the European sense and essence. The British wanted the mere recreation of a picturesque moment where the allies declared their allegiance to the overlord.

Another strategy of presenting the allegiance of the native princes in a visible way was the control of bodily movements of the native princes. The declaration of allegiance verbally was not the essence of the patron-client relationship. Loyalty had to be shown through body language or bodily demeanour. The Delhi Durbars were the venues where allegiance was demonstrated through bodily gestures like bowing head, bending back, kneeling or prostration. Placing of articles at the feet of the monarch or the Viceroy added to the effect of the bodily submission. When any breach of protocol happened, the British always responded in a stern uncompromising manner. This was the case with the Gaekwar of Baroda. The British decided the princes’ wardrobe, what accessories should be worn and in what way they should pay obeisance and their body’s deportment. The extreme faithful gestures of native princes were specially mentioned in correspondences and other official documents. Every move of the native princes had to be according to the code of conduct laid down by the British. This is why when the Gaekwar made a perfunctory bow; it raised the brows of the British officials. Thus, the restrictions on body and clothing determined the relative position of the ruled with regard to the Crown. There was a particular way the ‘Orientals’ were perceived and any diversion from that portrayal was unacceptable. The British could not find any other appropriate stage than the Durbars where bodily movements, gestures and seating arrangement reaffirmed the subordinate position of the native princes.

The spatial arrangement of the Durbar arena and the paying of homage ceremony clearly show that whatever high-sounding terms were used to describe the relationship

¹ Lady Betty Balfour, *The History of Lord Lytton’s Indian Administration, 1876-1880: Compiled from Letters and Official Papers*, London, 1899, p. 114.

between the Crown and the princes, the latter were never treated on an equal footing. Though homage ceremony was not part of the first Durbar, the subordinate nature of the native princes was detectable. The succeeding two Durbars had the special segment of paying of homage. The representation of colonial sociology which Cohn talks about in the Durbar of 1877 was repeated in 1903 and 1911. The rituals of subordination which the British initiated with the Durbar of 1877 were elaborated in the later Durbars. The visual manifestation of the Durbars was definitely colourful, but it never had an agenda of equal treatment of Indians either ritually or outside a ritual frame. These kind of theatrical events were never initiated and elaborated to be egalitarian modelled.

The allegiance declared through bodily submission was further consolidated with the grant or additions to gun salutes, careful creation and expansion of Orders and dissemination of titles and honours. The Nizam of Hyderabad, Gaekwar of Baroda and Maharaja of Mysore received twenty-one gun salutes, the highest number of gun salutes received by Indian ruling chiefs. The post-1857 period witnessed appointments to different orders like the 'Order of the Bath', 'Order of the Indian Empire', 'Imperial Order of the Crown of India' for women and the 'Star of India'.

Ceremonies of political nature were integral part of the British life; be it in Britain or in the colonies. Right from the days of the East India Company there was a general expectation from the officers to maintain certain ceremonial atmosphere, a certain degree of state whereby he maintained a physical and social distance from the natives. The officers were supposed to endorse a degree of state and style of the office that they held and show the significance of their office ceremonially. Many officials believed that pomp, ceremonies and display were integral to the governance of India. As the British power became more consolidated, designing and execution of public ceremonials became part of the British official life in India. Public breakfast, banquets, garden parties, big dinners, state balls, formal etiquette were all part of the British political life and culture in India. Other than the Durbars, other occasions celebrated grandly in India were birthdays of the monarch, Christmas, New Year's Day, welcome ceremony of new officials and celebrations in commemoration of victory in a war. Levee, state ball, state evening party, dances, parades on New Year's Day, annual convocation of universities, review of troops, fireworks and illumination were other ceremonies.

In addition to the above occasions, the arrival of members of the royal family was occasion of public rejoicing. The visits of Duke of Edinburg (1869), Prince Albert Victor (1889-1890) and Prince of Wales (1875-76, 1905-06) were celebrated with public

rejoicing in honour of the guests. Investiture ceremonies and Durbars were also held to which native princes were invited. To all these parties, when Indians arrived, they were supposed to attend those in full traditional ceremonial dress and jewellery according to the rules laid by the British, giving the occasion an exotic oriental representation as perceived and imagined by the British. Thus, it was a satisfaction of European perception rather than the actual visual presentation of India. Breach of protocol or different outfit was considered dishonouring and challenging the imperial power.

