



**THE
POWER
OF INDIA**

•
**MICHAEL
PYM**

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A Yogi.

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ILLUSTRATED

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THE POWER OF INDIA

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Made in the United States of America.

To

LADY HYDARI, AND MRS. WILLIAM ASTOR CHANLER

AND TO

GURU MAHARAJA MUNI SHRI SHANTI VIJAYAJI

WITH PROFOUND AFFECTION

FOREWORD

I DO not wish to claim for this book any great authority. It is merely the record of some years of study and observation in India, for which purpose I wandered over most of the country. As far as possible I have tried to avoid statistics and too much official or semiofficial documentation, because it has been my experience through years of newspaper work that these can be interpreted to suit almost any theory.

My sincere thanks are due to the India Office, to many officials of the Government of India, to the Indian Princes who so generously entertained me, and to numerous British and Indian friends in India who helped me to see and understand something of that vast country.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. A. J. Holcombe of the *Herald Tribune*, who gave me the commission which sent me to India, and to Miss Valentine Thomson and Miss Maxine Davis, who so patiently read and criticised the MS.

Barrytown-on-the-Hudson.

July 31st, 1930.

MICHAEL PYM.

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THE POWER OF INDIA

PART ONE

APPENDIX

THE Berars affair is one of those typically Indian imbroglios which began in sheer corruption, and goes on, partly in sheer ignorance and partly because officialdom hates to admit a mistake. Efforts are made to settle it, bury it, do anything with it, and it is always resurrecting. Therefore it has to be faced, and the story told as accurately as possible.

It begins way back in the early days, when European adventurers of various nations were struggling for a foothold in India. Both British and French made the main aim of their policy alliance with such States as would consent, whose help could be later enlisted to smash the recalcitrant. Taking the weaker for choice, military help would be offered, including officers and soldiers. At a price, of course; the troops usually being paid for by ceding certain revenues, or lands producing the necessary amount.

Such troops were known as "Subsidiary Forces." In the days of Clive, an arrangement was made whereby such a force was stationed in what are called the Northern Sarkars, guarding the road to Madras. This was a military necessity for the British who paid the Nizam 250,000 dollars a year for their occupation of this territory as long as the troops were not requisitioned. Such troops, it may be added, were not only designed for external defence, but to aid in preserving internal law and order.

When Nizam Ali was put on the throne, a new and larger Subsidiary Force was stationed in the State itself and new treaties made, whereby the Nizam, having disbanded his French troops, engaged also to keep an army of his own, amounting to six thousand infantry and nine thousand cavalry, to help the British in

war. From that time on, the British spoke of the Nizam's own army as the "Contingent." Referring to other States, however, the British got into the habit of calling the British Subsidiary Force stationed in them, the "Contingent," and this began a certain confusion of ideas.

To pay for the British force, Nizam Ali ceded the lands he acquired in the campaign against Tippu Sultan. Then it was found that his own army was not very efficient, and British officers were supplied for the training of this, the Contingent proper. Nizam Ali died, Sikandar Jah succeeded, and the fun started.

Frankly, Sikandar Jah was not a capable ruler. That for the first three years of his reign he had a good Prime Minister, was due to the help of the then Resident, also a good man. But when this Minister, Mir Alam, died, the British determined to take no chances. They insisted on their nominee, the Nizam insisted upon his. Finally a compromise was arrived at. The Nizam's Minister, Munir ul Mulk, should be appointed—without real powers. The British nominee, Chandu Lal, who was wholly in the hands of the British, should be his deputy with the real power.

Chandu Lal was altogether a scoundrel. Nothing more corrupt and morally degenerate can be imagined. In looks, strangely enough, his portrait is startlingly like Gandhi; the long nose, the mouth, the small eyes too close together, and the smile. But that is, of course, merely an odd coincidence.

Naturally the Nizam's army loathed Chandu Lal as a low-born adventurer who had supplanted their master. Chandu Lal feared the army, and desired but one thing, somehow to get it under control before it disposed of him. The British also wished to get the Nizam's army under control, because their own Subsidiary Force had shown signs of disaffection at the time of the "White Mutiny" when the British officers of the Coast Army rebelled against the Government. With this suggestion in his head, one, Henry Russell, arrived in Hyderabad as Political Resident. Russell and Chandu Lal agreed perfectly with each other, and soon found their opportunity.

