

THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM IN INDIA: 1830-1857

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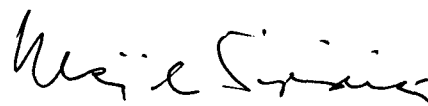
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THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM

IN INDIA : 1830-1857

Dedicated to
My Mother and Father

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This dissertation would not have been written without the guidance of Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya. The acquaintance to this interesting topic to me can be attributed to him. Here I will take opportunity to thank my all teachers in my academic life. A special regard I would like to pay to Dr. Radhika Singha for her invaluable and timely guidance at various stages of my study.

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Shivali Khullar

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INTRODUCTION

A persistent theme ran throughout the period of the colonial rule was the maintenance of its order that depended on the governments' ability to operate a complex and expanding political system. The British stood at the apex of a system of bureaucracy, which was dependent on an efficient system of communication and intelligence.

Espionage in India has a very ancient history. Since the ages, the intelligence system has acted as safeguard for Indian regimes. The treatise of Kautilya, 'Arthshastra' and texts like Manu Samriti all emphasise on the significant role of spies who were considered as the eye and ear of the ruler.

This tradition of spying was made more elaborate under the Mughal rule under the reign of Emperor Akbar. He was a man who realised the importance of the intelligence while ruling a country like India. The information collected by the Akhbar Nawis pertained to all districts and sub- district of the Mughal Empire. This system of the Akbar kept on evolving with time. It became more voluminous and complex in the eighteenth century, as there was emergence of many autonomous regimes that were struggling not just for power but also for their legitimacy. Thus the new political environment of treachery, distrust demanded a set up that could give elaborate information from various courts. The women's quarter, market places, trade routes and pilgrimage centre were brought under strict vigil. Such an elaborate system became a foundation for the massive bureaucratised system of intelligence of the British.

The need of intelligence was deeply felt by the British on their advent as ruler over an alien country like India. Language, culture, social structure, political set up and economic pattern were all novel to them. Being a commercial company the British on their advent to India

came in close relation with various information agencies, which helped them to understand not only the trade pattern but also convinced them about various commercial opportunities. However by the mid of eighteenth century the character of the British company began to change. Military success over the Indian rulers and grant of Diwani rights of Bengal demanded more political involvement of the British. They realised the importance of political dominance in order to sustain continuing commercial interest. Thus changed the character of company required a reliable source of intelligence.

Thus in order to make in road into such multifarious country conqueror needed a set up which could manipulate the indigenous communication system for realising their aims. In beginning the company officials relied on there own set of harkaras and spies, supplemented with regular intelligence inputs by various Indian informants and also by Indian rulers. Intelligence needs grew proportionally to size and spread of their power across India. Independent rulers served very well locally and helped understanding local social structure but information gathered from them was insufficient to predict a national phenomenon. Thus they needed a system that could provide information as an integrated and coherent mass of intelligence, based on entire country.

The establishment of the Residency system satisfied such requirement. The Residency system installed the company's indirect rule in India. It was a system, which undertook various overt and covert measures to establish the British hegemony over India. In the following work the functioning, organisation of the intelligence department or the 'Akhbrat' under Residency will be focussed. Trends like how British overpowered and utilised the pre-existing system of intelligence for their own purpose will be examined. The role of the

natives as an informant to the company has been broadly viewed in my work. Another set of questions will be, how the men in crime acted as intelligence agent in cracking down their own crime of Thuggee?

The period under study is from 1830-1857. The decade of 1830 witnessed a phenomenon of transformation of Indian system of intelligence to the British forms. It sees the establishment of Thuggee and Dakaiti Department. It was time in which various ideological and administrative changes in the very characteristic of the British regime were brought in. The new elements that were brought in were more British in colour, in the whole process there had been attempts by the British officials to make them free from the reliance over the native informants. Further by this period the Residency system had made its presence well establish not only in India but also in the entire British Empire. The information gathered at this point of time was more voluminous. The work culminates with the year of 1857, that marked a turning point in Indian and British history. In the light of events of 1857, this work tries to examine the effect of changes that were brought in decades prior to it in the intelligence department. It evaluates the role of various intelligence agencies and information gathering methodologies in the era of turmoil.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

In my work on the intelligence gathering under the Residency set up there has been an attempt to understand working and organisational aspect of the intelligence set up. The work have been a great help to me is of C.A.Bayly's *'Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social*

Communication in India, 1780-1870.¹ His work is a part of the new Cambridge studies. The subtitle of book suggests the working of the intelligence system, however in no way it means gathering the intelligence in formal spying. The work of Bayly studies a wider sphere of information and intelligence gathering. The elements of social communication have been well integrated by him to study the entire process of intelligence gathering.

The prominent theme in the entire work is the depiction of a gap between the colonial state surveillance agencies and the autonomous network of social communication. The presence of this gap had created a scope for various interpretation and misinterpretations. The misinterpretation of the information on the behalf of the British had resulted into the serious military debacles. It had been witnessed at the time of Nepal war in 1832, and later in Afghan war in 1842. The misinterpretation of signals and warnings at the time of ‘mutiny’ of 1857 was one of the reasons of shock faced by many British at that time.