Through the three Durbars, the British tried to project two Indian - the well ordered, disciplined British administered India with its own sense of rituals and pageants (though the Durbar in itself was a borrowed concept) and a completely Indian India which was totally chaotic and romantically oriental in British understanding and imagination. This notion of difference was extended to the architectural style of the buildings which the British constructed in India. Another point to be noted was that church service, an integral part of the coronation ceremony of the British monarch, was intentionally avoided in Delhi. Perhaps the British must have understood the ineptness of such an anointment of the King in a land of multiple religions. The Delhi Durbar was an event without any Christian religious rituals of sanction and legitimisation. The ceremonies remained completely within the framework of a political ritual sans Christian hymns and choral music.

Power without ostentatious ceremonies appeared powerless. Maintenance of this pageant culture in India was done at two levels by the British. Firstly, they integrated themselves into the Indian ritual idiom in the initial days of the British administration, though without understanding their meanings. Secondly, they rejected Indian ritual idiom and innovated a colonial Indian idiom with a blend of elements from both the ritualistic traditions.

The success of a public ceremony, in general, depends on two factors - pompous spectacles and spectators to witness the same. The word spectators denote both native princes and common people. A ceremony is not a public ceremony if any one of the factors is absent. Let us assume for one moment that the Indians did not arrive for any of the three Durbars. In that case, the history of political rituals in India would have had another story to tell. But such a situation did not arise in India and the British knew that such an unfavourable circumstance would not occur too. They repeatedly claimed that the natives had a 'lust' and an 'appetite' for symbols. Thus, they were confident that pageants, ceremonials, rites and rituals would play its charm in India and succeed in propitiating at least a category of Indians, if not all, thereby warding off threats to the Empire.

Thus, the Durbars were a complete visual package of colonial ideology wrapped in the bright and dazzling paper of rituals. The ingredients of this package were elaborate ceremonies, hierarchy, big game hunting, adherence to protocol, commemoration of British victory in various battles, military spectacles and grants of boons and money demonstrating the paternal and benevolent nature of the *Raj*. An imperial rule sans ceremonies was unimaginable for the British. They believed that through the splendour and extravaganza, India could be held under control without arms. Hunting or *shikar* was an act or sport which the British turned into a spectacle. It was a pastime of not just Indian princes, but also of monarch's representative in India. Hunting was used as a medium to show the superior skills and technology of the British. The spread of railway network and usage of modern weapons facilitated hunting in new areas which were inaccessible before. Thus, *shikar* was not just about killing animals; it had deeper meanings to it. The insertion of the segment of hunting in Nepal was intentional with this motive.

The British, whenever they toured different places of India, held meetings with the princes and other noblemen of India. The meetings were always in the form of a Durbar where honours and rewards were presented to Indians. The ceremonies that were followed during the visit of a native prince to the Government House followed the same pattern as that of the Mughal court. It can be inferred that the concept of Durbar was not totally new to the Indian context. Though they wanted to erase the memories of Mughal times, they did not reject the ritual of 'Durbar' which was an easy medium for representing power and authority.

The theory of authority propounded by Cohn is fundamental to the understanding the post-Revolt British rule in India. The argument of Metcalf that Durbars were tools improvised by the British to legitimate their rule in India stands valid in the light of my research. I would like to add that coercive intent was added to the theory of authority and improvisation of Durbars. The Revolt of 1857 was a vicious indication of the power and might of the British. The intention to use force, if necessary, subtly underlies the Durbar agenda. The display of military troops at the Durbars had this message silently conveyed. The review of the troops of both the native army and the British was made to take place one after the other in order to show the superiority and the might of the British troops. The review of the British troops was a sharp contrast to that of the native troops. The precision and steadiness of each regiment, the coherence of the whole mass and the regularity of every movement silently proved the organizational superiority by which the British

administration operated in India. The ritual idiom which was created, presented an image of an authority which can use force when it found itself under threat.