A couple of the Nizam's regiments mutinied for lack of pay; for, part from the British section of the story, Chandu Lal was having a grand time with the State finances. The Resident, backed by this creature, promptly transferred these mutineers to his own command, attached them to the Residency, and recruited others. Thus was initiated the "Hyderabad Contingent" without the slightest treaty right. The Residency paid them, and got paid in return by Chandu Lal, who calmly abstracted the money from the Treasury.

The battalions thus dealt with were called the "Russell Brigade." Fantastic pay was allotted to their British officers, the Commandant getting no less than twenty thousand dollars a year, and the rest in proportion. More and more troops, especially those in Berar, were drawn into the scheme.

Thus supported by the Resident, Chandu Lal really enjoyed himself. The Subsidiary Force, stationed at Jalna and Secunderabad, was exempt from Customs and Excise. Nizam Ali had put Secunderabad under the jurisdiction of the Resident, who had agreed to look after the Excise duties and return its proportion to the State. "A little thing like that?" said Chandu Lal, "O, just keep it. A mere trifle." Chandu Lal cared nothing for money—his passion was power. The British could have all the money they wanted; almost a third of the entire revenue of the State for the Contingent, for instance, about two million dollars. The European officers and Staff alone accounted for six hundred thousand dollars of this.

In about ten years, Chandu Lal had effectively ruined the State. The people first revolted, and then emigrated. He could no longer pay even for the Contingent. Then Mr. Russell decided something must be done, and the firm of Palmer and Co., money-lenders, was called in to make an unsavoury third. Lord Hastings, the then Governor General, was connected with a member of the firm Sir William Rumbold who had married a ward of his. Thus it became possible to lend money to Hyderabad at twenty-five per cent interest, plus huge clandestine bonuses and bribery all around. By this time, even the Directors of the East India Company began to denounce these transactions, but they

were confronted by obstinacy and lack of judgment on the part of the Governor General who refused to credit the facts.

The loans were cleared by the Government's capitalization of the revenue they owed to the Nizam for the Northern Sarkars, thus paying off an alleged debt with a genuine one, and securing the Sarkars for themselves.

Russell made way for Sir Charles Metcalfe, a genuinely honest and decent man, who tried to do something toward reforming the revenue system instituted by Chandu Lal. Chandu Lal had farmed out various districts to middlemen at a price, a good price, and these in turn "trod on the faces" of the people. Though Sir Charles was hampered in every way, even the little he was able to do began to bring the people back to their deserted lands.

Chandu Lal was not happy, but he still had Calcutta behind him. Lord Hastings actually approved a request that the Nizam should give Calcutta eight hundred thousand dollars for city improvements as an expression of friendship, but this was stopped in time by London. Behind Sir Charles Metcalfe's back, Chandu Lal secured a promise that European superintendence of the land revenue collection should be done away with.

Nasir ud Daula succeeded to the throne. Taking hold of the government, he, inspired by Chandu Lal, got rid of the officers in question. Calcutta wondered if this also meant disbandment of the Contingent, and calmly pointed out that should this be the intention, the Government would require one million dollars annually in its stead.

"It's been costing you two million," was the argument, "so you might consider yourself lucky to cut this down to half."

The fact that the Subsidiary Force, the only British army with any justification for its existence, was already being paid for by ceded lands, and that the Contingent had been originally made up of part of the Nizam's own army—stolen from him so to speak by Russell and Chandu Lal, had apparently been forgotten. The Nizam not being a lawyer, replied that he would rather continue the Contingent, and upon this reply was based later contentions to the effect that he accepted the policy of establishing the Contingent.

Five successive Residents supported Chandu Lal who finally reached the point of assigning lands to money-lenders. The State was reduced to chaos, what with hopelessly involved finances, revolts—which the British refused to help quell though their treaty called for such help—and general disorganization. The East India Company interfered from London and said “Chandu Lal must go.” Ostensibly he changed the revenue officers, and, secretly, life went on as before. At the age of seventy-seven, Chandu Lal died.