Thus Bayly work is evident that Orientals was not just only means of British understanding of India. They some time did presented distorted image, which was one reason behind the misinterpretation that we have just talked. Bayly work is excellent in understanding the process of intelligence gathering in its totality. The another work by Bayly is an Article, “Knowing the Country: Empire and Information”.² It also showcased the similar trends but in a more concise forms. Bayly precisely points out, that the intelligence gathering has never been an auxiliary to Indian power irrespective of Mughal or British. He traces from Mughals

¹C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, New York:(1996),CUP

² C.A.Bayly, “Knowing the country: Empire and Information in India”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, no. 1 (1993), pp.3-43

to the British all the rulers have made intelligence as an integral part of the power. He writes, “ the network of information gathering, spies, informers, and collators of gossip were more than useful adjunct to power and legitimacy. They were integral to them.”³

In order to understand the formal structure of Residency and its department of Akhbrat, the work by M.Fisher provides good material. His work *Indirect Rule in India: Resident and Residency system in India*⁴. Focuses on the role of the Resident in British imperialism in India between 1764-1858. The work by Fisher traces the evolution of indigenous system of indirect rule in the shape of the Residency system and how it changes over a period of time and in varied states. The book throws light on various phases of the Residency system and also brings out the reaction of the Native rulers in accordance to its changes. The last part of the book consists of case studies of Awadh, Hyderabad, Mysore and Nepal.

Fisher also explains, How did the negligence of the native informer by the British officials due to their racial attitude cause the surprise at the time of 1857? Another work by Fisher, which enables me to construct this work, is his Article, “The Office of Akhbar Nawis: The Transition from Mughal to British Forms”.⁵ In this work Fisher, traces the working and utility of Akhbar Nawis from days of its origin. The transition in the very form and nature of gathering information has been traced since the days of the Mughal to the British. Such piece of work enables to understand any institution in its totality. The knowledge of historical background of the institution helps to understand the changes brought in by the East India

³ C.A.Bayly, “ Knowing the country”. Op.cit.p.4

⁴ M.Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Resident and Residency system, 1764-1857*, Delhi: O.U.P, 1991

⁵ M.Fisher, “The Office of Akhbar Nawis: The Transition from Mughal to British Forms”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, no. 1 (1993), pp.45-82

Company in the institution of Akhbar Nawis, in a better manner. Further this paper look into the reaction of the Indian ruler to the changing nature of institution under the Residency system. The other work by Fisher, *A Clash of Culture: Awadh, The British and The Mughal*,⁶ has not been much referred in my work. But it does help to understand the relation between the Resident and the Native ruler. It shows that the Native ruler did not accept the changes brought in the early half of the nineteenth century passively. It shows how the tussle of power and rights between the British and the Indian ruler resulted into the revolt of 1857. My second chapter deals with the role of intelligence department under the Thuggee and Dakaiti department. The major source material that I have come across is the work of W.H.Sleeman "*Ramaseena or vocabulary of the peculiar language used by the Thugs*"⁷ and "*Report on Budhuk alias Bagree Dacoits and other Gang Robbers by Hereditary Profession*"⁸. His contemporary accounts enable us to value the work of intelligence system of crime under the Department of Thuggee and Dakaiti. These accounts give us an insight how the natives were successfully used to unearth the secret of crime. Work of Parama Roy, "*Discovering India, Imaging Thuggee*"⁹ further furnishes the sources, which enable in construction of picture regarding the very working of the department. In studies related to crime and criminality an important work that we come across is of Radhika Singha "*Providential Circumstances: The Thuggee*

⁶ M.Fisher, *A Clash of Culture: Awadh, The British and The Mughal*, New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1987

⁷ W.H.Sleeman, *Ramaseena or vocabulary of the peculiar language used by the Thugs*, Calcutta: G.H.Huttmann, military orphan press, (1836)

⁸ W.H.Sleeman, *Report on Budhuk alias Bagree Dacoits and other Gang Robbers by Hereditary Profession*, Calcutta: Bengal Military Orphan press, (1849).

⁹ Parama Roy, "*Discovering India, Imaging Thuggee*", Yale Journal of criticism, 9.1, (1996)

Campaign of the 1830's and Legal Innovation."¹⁰ This work predominately look at the legal aspect of the thuggee campaign. Although this work has not been incorporated much in detail by me. But the representation of Thuggee and legal aspect, which it unfolds in her work, are noteworthy to mention here.

The volumes of work have been written on rebellion of 1857. The most important source material which one can come across is that of J.W.Kaye, *History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58*¹¹. As a contemporary historian Kaye work is significant in understanding the mental state, policy and action of the British administrator at the time of mutiny. In his work he staunchly criticised the various policy of the British government. He placed the blame of outbreak of Mutiny on the shoulders of the British officials, by pointing out to their insensitivity to the on going discontentment among the people. He clearly pointed out that before mutiny there were several warnings in shape of rumours but none of them were paid any heed.

The others set of work that are used are of S.N. Sen, T.R.Metacfe and R.C.Majumdar. These works provided us the variant interpretations of the events, causes and nature of the mutiny. An officially sponsored work of S.N.Sen¹² brings out the entire picture of the mutiny of 1857, but in a milder tone as compare to Kaye. He in his book clearly shows that there was a no prior conspiracy and no question of nationalist uprising. These above mention work have not been use very extensively by me. The more extensive literature on which I have relied

¹⁰ Radhika Singha "Providential Circumstances: The Thuggee Campaign of the 1830's and Legal Innovation." *Modern Asian studies*, vol. 27-I, (1993), pp.83-146.

