

States
Information
Service & Bureau

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a PROSPECTUS : 18 May 1965 : M :
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Introductory

THE SUBJECT of this Prospectus was discussed at the Inaugural Conference of Consultation held at New Delhi on the 12th and 13th of August 1967. The agenda tabled by the Organiser and Sponsoring Committee of Consultation included the following agendum :—

9. *To approve the setting up of an Information Service and Bureau. (Resolution No. 8 dated the 13th February 1966, adopted by the Saurashtra States Conference, and a prospectus of the proposal, dated the 18th May 1965, will be tabled.)*

The members present at the Conference in New Delhi, will have perused their copy of the Prospectus of which I now have the pleasure of presenting this reprint.

After the discussion on this agendum, on the first day of the New Delhi Conference, it was my privilege to move the following resolution :—

RESOLUTION No. 6 : Institution of a States Information Service and Bureau : THE CONFERENCE commends and hereby approves the setting up of a States Information Service and Bureau for the collection, production and dissemination of information on the constituent territories of India, past and present (as anticipated by the Saurashtra States General in their Resolution No. 8 of the 13th February 1966, *vide* the Prospectus appended) and directs that an endowment, sufficient to its needs, be created and set aside for its stability and permanence.

As recorded in the circulated proceedings (which were subsequently confirmed by the Plenary Conference of Consultation at Bombay on the 10th November 1967), the resolution was 'supported by His Highness the Nawab of Palanpur, His Highness the Raja of Mandi, Her Highness the Rajmata Scindia of Gwalior, His Highness the Raja of Narsingarh and others, and passed unanimously.'

The resolution of the Saurashtra Rulers Conference, adopting the original proposal, reads as follows :—

RESOLUTION No. 8 : Proposal of a States Information Service and Bureau : THIS CONFERENCE recommends

and approves the setting up of a Bureau and Service for the collection, production and dissemination of information on the Indian States (see the appended prospectus dated 18th May 1965) and authorises the Board to promote the same, provided that for its expenses, chargeable to the Administrative Fund, no further contribution will be invited from the Saurashtra Rulers, unless the project achieves wider acceptance or a separate existence.

This resolution was moved from the Chair by His Highness the Maharaja of Porbandar, President of the Conference, and passed unanimously.

The idea of a central institution of this nature and scope, was first mooted in 1963 (in connection with a project, the *Illustration of Houses*, a compendium or reference work on the ruling houses) by His Highness the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra, now known to be the author of this Prospectus. One can only regret that the proposal did not, at that time, evoke sufficient response, and that this serviceable institution did not then come into being. It foreshadows the Concord itself.

Today we shall have to *begin to create* an organisation—an uphill and most difficult task—instead of having had one ready at hand. We shall have to *begin to pool* our resources, when we should have already had the means at our ready disposal. We shall have to take *remedial* measures where we might have taken *preventive* ones.

The words and contents of this 1965 Prospectus carry so strong an appeal, so cogent a message, that I deem it but right, indeed a duty, especially as the mover of the Resolution, to render this very small service in the common cause. I am grateful to the Convenor General for kindly permitting me to reprint this Prospectus.

With this, I earnestly commend this prophetic Prospectus (which was written more than two and a half years ago) for perusal and study by my brother members of the Order and the distinguished members of the Council and the Committee.

21st January, 1968

The Villa, Kapurthala

Maharaja of Kapurthala

States Information Service & Bureau—a prospectus

GENERAL

Background & Tradition of the Indian States

THE INDIAN STATES, after enduring for centuries, passed from the scene into history during the years 1948 to 1950. This remarkable transition was achieved by the co-operation of the hereditary Ruling Princes & Chiefs of India,—a plural action which has been fittingly extolled and described as ‘free, sovereign, and unique acts of unparalleled abnegation and the highest patriotism’. Through the storms and stress of territorial existence and social strife, and withstanding foreign aggressions, these States had come through as monarchic bastions of the native polity and as the natural bulwarks of our social heritage and culture. They have left a permanent impress on our Country’s history. With their passing, the pageant and unbroken tradition of Indian kingship came to an end.

Accession & Integration of the Indian States

IN THE YEAR 1947 the Indian States accounted for one-third the territory and one-fourth the population of undivided India. For the momentous contribution made by the Indian Rulers in the rebirth of this Nation, they were hailed in the Constituent Assembly of India as the “co-architects of Indian independence and unity”. The Deputy Prime Minister of India, the great Sardar Patel, gave expression to the general sentiment of the time when, speaking for the country, he declared :

“These Princes have by their act of abnegation purchased in perpetuity their right to claim the devotion of their people”.