Conditions could not be worse. Useless for the East India Directors to write from London saying that if the Contingent was too great a strain on the Nizam’s finances he should be at once released from such unnecessary pressure. Lord Dalhousie, unquestionably one of India’s least sympathetic Governors, pressed for a cash settlement or further cession of territory. Territory was Dalhousie’s mania, and he managed to lay the foundations of the Mutiny precisely on this account. The Nizam made a big payment in 1851; he mortgaged his jewels—and the British lent him money at twelve per cent interest.

In 1853, then, the British Government presented a final bill for over two million dollars, for this Contingent. For forty years the British had pocketed, with Chandu Lal’s help, the Excise duties of Secunderabad, amounting almost to the sum demanded. In 1810, they had reduced their own Subsidiary Force below treaty strength, and again pocketed a very large surplus from the lands ceded in payment, whose value had increased. The Contingent had been imposed upon Hyderabad without the slightest legal right.

But this counted for nothing. The Nizam couldn’t pay. The British asked for, instead of the cash, the province of Berar and two other districts, yielding in all a quarter of the State’s revenue. Berar was the finest cotton land the Nizam possessed.

The Nizam refused to cede these in perpetuity; the British threatened military pressure. The Nizam reluctantly consented to a compromise and, refusing cession, assigned “exclusive management” of the Berars to the British Resident. The Governor General stated that the transfer was temporary and anyhow after

payment of the debt and deduction for the Contingent, the surplus revenue was to be returned to the Nizam. Dalhousie, admitting that the Government had "never been entitled either by the spirit or the letter of the Treaty of 1800 to require the Nizam to maintain the Contingent" still contended that liberal treatment had been extended to Hyderabad.

Time passed. Sir Salar Jung the Great becoming Minister attempted again and again to have the Berars restored in return for a capital sum. The London *Statesman*, in 1884, reveals that in 1874-75 the Berari peasants revolted in adjoining districts, but remained perfectly happy under Sir Salar Jung. The revolt over, the latter again opened the matter of the Berars, with the result that Sir Richard Mead was sent to Hyderabad to do something about it. "Doing something about it" is a polite way of saying, to stop the agitation.

Sir Richard drove Sir Salar Jung out of office, and the great statesman and loyal friend of the British who had held Hyderabad on the British side during the Mutiny, died of a broken heart. Mead also brought an action against the *Statesman* but withdrew. The viceroy meanwhile tried to discover who had shown private official papers to the *Statesman*.

The revenues of Berar trebled, but the Government also increased its costly establishment there, and further mysterious expenses were added to their accounts, so that Hyderabad was often debited rather than credited.

Under Lord Curzon the matter again came up. He wanted a permanent settlement with a view of merging the Hyderabad Contingent into the British Army and gaining a freer hand in Berar. Visiting the Nizam in 1902 he pressed upon him a treaty renouncing Hyderabad's claim to Berar forever on a basis of an annual rent of about eighty thousand dollars and the abolition of the Hyderabad Contingent. Remark, that the original annual charges of the Contingent for which Berar had been ceded amounted to two million dollars. The Nizam had just previously also had to borrow money to meet with famine stringencies.

The Nizam asked whether there would ever be any chance of a future Government's returning the province. Curzon replied

in the negative. He signed the treaty, retaining technical sovereignty of the Berars, however.

British income tax and land and liquor taxes have quadrupled the revenues of the Berars. During the Viceroyalty of Lord Reading, the present Nizam questioning the validity of pledging posterity, asked for an enquiry into the case and for an account of the money dealings between the two Governments. This was bluntly and haughtily refused by Lord Reading in 1926, and the Nizam has been looked upon with a certain doubt since that episode.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER FOURTEEN

“Persons are much blamed who do not procure husbands for their daughters before the age of puberty; but the young woman whose parents have neglected this is not considered impure; and it is the lowest ranks that marry earliest because the expense is moderate and because young widows are not among them condemned to celibacy. . . . The marriage here is only a betrothing, as in Behar. Consummation does not take place until after puberty.”

(Montgomery Martin: “The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India, surveyed under the orders of the Supreme Government and collated from the original documents at East India House with the permission of the Hon. Court of Directors.” Pubd. 1838. Vol. 2, p. 474.)