¹¹ Kaye and Malleson, *History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58*, Vol-1, London: (1897-98).

¹² S.N.Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, Calcutta: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.,(1957).

for my source material are the works like “*Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi*”¹³ by C.F.Metcalf, Major W.S.R Hodson’s ‘*Twelve Year of Soldier’s Life in India*’¹⁴ and B.J.Cork’s, ‘*Rider on a Grey Horse. A Life of Hodson of Hodson’s Horse*’¹⁵. The latter two unfold the story of a man in action. How Hodson manage to receive intelligence from the various sources in an hour of need. Secondly, these accounts give us first hand information about the military ability of Hodson. These works enable to reconstruct the working of the intelligence system in more lively form. While reading these account one can infer the courage and intelligence that Hodson showed at the time of mutiny. The book, ‘*Twelve Year of Soldier’s Life in India*’ is the collection of Hodson letters written by him to his wife. These letters he wrote from the war front, thus he gave a detail and minute information of what he felt and what all challenges that he faced at the time of mutiny.

The work by C.F.Metcalf brings out the translation of two valuable newsletters. These newsletter help us two witness how the natives acted as a valuable source of information at the time of mutiny.

The two latest work are by Seema Alavi’s ‘*The Sepoys and The Company*’¹⁶ and Rudhrangshu Mukherjee, ‘*Awadh in Revolt 1857-58: A Study of Popular Resistance*’,¹⁷ the latter work is excellent in bringing out the clear picture of the war scene on Oudh.

¹³ C.F.Metcalf, *Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi*, Delhi: Seema Publications (1974),

¹⁴ Major W.S.R Hodson, *Twelve Year of Soldier’s Life in India*, London: (1859), John, w Parker & son,

¹⁵ B, *Rider on a Grey Horse. A Life of Hodson of Hodson’s Horse*, London: Cassel & Co. (1958)

¹⁶ Seema Alavi ‘*The Sepoys and The Company*’, 1770-1830, Delhi: OUP, (1995)

¹⁷ Rudhrangshu Mukherjee, ‘*Awadh in Revolt 1857-58: A Study of Popular Resistance*’, Delhi: OUP, (1984).

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

The following work portrays the organisational capabilities and functioning of the intelligence system working under the system of Residency. The sources for this study have been procured from the National Archives of India, New Delhi. The files that are examined belong to Foreign department, political consultation (1830- 1857) and Foreign department, secret consultation, (1830-1857). The another set of files used pertains to Home department's Thuggee and Dakaiti branch (1830-1857).

CHAPTER ONE

THE INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM UNDER

THE RESIDENCY SYSTEM, 1830-1857

In India the system of surveillance and intelligence gathering was always a priority and challenge for the Indian kingship. The British on their advent also faced similar challenges in India. In fact their task was more difficult due to their alien origin and complex political structure, which they encountered on their arrival. The poorly informed Company till the mid- eighteenth century, required a network of intelligence and communication, which could inform company about political, economic, military, diplomatic and social aspect of the country. This growing aspiration for a better intelligence and information was satisfied with the establishment of the Residency system in 1765. Under the Residency set up, the Department of Intelligence or 'Akhbrat' enabled the company to get intelligence from virtually all-native courts of the country by 1830. This chapter focuses on the operational aspects of intelligence network under the Residency system and how military success received it stability with a well establish web of intelligence agents.

The Tradition of Intelligence Gathering

The Indian rulers acknowledged the need of good intelligence network within and outside their dominions. There are numerous references to spies and espionage in the Hindu religious text and other ancient literature. The recorded history of espionage in India begins probably with Kautilya's, classic treatise on statecraft 'Arthshastra'. In his work Kautilya, has mentioned that the system of espionage is the eye of state, which every king should possess for the success of regime. According to Arthshastra both domestic and foreign espionage was essential to the security of state and the maintenance of large network of spies was one of the ruler's

most important duty.¹ The basic system of espionage continued to survive under the Mughal rule. After 1200 A.D, Muslim ruler gradually introduced a system that was more of an official political reporting.²

The concrete shape and structure to the Muslim system of surveillance was received under the reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. Flow of information in his regime expanded to mammoth proportion. A formal structure was given to information network in Akbar's regime. The large number of newswriters, Munshis, Vakils and runners were appointed under the Department of Akhbar Nawis. The newswriter or 'Waqyanawis' used to collect information about officials and local magnates, on plunder and malefaction and occasionally on the affairs of merchants.³ The head runner and head newswriter used to make sure that the Emperor was getting the regular intelligence from the regional areas. The efficiency of the system further relied on the fact that these set of the reports were further supplemented with the range of report sent by the secret agents (khufia Nawis). These agents traversed countryside keenly listening in bazaars and checking on the reports of provincial governor and the official newswriter.⁴

¹ R.J.Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence, 1904-1924*. London: Frank Cass , 1995, pp. 8-9

² C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, New York :Cambridge University Press, (1996), pp. 14-15

³ C.A.Bayly, " Knowing the country: Empire and Information in India", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, no. 1 (1993) p.3