Shri B Pattabhi Sitaramayya, then President of the Indian National Congress and earlier President of the Indian States’

Peoples Congress, in his letter dated at New Delhi the 18th August 1949, to H. H. the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra, wrote:

“The sacrifices that you, the Princes, have made are much greater than those made by the people of India”.

The fateful decisions taken by the Princes during the epochal years 1947, 1948 & 1949, and the final consequences—political, constitutional, & territorial—flowing from these decisions and resulting in the organic consolidation of India have been authoritatively dealt with in the *White Paper on Indian States (1950)*.

Post-Integration Position of Indian Rulers

UNDER THE SEVERAL integrative treaties (variously called union covenants, merger agreements, &c.) the Rulers renounced and ceded the administrations of their States and vested them either in the Unions of States jointly formed by groups of them, or in the Government of a neighbouring Province, or in the Central Government. By the same instruments they retained to themselves, and their heirs & successors, with the concurrence and under the perpetual guarantee of the Dominion of India (now the Republic of India),—

their *personal privileges* as existing on the 14th August, 1947 ;

their *privy purses*, as settled by negotiation and agreement; and—

their *private properties*, as distinguished from State properties.

The personal privileges, including the privileges of family members (exercisable both within and without their State territories) cover such diverse matters as hereditary titles, customary rights, dignities & courtesies, safeguards against civil and criminal processes, certain exemptions from taxes, customs duties & other levies, and so on.

RATIONALE

Need of an Information Centre

SINCE THE ECLIPSE of the States, some 17 years ago, there exists no centre for the collection, compilation, and dissemination of information on the erstwhile Indian States and the Order of Rulers. (For example, the records and the library of the Chamber of Princes would be an invaluable source of reference.) This must surely be deemed an urgent need which, it is now proposed, should be made good—in a simple and modest manner. It is proposed that the Rulers themselves, or those of them and others who recognise the need and feel a certain responsibility in the matter, should take the lead in sponsoring such a centre, or bureau, under their own auspices. Apart from general utility, this centre would, in the first instance, serve as a means of contact between Members—as a small office of reference, co-ordination, & co-operation—in matters of common interest.

Co-operative Utility of an Information Centre

SUCH INFORMATION SERVICES are a common modern feature of many important and widespread institutions & societies. It must then be deplored that such a service, however small it might be, has yet to come into being on behalf of so historical an interest as the erstwhile Indian States and of so important a body of persons as the Order of Rulers. In fact it is difficult to believe that *a common office for a collective function* does not exist for the Rulers, especially when it is considered : (a) that, under the various compacts entered into by them, they have a similar, almost identical, organic relationship with the Government of the country ; (b) that special provisions concerning them have been deliberately introduced and enshrined in the Constitution of India and elsewhere¹ ; and (c) that, as compar-

1. See the *Memorandum on the Personal Privileges of the Rulers of the Merged States* (blue book) issued by the Ministry of States on 4 August 1949. See also Articles 291, 295, 362, 363 and 366 (7), (15) & (22) of the Constitution of India.

able repositories of a common heritage, they must necessarily share certain like interests. (Even for lesser pursuits, such as hobbies & pastimes, there are numerous clubs & societies for the use and benefit of members.) It can be strongly argued that the things of which the Rulers² are joint and several guardians, trustees, and inheritors, are all likely to suffer and depreciate through neglect and in default of a *focus of liaison between them*. It is therefore submitted that the rationale for a 'States Information Bureau' is not only general service but an obligation the Rulers owe to themselves and to their historic Order.

FUNCTIONS

THE FIRST JOB of the bureau would be to begin a collection of and classification of records & precedents touching the Order of Rulers and useful reference material about the States including a small reference library. But first let us consider how the institution will be useful to Rulers themselves. From here on we shall concentrate on the practical service that such a nucleus can render to the Rulers—collectively and individually. Let us pose the case of the special status and the privileges assured to Treaty Rulers. These are largely a matter of interpretation. Once an interpretation is pronounced it becomes a *precedent*, governing and citable in all like cases.