Few more factors were important which the British rightfully contemplated and tactfully twisted. **Firstly**, affirmation of inequality was crucial in the Durbar where the native princes were assured of their position without any risk of being deposed. The British authority had a pre-conceived notion of inequality. The Durbars were staged theatres where this inequality was maintained, confirmed and repeated. This approach helped in sustaining political stability in India by averting rebellious break outs even after the formation of the Indian National Congress. Though it was claimed that the native princes remained as 'natural' leaders, the British never acknowledged them as equal partners. The Durbars legitimised and popularized the British rule in India through the creation of an institutional hierarchy or legitimate order of inequality.

The **second** was the colourful presentation of various segments of the ritual. Ceremonies had to be splendid, not lustreless and dull. Even during the tour of Queen Mary in Rajputana, ceremonial ambience was maintained, and utmost loyalty was promised and demonstrated by all the native princes. When the Queen arrived at Jaipur station, the Maharaja of Jaipur placed his sword at the feet of the Queen as a mark of his fealty. Escort, ceremonial paraphernalia like elephants, musicians, armed retainers, triumphal arches and troops welcomed her everywhere making the visit colourful and spectacular. The **third** determining factor was the time of convening the Durbar. Were the Durbars convened at an appropriate time? Definitely, the socio-political situations determine the appropriateness of the summoning of a Durbar. The position of the British within India and internationally towards the end of the nineteenth was not secure. The Empire was not without challenges. The imperial designs of Russia, Germany and France were always a threat to the British Empire. Simultaneously, the rise of United States of America and Japan as dominant world powers was also a threat to Britain's position and her imperial designs. The British also realized that it was not now possible to outrightly suppress the aspirations of the natives in the wake of rising education among Indians and their demand for greater share in the governance of India. The Durbars of 1903 and 1911, which were summoned in the twentieth century tried to appease the native princes as a counter balance against the nationalists. If one looks at the years of summoning of the Durbars, one can see that the Durbars were called at a time when Russophobia existed and the British required a ceremonial environment to remind themselves and the world of their bolstered position. A question that can arise at this juncture is that what if Queen Victoria

and Edward VII had not died in 1901 and 1910 respectively. If they lived longer, would Durbars be still convened? I strongly believe that, though the death of the sovereigns were the immediate context for the summoning of the Durbars, even if they had not expired, Durbars would have happened on the pretext of other reasons. The Durbar of 1877 happened, not due to death of the reigning monarch or for announcement of the next heir. It was called to announce an addition to the royal title and style of the British monarch. That act was also to equate the royal style of the British monarch to the Russian Czar. Thus, a Durbar's reason to be convoked needs to be looked beyond the immediate context of the death of the monarch. Though the dates of the second and third Durbars were due to the death of the reigning monarchs, these Durbars coincided with certain important political developments between 1900 and 1911 in the world and in India. The three Durbars also coincided with the confident phase of the British imperialism in India. Thus, a spectacle or display was necessary to remind the rival imperial powers of the British power and at the same time tranquilize the restless situation in India due to the partition of Bengal. **Fourth** was the acquisition of large scale attention from across the world. The attention which the Durbar received was the attention that the British Empire got reaffirming its influence to the world. The Durbars signified much more than just symbols and ceremonies; it was also a wordless communicative performance where the British demonstrated its hegemony over India as the paramount power. Due to the importance of the fourth factor, technologies of publicity and dissemination were abundantly utilised to spread the imperial message. The British made conscious efforts to record the Durbars; in writing as well as visually. By the time of the second Durbar, photography and video shooting had become popular and these two methods were utilized to capture the Durbar moments.