⁴ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op.cit. , p. 15

One of the parallel source of information besides this official system was that the “patrimonial knowledge” as mentioned by Bayly. The Indian kings and nobles had effective access to the “patrimonial knowledge,” which they drew through participation in community’s beliefs and marriage, through religious affiliation and association with holy men, seers, astrologers and physicians. The Indian magnates also had access to the information moving along a network of marriage and kinship. Multiple marriages brought variety in sources of news and gossips. Royal women carried on their independent correspond under the seal of their husband or even under their own seal in order to get information from their native territories and kin.⁵

The fall of the Mughal Empire saw the breakdown of the centralised system of surveillance and information. Only to be replaced by a unique multilateral system of intelligence. Eighteenth century saw rise of many new Provincial regimes emerging from erstwhile Mughal Empire and these regimes fiercely maintained de facto autonomy from the Mughal Empire.⁶ These set of rulers were always doubtful of their legitimacy and were many times target of incessant plotting by aspiring king makers, mercenary, Europeans and crowd of envious relatives. Therefore, the need for newswriter and runner grew enormously.⁷ The authority of Marathas and Sikhs received competition for power from the newly emerged autonomous regimes and the European Company’s especially the British, thus they too felt need for a well-

⁵ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op.cit. , pp.17-19

⁶ M.Fisher, “The Office of Akhbar Nawis: The Transition from Mughal to British Forms”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, no. 1 (1993),p.53

⁷ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op.cit. , pp 32-33

knitted web of intelligence.⁸ In no way we saw the shrinking of the Mughal's intelligence network. In fact it expanded enormously and became a complex grid of information. Fisher mentions that "conversely, each court became the object of manipulation and scrutiny by the numerous Akhbar Nawis and Wakil stationed there by rivals and allied rulers. The modified institution of Akhbar Nawis reflected as altered political context."⁹ In addition to the official set, the complex factional politics of the Eighteenth century saw the emergence of the several private intelligence agencies. Some of these agencies were patronised by the rulers and the merchants and another set of agencies were run privately. The private agencies used to sell of information to any one who paid the price irrespective of masters. These agencies were staffed with the efficient Hindu penmen and Muslim literati.¹⁰ The merchant community also had their own set of information agencies which was frequently also used by their respective ruler or by the European powers. The king and nobles patronised wandering holy men, astrologers, physicians and even the musician party as they could bring recent news from their travels.¹¹ Thus these set of the intelligence agencies and set up, provided substructure for the British system of intelligence in India. This pre existing system enabled the company officials to penetrate into Indian society and was a ready source of wide range of information to the British.

⁸ M.Fisher, "The Office of Akhbar Nawis" op.cit., P.55

⁹ Ibid. p.53

¹⁰ C.A.Bayly, " knowing the Country", op.cit., p.13

¹¹ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op.cit. , pp. 31-33

Company's Reliance on the Indigenous System of Intelligence

In the initial days, the Company simply adapted itself to the pre-existing network of information. The Company's commercial intelligence was effective. It endowed the possibility of long run profits for the Company, while trading in a vast and largely unknown continent with its massive and political and climatic uncertainties. The local Christian and Armenian's, continental Europeans and company's agents and harakaras provided such information to the company from its earliest days.¹²

By the mid eighteenth century the interest of the Company, no longer restrained to the commercial sphere, it became progressively more involved in the political affairs of the Indian states. The Anglo- French rivalry in the south and the victory in the battle of Plassey and Buxar in the north made company's intercourse with the Indian rulers' and political magnates deeper. Therefore, the newly emerged circumstances demanded a better degree of information.¹³ The major source of information at this time to the Company was the Indian rulers and various intelligence agencies. There were many agents who gave ready information to the Company. This they did in order to make themselves enlist in the list of British loyalist. Besides this hefty rewards and high esteemed position in the society allured such Indians.¹⁴

The rulers of Awadh and Bengal were the regular providers of information to the British. The Muslim court servants like Tafazzul Hussan Khan and Ibrahim Khan acted as the significant informants to the British. Krishan Kant Nandy, a Bengali

¹² C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op.cit. , pp.46-47

¹³ M.Fisher, "The Office of Akhbar Nawis" op.cit., pp. 58-59

¹⁴ Ibid.

magnate proved to be useful to Warren Hasting during the Benares revolt of 1781.¹⁵ The Akhbrat provided by the native rulers contained information about the movement of armies, intrigues of courts and also the doings of the Emperor. Besides these set of Informers, Company had their own set of spies and listed services of efficient Harkaras that kept company well informed.

Growing involvement of the company in the polity and social spheres of society required a system of intelligence, which was more bureaucratic and formal, and could provide reliable and regular information. They were unaware about the beliefs, thoughts and sentiments of the new land especially while tackling the crime like Thuggee or dealing with the provincial states. The Company had very slight knowledge about the rise of new regional power outside the Mughal orbit. The Jats were largely ignored until the 1770's. The northern Indian conquests of Maratha were misinterpreted and the view about the Sikhs remained quite inaccurate. Bayly remarks that the British understanding of the Indian society was defective due to the lack of reliable information.¹⁶ Further the information received from the native ruler was filtered and adulterated with wrong information.¹⁷

The Company's Residency System

In order to satisfy its needs, the Company began to assert its own control over the indigenous system of information. This was done through the system of Political

¹⁵ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op.cit. , pp.50-51

¹⁶ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op.cit. , pp.47-48

¹⁷ M.Fisher, "The Office of Akhbar Nawis" op.cit., p.63

Residency. It was the system in which the British officials resided in the various Indian courts as the representatives of the Company. This Political Resident eventually subordinated to himself both the Akhbar Nawis of the Company and the information network of the Indian rulers.