2. Although the Rulers have ceased to govern their States the expressions "Rulers", "States", &c. have the warrant of the Constitution of India and they are used accordingly. In the official Hindi translation of the Constitution the renderings are: 'ruler', *naresh*; 'State', *rajya*; 'Indian State', *Bharatiya rajya*; 'ruling prince or chief', *bharatiya naresh*; (ruling) prince', *raja*; and (ruling) chief', *raja*. The expressions "Treaty States/ Rulers" are used for distinction as a generic term for those Rulers of States who, or whose predecessors, have subscribed (in the words of the Constitution, Art. 363) to "a treaty, agreement, covenant, engagement, *sanad* or other similar instrument . to which the Government of the Dominion of India or any of its predecessor Governments was a party and which has or has been continued in operation after (the) commencement (of the Constitution)". An important constitutional expression is 'Durbar': it means the Ruler for the time being and so also, during his minority, incapacity, &c., his duly constituted regent or natural or legal guardian, or other authority duly vested with vicegerent powers and functions; where 'Ruler' may mean a Ruler in person, 'Durbar' signifies the Ruler as a perpetual and juridical person.

The interpretation may be favourable or unfavourable to Rulers. If favourable it is all too likely to remain in the private record of the Ruler who won the point at issue (unbeknown to the others of his Order), and to sink to obscurity in the capacious files of public authority. But if it be derogatory to private interest it must necessarily rise to conspicuous notice in the official record of all public authorities.³ The proposed bureau would redress the balance by maintaining well-documented records and serving as a central exchange between Members.

Dissemination of Information to Members

AFTER THE INTEGRATION of their States, most Rulers have probably had to 'join battle' with Government about some general issue or other, petty or important. Very often a private disputation is conducted more vigorously, competently and successfully, than a collective representation on a similar issue. To give an actual example, in a recent case a Ruler's learned counsellors were able successfully to contend that the successor to a State *gaddi* was in certain respects a perpetual and juridical person and hence exempt from some effects of estate duty. Here is an important ruling by a competent public authority on a major issue. But how widely is it known? Sooner or later the same issue may again be joined in behalf of another Ruler—without any one knowing the precedent established. This time, due to a wrong approach, or weak argument, or poor handling—or even some personal factor—the case may be lost.

3. It must be appreciated that the public authorities of the State are specially constituted and adopted to preserve and promote the *public* interest, not *private* privilege. At the same time these authorities are zealous to protect minority, sectarian, and private interests, such that may lawfully appertain to those vigilant and at pains to conserve them. The Central and the State Governments some time find themselves at a disadvantage in protecting pledges and guaranteed rights when these are poorly voiced or inadequately represented, and especially when they are little regarded or go undefended by the majority of those concerned. (Similar is the case with Courts when a party is indifferently represented or does not care to appear.) It is submitted that inertia and indifference, a lack of initiative and concerted action are perhaps graver dangers to the privileged body of Rulers than any deliberate action aimed against them.

It is patent that every such 'battle' is won or lost not for an individual Ruler *but for all Rulers.*

ALL ADVERSE DECISIONS (reversals, denials, repudiations) affect the whole Order, because they are properly recorded for future use and citation. Even the Durbar that had previously secured a favourable decision will some day be confronted by the new and adverse precedent, applicable to all, and so must acquiesce in it. It is therefore obvious and mere good sense that *all* big and small points gained (concessions obtained and rights established or conserved) should be intimated to a central office for routine documentation and transmission to Members. Then again a member might wish to circulate some valuable fact or information, but may lack the machinery for doing so. It would not be reasonable to expect an individual to assume the additional burden of such miscellaneous general duty.

PAST EXPERIENCE SHOWS that when some new issue confronts the Order, and such issues are bound to spring up from time to time, whether in individual cases or having a universal effect, Rulers are often taken unawares, unprepared, and handicapped by a lack of direction. Here again the bureau would be of inestimable service in supplying a means of consultation and concerted action...without the usual delays, which can often damage a case, and without dependence on individuals upon whom the onus may happen to fall. Organization is Strength. (Individuals have after all their own burdens to carry and there is no reason why they should be expected to take a lead and devote their time and money to matters of collective benefit and service. In any event they too would be handicapped by the absence of a collocated record.) Any issue or problem that arises may be referred by a Member to the bureau for information, advice, or circulation. It would be pondered and dealt with by it—as best it can. The bureau will no doubt gradually gather experience and, if not wisdom, at least a certain know-how in matters of Princely concern. When

occasion requires, expert opinion and learned counsel would be procured from certain regular consultants who themselves would acquire a specialised experience in the process. (Most present-day lawyers altogether misconceive the political antecedents of Indian Rulers, and so are prone to draw up 'petitions' lacking the form and dignity which alone can give a remonstrance the importance and conviction it should carry.) Sometimes a simple query may have to be circulated, sometimes a meeting of Rulers may have to be called ; all these things would become the proper business of the bureau. The bureau, its records and its small staff, would be at the ready disposal of Members and their representatives. Its chief officer or secretary could even be summoned to attend at social occasions when Members happen to foregather and can consult. Apart from supplying a less expensive and more compact agency than the plurality of experts, consultants, and counsel engaged by the Rulers severally, the S. I. B. will, it is hoped, afford a peculiar advantage in :- its coordinative centrality ; overall coverage & collation of cases ; procedural experience : steady service : and *continuity*. It will meet the need of regional conferences and even of a central association and by its very nature it will preclude any political tendency.