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Montgomery Martin, in his book “East India,” based on an official survey by Dr. Francis Buchanan under the auspices of the East India Company, 1838, remarks (Vol. 1, p. 127) :

“Considering the number of large towns there are in those districts (Behar) the number of prostitutes is very small. . . . In Patna a number of the prostitute families are very rich and a few in Behar have trifling endowments in land, but in general they are rather poor. They are not, however, as in Europe, neglected when they become old; their adopted daughters supporting the aged; nor do they acquire the hard-

ened depravity that arises from a sense of being totally despised and unprotected. . . .”

Describing Shahabad, then owning a population of 1,418,780, the author again remarks: “The number of prostitutes is very small, amounting to only 130 houses.”

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

One of the most scathing indictments ever written about British rule in India, under the East India Company, is to be found in Montgomery Martin’s *East India*, to which I have alluded previously. In the Introduction to Vol. 1 (pages xi on) he says:

“It is impossible to avoid remarking on two facts which are peculiarly striking:—1st, the richness of the country surveyed and 2ndly, the poverty of the inhabitants.”

He goes on to trust that this survey will induce England to apply to India that commercial reciprocity “of which so much is heard with reference to foreign nations, but none at all with regard to our possessions in India,” and says:

“England *compels* (his italics) the natives of British India to receive her steam wrought manufactures at a rate of but $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. while she imposes 20 to 30 per cent. on the hand wrought cottons and silks of the Hindoos, whose sugar is taxed 150 per cent. coffee 200 per cent. pepper 300 per cent. rum 500 per cent. etc., when imported into the United Kingdom; and this from a country where England annually levies £20,000,000 sterling, and of which £3,000,000 and upwards is yearly transmitted to London as tribute.

This annual drain of £3,000,000 on British India has amounted in 30 years, at 12 per cent. (the usual Indian rate) compound interest to the enormous sum of £723,997,971 sterling; or, at so low a rate as £2,000,000 for 50 years to £8,400,000,000 sterling.

So constant and accumulating a drain even on England would soon impoverish her; how severe then must be its effect on India where the wages of a labourer is from twopence to threepence a day?” . . .

In his summing up of the whole survey, Introduction to Volume 3, Martin says:

“These facts (sic) . . . all demonstrative of a mass of wretchedness such as no other country on the face of the earth presents; and the continuance of which is a disgrace—a deep and indelible disgrace to the British name. Since this official report was made to Government have any effective steps been taken in England or in India to benefit the sufferers by our rapacity and selfishness? None! On the contrary we have done everything possible to impoverish still further the miserable beings subject to the cruel selfishness of English commerce.”

He then repeats the charges made in the Introduction to Vol. 1 and continues:

“For half a century we have gone on draining from two to three and sometimes four million pounds sterling a year from India which has been remittable to Great Britain to meet the deficiencies of commercial speculations; to pay the interest of debts, to support the Home establishment, and to invest on England’s soil the accumulated wealth of those whose life has been spent in Hindostan.”

Referring to the farmers, he points out that

“a people who with all their industry and possessed of considerable skill are unable to earn more than a 1d or 1½d or 2d a day, and when in want of means to till their land or carry on their looms or smithies are compelled by their necessities to borrow money at 20 to 30 per cent per annum must necessarily be beggared. . . . And when to such a sure cause of misery we have added the commercial injustice which prohibits the Hindoo from having even the same advantages for his dear wrought, high taxed products in the markets of the United Kingdom as the Englishman has for his cheap manufactures in India, can we be surprized at the misery which exists and the utter desolation which must ensue . . . as regards commercial rights England treats India with a despotism which has no parallel in ancient or modern history . . . *the handwriting is on the wall* (original italics)—and if ever a nation deserved punishment and annihilation it will be England should she continue in her present career of injustice to India.”

Twenty years later, it will be remembered, the Mutiny broke out. Martin also agrees with Mead and Torrens as regards the effect of British rule on the upper classes, and says:

“It is also to be observed, and, I think, much to be regretted, that the operations of our systems of finance and law have done more in

twelve years to impoverish and degrade the native chiefs, who succeeded the impure tribes, than the whole course of Muhammedan government" (Vol. 2, p. 345).

It is interesting to note that Francis Buchanan's original survey, which indicated the terrible conditions prevailing in British India, was begun as far back as 1807. Dr. Buchanan worked in the field on this until 1816. His report was filed at East India House, a few copies being sent to the then Government of India. None of it became public until 1838, and no particular action appears to have been taken on it.

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