The Residency system was the tool of 'Indirect Rule' as mentioned by M.Fisher, a system that had all powers to dominate without responsibility. The Residency system made its first presence in Awadh, from here Company never looked back. The Residency system made the penetration of the British in the alien land permanent and deep-rooted. The system of indirect rule proved to be valuable in the construction of a system of Subsidiary Alliance and Extraterritoriality in India and later in the entire British Empire¹⁸.

Hastings in 1782 had instructed the Resident of Awadh, an endeavour to obtain early and minute information of the state, their government, their military defence and distribution of forces, revenue, the disposition and actual conduct of zamindars. The Residents were entitled with the responsibility of acquisition and control of knowledge and information and to record and convey this knowledge in a systematic way. The Resident progressively expanded their role and became the prime source for the regular flow of information to the Company's Headquarter in India and London.¹⁹

¹⁸M.Fisher, *A Clash of Culture: Awadh, The British and The Mughal*, New Delhi: Manohar Publications,(1987), p.107

¹⁹ M.Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Resident and Residency system, 1764-1857*, Delhi: OUP, (1991),p.128

One of the important functions of the Resident besides the diplomatic and administrative functions was the collection of intelligence. Until the mid- nineteenth century the Resident continued to commission and collect formulaic Akhbarat of many regional courts. The existence of the Residency was more tenaciously watchful not only of all publication but also all private mechanisation of the native courts. The Residents were asked to take all the information about the world that the company was entering:

“The utility of collecting every possible information respecting the disposition genius, talent, character, connection, views, interest, revenues, military strength and even domestic history of those princes or people, with whose affairs our own happens to interwoven or related, either immediately or remotely must be also equally clear.”²⁰

C.M.Wade provided an excellent intelligence regarding the political and economic policies of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The diplomatic, social and personal engagement was also kept under the strict vigil²¹. Being a Resident of Ludhiana C.M.Wade, not only kept vigil over the Maharaja but also made efforts to have good diplomatic relations with Ranjit Singh²². The Residency system was established not just in Indian states but also outside the Indian Territory in the British Empire. Political agents provided regular inflow of the intelligence to the British government in India and London regarding political and diplomatic development taking place in the other parts of the world. The political agent of Syria sent the intelligence to the Secretary to the Government regarding the advance of the Ibrahim Pasha. He informs that the

²⁰ M.Fisher, “The Office of Akhbar Nawis” op.cit., p.67

²¹ From C.M.Wade, Resident of Ludhiana to Secretary to Government at Calcutta, Foreign Dept., Political consultation, 10th April, 1837, no.19 and no. 20

²² From C.M.Wade Resident of Ludhiana to Secretary to Government at Calcutta, Foreign Dept., Political consultation, 10th April, 1837, no. 21, and no.22

Ibrahim Pasha forces were advancing through Latachia, Beirut and they feared to advance to the city of Celica. The Political agent, while giving the intelligence also demanded guidelines for the forthcoming situation.²³

The Foreign Residents were helpful to the British government in knowing the design of the other mercantile powers. Intelligence was gathered regarding the design of the French and also that of Russia. For example an intelligence was received by the Political agent of Aden, he said that French have tried to bribe the British agent and have asked him to become the French consul at Mocha by giving him handsome salary of 200 German crown. The Resident mentions in his report that such a move was an attempt on the part of the French to make their presence strong in the Red Sea region, Yemen, and Egypt.²⁴ Secondly there was a need to protect Aden from the designs of the French, as Aden had strategic importance to the British mercantile interest, since it was an important coal depot and also a naval base to support Indian military.²⁵

The Resident's Intelligence Network

The Intelligence network of the Resident was the most telling instrument in the hands of the British to make their control more effective and permanent. The Resident collected information from the different sources and these information in

²³ Foreign dept, political consultation branch, 10th September 1832, no. 17, also see, From Political Agent Syria to Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 19th November, 1832, no. 16

²⁴ From Political Agent of Aden, J.B.Hained to Secretary to Government, J.P Willoughby, Foreign Dept., Secret Consultation, 26th December 1839 no. 23.

²⁵ Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 27th February 1839, no. 38.

form of report were transmitted on the regular basis to the Secretary of the Government. Resident of Lahore had forwarded detailed information to the Secretary of Government collected from his Persian and English departments and also diary supplied to him by the Assistant Resident.²⁶ The diary of James Abbot (Assistant Resident of Lahore) proved to be quite beneficial as it provided regular information about the activities of the Sikhs in the region. In 1849, Abbot had sent detailed information about the Sikh attacks in Peshawar and also about their strength and weaknesses.²⁷ The information collected by the Resident was either sent to Governor General in the form of newsletter or was compiled in a diary on daily basis. The daily diary of Resident was an excellent piece of intelligence to the Government. The daily diary consisted of all-important intelligence received by the Resident, his proposition on ongoing situation and information collected from his personal sources and observation made by him. By 1830, we see that the Residencies were having a greater degree of exchange of information and intelligence among themselves²⁸ thus, making the intelligence system of the British more interwoven. The Resident collected information from a series of sources. The Resident and his Indian staff had their secret informants among the courtiers and officials of the native states. These informants provided the information in exchange for variety of compensations or promise of the Resident's favour or protection or simply cash.