The British had assigned a medieval 'feudal' character to the Indian princes and this medieval conception reached its pinnacle in the Durbars. In the changed context after 1858, colonial sociology targeted the princes and their states. For the articulation of this changed attitude in the ritual arena, the British used 'Durbar' as a medium which was not unfamiliar to the native minds. The Durbars were the venues where the nature of relationship between the colonial government and Indian princes was redefined on the basis of a hierarchy. This hierarchy and the regularised salute table created a pyramidal ranking among the Indian princes. Thus a new era of ritual representation and dissemination of honours was inaugurated which incorporated the native princes into the body of the 'British administration'.

However, the Durbars did not grant any special privileges to Indians. Except for a number of titles, medals and salutes, the native princes did not acquire any advantage or concession. In other words, their subjugated and submissive status was further reaffirmed. Their hierarchical status was reinstated through the difference in the number of salutes. As Dirks has commented, the rituals and ceremonies made the native rulers hollow devoid of any actual power. The Durbars did not bestow any concession with regard to the educated Indians' demand of their inclusion in high office ranks. It affirmed the fact that high and well-paid offices would continue to be in the hands of the Europeans; and empty titles and subordinate posts would remain with Indians. Thus, Indians continued to be deprived of their right to have a share in the administration of their country. Though a new ritual idiom was inaugurated, Indians continued to be discriminated against. The significance of the Durbars lies in this fact that, though it was criticized for its extravaganza, the three Durbars were the tangible result of the newly developed ritual idiom.

Addressing the question of the success of the Durbars, it can be said that, they did not bring any advantage in the long run. But, in such pompous pageants, the Indian princes paying homage to the representative of the monarch and to the monarch showed that it brought an effect which the British desired. High attendance from the Indian side showed that the British accomplished what they wanted – to represent the image of the British authority as they envisaged. The fundamental objective of securing their loyalty and support was thus achieved. Hence, it may be concluded that the British had a well articulated ideology with various devices of application, of which the Durbar was considered to be the most effective. They wanted their rule to be percolated to the different segments of the society, even at the local level. The Durbars gave an opportunity for them to display their might and authority to the Indians and reinforce that they were the legitimate rulers after the Mughals. It also allowed them to make the native rulers demonstrate their loyalty and see the fellow princes doing the same. This tactfully manoeuvred ideology supplemented with political rituals was used as a medium to create the difference between the rulers and the ruled and sustain the British rule over India. All the rituals and other ceremonies performed during the British rule in India were not accidental, but well crafted, choreographed pageants which the British staged pompously within the project of 'invention of traditions'.

The Durbar of 1911 was the last Durbar called in the history of the British administration of India. The ritual idiom or rhetoric lost its significance in the post World War I period and India did not witness a fourth Durbar. After George V, Britain had two

more monarchs – Edward VIII and George VI. George V expired in 1936 and his eldest son, Edward VIII succeeded him the same year. The British had plans of conducting another Durbar with the application of the modern and swiftest way of transport - aeroplane. The plan was that the King should descend from the sky giving a royal-cum-fantasy effect to his arrival. But, the situations in India had changed by this time that India was in no mood for pageants and ceremonies as the political scene was already taken over and dominated by Gandhi who, along with his doctrines of non-violence and Satyagraha, was attacking the symbols of the *Raj*. The British realised the infeasibility and futility of convening a Durbar at this point of time and abandoned the plan. Though India moved away from the mood of pageants by the second quarter of the twentieth century, the convoking of three Durbars during the apogee of the British rule in India stands testimony to the fact that symbols and rituals of authority caught attention, howsoever, ‘hollow’ they were. The British were successful in keeping India in a subservient position though rituals at least till the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Edward VIII abdicated soon towards the end of December 1936. He was succeeded by his brother, George VI the same year. A Durbar was not summoned in India considering the developments in India. In three years Britain was drawn into World War II. The two world wars were a serious drain on the resources of Britain and by the second quarter of the twentieth century it was clear that India could not be held as a colonial possession with rituals and propitiation of native princes. The right of the native ruling class to rule was attacked with the popularity of democratic ideas. The native rulers were no longer the right collaborators to counterbalance the rising tide of nationalism. The paramountcy became void with the departure of the British, driving India into much complicated issues of reorganisation of states.

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