PUBLICITY : No less important than providing a meeting ground for Members and compiling a mere legal documentaion, the bureau would serve as an agency for publicity, which has been altogether neglected.

OPERATION

IT IS SUGGESTED that a beginning be made with a small nucleus and a location in New Delhi or Bombay. Probable staff :—

- (i) A moderately well-paid, first class, Secretary, preferably with excellent legal qualifications, at say Rs. 1500/3000 p. m.

- (ii) An Asst. Secretary, especially so that the operation is never stranded, Rs. 750/2000 p. m.
- (iii) Two clerical assistants for typing, records & accounts. Rs. 400/700 p. m. each
- (iv) Office facilities : set of rooms (for secretaries, clerks, and records & storage) ; two typewriters ; duplicator ; telephone, &c. ; and office furniture and equipment.

The work in the initial stage would be : (a) the gathering of material, (b) *the elicitation of precedents*—that is of favourable decisions and rulings, the big and small concessions, obtained by Rulers through their own exertions and unfavourable decisions or rulings for future amendment if possible, and (c) documentation of records and their *systematic classification* for future filing and reference.

CONTROL

THE DIRECTIVE CONTROL of the bureau, it is suggested, should be vested in a small committee of say *three* members, the quorum being two. (Larger executive committees of the purely honorary kind are assembled with great difficulty and in the brief time the members can spare subjects other than those on the agenda tend to take priority. So things get diffused and work is held up.) If there is a bank account it may be operated severally by any two of the three members (so if a member lapses there will be no difficulty). A vacancy would be filled without delay. Each member might retire after a two-year tenure, but may be re-elected at the *next* vacancy. The committee would have neither a leadership function nor a representative capacity so far as the Order of Rulers is concerned,—its task being restricted to the running of the S. I. Service and Bureau. Draft articles for constituting and regulating the institution are attached for consideration.

FUNDS

THE FINANCIAL STABILITY of the service should, it is suggested after careful thought, be secured in two ways :—

- I. A lump-sum contribution, by way of endowment donation, by Members, correlated on a graduated scale to their incomes ; this is undoubtedly the fairest and most practical ; the Fund thus created would yield an income to cover most of the outgoing.
- II. A recurring contribution, by way of annual subscription, from Members ; this may be kept low it would follow the same graduation as above but the differences would not be marked.

A standing fund will make this small but useful institution less contingent upon the uncertainties of annual membership and subscriptions.

CONCLUSION

IT IS SUBMITTED in conclusion that, even regardless of its peculiar value to the Order of Rulers,—and even if there were no agreements or special relations between the Indian Rulers and Government, and no privy purses—such a bureau deserves to be instituted at the hands of the Rulers. Apart from having a special place in society and being the representatives of a long historical tradition, they have a more general obligation. It may be pointed out that the one thing from which the institution of Rulers has suffered is adverse and malicious propaganda. It served a political purpose inimical to Rulers and Rulership and it may now be a thing of the past. But so continuous was the vituperation of partisan politics that a most damaging misconception about the institution has been created and is widespread in what was British India and even abroad. It will be found perpetuated in many Indian films and novels.

The image of native kingship and administration has been tarnished. Should not misrepresentations and misconceptions be counteracted by the sober and unbiased presentation of facts? The States have gone and with them monarchy. But even so, is it not a prime and continuing obligation of present Rulers towards the heritage of India, and towards the people of India whose heritage it is, to rescue from distortion and repair the injury done to the high tradition and record of Indian kingship, and to the reputation of their own forebears? It is surely, no great thing that their illustrious Order should afford some permanent centre—especially one that seeks to offer information and guidance, on matters of common and general interest. The centre could also sponsor specific works of research. There is at present no such facility available to research workers, history students, and others, on the important subject of the erstwhile Indian States, which in the latter period of Indian history comprised *a third* of the territory and *a fourth* of the population of undivided India.

BOMBAY.

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