²⁶ From the Resident of Lahore to Secretary of Government, Foreign Dept., Secret Consultation, 30th December 1848, no. 236

²⁷ Captain James Abbot (Assistant Resident) to Resident of Lahore, Foreign Dept., Secret Consultation, 27th January 1849, no. 117

²⁸ M. Fisher, *Indirect rule in India*, op.cit., p.170

The Resident had their own set of spies who worked in diverse forms and informed their master of the forthcoming events and rumours. Role of spies in the intelligence gathering was very significant, services of spies were engaged much prior to the establishment of the Residency system. In 1839, the Resident of Hyderabad, I.J.Fraser received information from his spies regarding the intrigues by the Wahabee people against the British government. The Spy further informed to the Resident that the native officer Mahmood Ally Razza, who was at the cantonment Secundrabad, was suspected to tamper the facilities of the native troop station at this place²⁹. In order to receive more information of the situation further set of spies were kept. One of the key spies was Kashmiri shawl weaver, who with his courage provided valuable information. He informed on the intention of Mooburizoo Dowlah and Maulvee Sukrun of Wahabee sect to launch jihad against the infidels or the British.³⁰ The Kashmiri weaver received all this information by becoming the part of this sect. He came into contact with a Punjabi Muslim who was also Wahabee and was in close communication with Maulvi sukrum. This friendship enabled the weaver to gain information regarding the secret trends of the Wahabee. He was able to procure a document written in excellent Hindoostani verse that mentioned the advantage of waging war of extermination against the infidel or the British.³¹

²⁹ From I.J.Fraser officiating Resident Hyderabad to Secretary of Governor General, Foreign Dept., Secret Consultation, 17th July 1839, no. 1

³⁰ From I.J.Fraser officiating Resident Hyderabad to Secretary of Governor General, Foreign Dept., Secret Consultation, 17th July 1839, no.3

³¹From I.J.Fraser, Officiating Resident Hyderabad to Secretary of Governor General, Foreign Dept., Secret consultation, 17th July, 1839,no.4

The Political agent, in his report to the Secretary of the Governor General mentions that "The style of its composition and the topic of which it treats under it, conceive a dangerous document in the hands of designing men for pursuing the intolerant bigotry and fanaticism of a ignorant Mohammedan population." The spy was successful enough to reach the meeting where conspiracy was constructed. He informed that not all the disciples of the Wahabee sect were involved in such act, and the jihad was planned to be launched after Mohurram³².

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The Political agent or the Resident had their own set of native brigade of informers. They worked as Vakils, Munshis, Newswriter and Harkaras. The service of the natives was used since the time the British stepped in India. But the British never attained confidence on the loyalty of the natives; authenticity of supposedly filtered news was always questioned. Charles Metcalfe expressed his view that "this duty cannot be ensured with the confidence to Natives, it requires a judgement, which they do not in general possess, and a security regarding the fidelity, which it is not safe to feel. They might suppress most important intelligence if it suited their view to do so."³³ The Resident of Poona, who said "we are obliged to depend on the intelligence conveyed by the black agents, it is too natural to suppose report to be calculated to suit their own interest", also expressed a similar fear.³⁴ However the service of the natives continued to be utilise in the British intelligence services this was mainly because, the natives were useful to the British, as they were well versed

³²From I.J.Fraser, Officiating Resident Hyderabad to Secretary of Governor General, Foreign Dept., Secret consultation, 17th July, 1839, no.7

³³ M.Fisher, "The Office of Akhbar Nawis" op.cit. , p.67

³⁴ M.Fisher, *Indirect rule in India*, op.cit., p.320



in Persian and English languages. The simple difficulties of language made the British dependent on the natives. The natives helped the British to move into the realm of indigenous thoughts, beliefs and practices. The people of the upper caste proved to be more advantageous as such men earn great say and prestige among the local and also in the native Darbar. He could mould the decision of the native courts according to the wishes of the British government. The men from the upper caste proved to be a bridge between the two communities.³⁵ The Intelligence agency of Residency had about 56% of Hindus and 44% of Muslims in its service. The payment of the employees were made from the Contingency bill issued by Governor General.³⁶

The Role of Harkaras

One of the integral part of the intelligence set up was that of the Harkaras. The term Harkara is derived from the Arabic word 'kassid' usually meant a long distant runner.³⁷ Harkaras were classified into many categories, there were the one who were just a footmen or palkin bearer, dak runner and some of them belonging to higher caste were used for the intelligent purpose. The ruler, financier and merchants used the service of the harkaras for intelligence gathering for ages. It was the network of the harkaras on which the British relied heavily for their communication purpose. This reliance persisted up to the 1850's. The human

³⁵ From T.H.Maddock (Acting Resident of Lucknow) to Secretary to Government of India, Foreign Dept., Political consultation, 25th September, 1839, S.NO.182

³⁶ M.Fisher, *Indirect rule in India*, op.cit. p.215

³⁷ C.A.Bayly, 'Knowing the country', op.cit., p.8

runners and palkin bearer were preferred more than the horsemen, due to cheap labour were. One of the important reasons for such preference was that humans on foot were more skilled at passing treacherous and monsoon ravaged roads and Harkaras who did not wear livery could escape detection as compare to horsemen.³⁸ The Harkaras were apparently trained within their families or were apprenticed to caste member who taught them the skill of running and survival in an hostile territory. The transmitter or the carrier of the information mainly belonged to the lower caste. In Banaras, people of the untouchable leather and parchment making caste - the chammars had a customary duty to run for men of power. Similarly in Rajasthan the lowly Mahar caste provided many runners.³⁹ The most able bodies of Harkaras belonging to the upper caste worked with ministers and their newswriters. The superiority of the harkaras however depended on mental and physical accomplishments rather than caste. The superior class of harkaras was supposed to be skilled in various form of classical knowledge, including the Vedas, astronomy, astrology and vocal music. The harkaras verbal skill as a reporter and advocate were all-important.⁴⁰

It was this institution of harkaras on which the British relied for intelligence in their initial days. Large numbers of harkaras were appointed to not just gain intelligence of court matter but also about the market places. The harkaras were best guide to

³⁸ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op.cit.p.65

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the British in an alien country. In the absence of any alternative source of information harkaras played significant role. It was Col. William Fullerton, who realised the importance of military intelligence and possession of loyal harkaras in the fast moving cavalry warfare. Col. Fullerton was a man who realised that the British officials have ignored such an important element of intelligence system by paying them badly. He was the man who reconstituted under the British control the classic Indian intelligence system, which allied the writing skills and knowledge of learned Brahmins with running skills of tribal and low caste people.⁴¹

By the 1830, we see that the system of harkaras became a part and parcel of the regular British administration. More efforts were taken to make them more organised by which their service was used more effectively. The regular routes were set up for the harkaras for the regular communication of the intelligence and other news. The distance between the two runners was kept an average of 6 miles during the dry season and in the monsoon this was doubled in order to get regular and faster information.⁴² A special line of runner was establish between Lunlah and Ropar so as to have constant and uninterrupted communication with the camp officer deputed on mission to Maharaja Ranjit Singh.⁴³ The Resident of Sindh also felt a similar demand. He increased the number of runners between Bhooj and Tattah.⁴⁴ Bayly writes, while emphasising the importance of harkaras that, “ the very

⁴¹C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op.cit.p.67

⁴²C.A.Bayly, “Knowing the country”, op. Cit. , p.9

⁴³ From Deputy Secretary with Governor General to Political agent of Subalpoore, Foreign Dept., Political consultation, 18th July , 1838,no.56

⁴⁴ From Resident of Sindh to postmaster of Sindh, Foreign Dept., Political consultation, 16th October 1839,no. 41.

penetration of the British intelligence gathering system and the effectiveness of the Harkaras which helped the British to gain military upper hand in the first place.”⁴⁵

The services of the harkaras were used extensively at the time of the ‘Mutiny’ of 1857. The coming of the telegraph in no way reduced its importance. The harkaras were the alternative source of communication of news, especially to the places where the Telegraph lines were disrupted or were not laid down. The places like Lucknow where the Company’s set up was completely disrupted and no help could reach to the officers entrapped in the British Residency at Lucknow. In such a situation the intelligence was the only available source with the help of spies and Harkaras⁴⁶.

The Role of Akhbar Nawis

The Company network of the newswriters was one of the most telling advantages over the various Indian rulers. The newswriter or the term ‘Akhbar Nawis’ is used in Indian polity since the time of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. It is a term derived from the Arabic word ‘Akhbar’, the plural form of the term ‘Khbar’ meaning to know or in literal term news. The term Nawis means writer. Thus newswriter can be called a foreign correspondent as well. These were the men who had proficiency both in reading and writing the Persian. They collected official ‘Akhbrat’ or news and intelligence from the place where they were deputed. There by transmitted the first

⁴⁵ C.A.Bayly, “Knowing the Country”. Op.cit., P.32

⁴⁶From Mr Carnegie (The Civil Officer in Charge of Intelligence Dept. in Jaunpoor to Secretary to Governor General, 16th October 1857, Foreign Dept., Secret consultation, 26th February 1858, no.226

hand information to their master in form of a newsletter.⁴⁷ The newsletter was one of the threads that tied together the little kingdoms and feudatory states making up the all-Indian polity. It was this system of newswriter, which was adopted by the British in their initial days.⁴⁸

The system began to change in terms of personality and structure according to the needs of the British. The Akhbrat fetched by newswriters diversified in its sphere. It dealt with the information about socio-political, economic and cultural aspects of country. The Newswriter played a significant role in keeping an eye on the political happening in India and around. The various political agents in order to gain regular intelligence regarding political, diplomatic and military activities of Maharaja Ranjit Singh kept special sets of newswriters. The Political agent on his mission to Lahore received intelligence by his newswriter that a treaty was concluded between Maharaja and Shah Shuja. He had further inform that the sum of Rupees twenty five thousand was paid to the Vakil of Shah and Rupees seventy five thousand were to be paid later in form of help to Shah.⁴⁹ The Political agent of Ludhiana had received intelligence from his newswriter regarding the erection of fort by the Maharaja and stationing a garrison in the territory of Peshawar.⁵⁰ Similarly a newswriter in Kashmir had sent information that the Raja of Ladak seeking the British protection from the

⁴⁷ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op.cit.p.73

⁴⁸M.Fisher, "The Office of Akhbar Nawis" op. cit. , pp.46-47

⁴⁹From Political agent on Mission to Lahore and Bhawalpore to Secretary to Governor General, Foreign Dept., Secret consultation, 10th January, 1834, no.3

⁵⁰From Political Agent of Loodhiana to Secretary to Governor General Calcutta, Foreign Dept., Secret Consultation, 30th January 1832,no. 2

⁵¹ Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 9th January 1837, no. 24

attacks made by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Newswriter, while expressing his view, insisted that the Government should think positively about this matter. This was mainly because Ladak was a buffer state between the China and the British Indian Empire.⁵¹

In an another newsreport, the newswriter had given information about the performance of Sati at Kotha. The newswriter had expressed his concern while saying that such practice was a regular feature, despite the fact that the Government had prohibited it. He had further informed that women were forced to perform such practise under the pressure of the village people, priest and it was an act that received sanction from the native chiefs⁵². The Resident had asked Governor General to invest power in the hands of newswriter in order to stop such activities even at lowest level⁵³.

The Department of Thuggee and Dakaiti also brought the service of the newswriter under Residency in use. The Resident of Gwalior had sent the Persian newswriter along with the search party of the Department, which was deputed to make arrest of dacoit Abdool Ahmed Khan's party. The Persian newswriter was helpful in not just sending regular intelligence back to Residency, but they also guided troops in

⁵² From officiating Resident of Rajpootana, to Governor general, Foreign dept, political consultation, 30th November 1840 no.148.

⁵³ From officiating Resident of Rajpootana, to Governor general, Foreign dept, political consultation, 30th November 1840 no.149

unknown territories.⁵⁴ The institution of newswriter was an accepted manner of spying. Many newswriter worked in guise to get detail information. At Peshawar the British newswriter acted as the munshi in Service of Sardar Muhammad khan. The newswriter served in the name of Zain- Ulab Din on a supplementary salary of twenty-five rupees per menses given to him by the British.⁵⁵

The newswriters were supposed to give elaborate picture of the different activities of the ruler and his social and diplomatic contacts and military reports. The newswriters were some time considered as a better source of intelligence rather than the high ranking Munshi. This was mainly because they were economical as the pay of a Munshi was some time even higher than the combined salary of two newswriters. Secondly the newswriter had a less administrative powers as compare to a Munshi, thus the fear to monopolise or tamper information was less. Employment of large number of newswriters provided a better access to the information. The importance of the newswriter for the British intelligence service can be deduced from the following abstract. "The question arises that the appointment of such Munshi will mean investing all power in him. Government would be dependent on him. Instead of Munshi, two newswriters can be employed may be of lower rank, which are well versed in the Persian. Help in translating and conversing with Durban in persianate, the salary of each to be Rs 40 per month..."⁵⁶

⁵⁴From Resident of Gwalior, Allen Spiers to W.H.Sleeman, 13th October 1840, Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 23rd November 1840, no. 42.

⁵⁵ Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 20th June 1838, no. 38 and no. 39

⁵⁶ From Acting Resident of Lucknow to T.H.Maddoch Secretary to Governor General, Foreign Dept., Political consultation, 25th September 1839, no 176

The Role of the Munshi and Vakil

The highest in the ladder of writers was the class of Munshi. To be good Munshi one had to be excel in Persian and also should have good social standing. The foremost duty of the Munshi and his supporting Persian Department was to provide knowledge and information to the Resident and to translate his advice and command into persianate form for transmission to other courts.⁵⁷ Initially these set of Munshi were considered by the British as mere language masters, a person who taught them to read and write Persian script.⁵⁸

However, Munshi as class proved to be significant to the British in accomplishing their aims in the due course. The class of munshi acted as a guide to the Resident through the intricacies of the Indian court life.⁵⁹ The office of the munshi and his supported Persian Department provided East India Company tenuous and ambivalent contacts with tradition of statesmanship and knowledge. Further an expert munshi with a long diplomatic experience was extraordinarily valuable for the company in the alien land, as he could helped the British in forging the diplomatic and social ties with the Indian rulers. Due to such abilities munshi could fetch for himself a salary as high as Rs 200 per month. The munshi also contributed their administrative skills by teaching the next generation of the British officials.⁶⁰

⁵⁷M.Fisher, *Indirect rule in India*, op.cit. , p.175

⁵⁸ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op. cit., p.74.

⁵⁹ M.Fisher, *Indirect rule in India*, op.cit., p.175

⁶⁰ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op. cit., pp.74-75.

The native Munshis were like a bridge between the local people, Durbar and the company officials, as these men earn great say and prestige among the local people and the native Durbar. Subsequently Munshis were able to mould decision of Durbar according to wishes of the British government. He could advise the native Durbar against the ill advice suggestion and also could protect the British government. Maddoch said “ a clever moonshee is enabled to him the confidence reposed in him by his superior to general pecuniary advantage.”⁶¹

Being a Persian expert the class of Munshi acted as one of the effective agency of intelligence gathering. As their mastery over the language helped them to read hidden messages within the complex Persian verses. But many British officials in the early part of the nineteenth century negated such abilities of the Munshi. This class of Munshi was considered as mere persianate or as translators. Thus we see in 1830's a slow and imperfect displacement of this class by the English educated youth. Fisher opines that the attitude of the British officials towards munshis were in large measures reflection of their racial attitude toward Indian in general. Munshi like Shaik Lutfullah could figure out the degrading attitude of the British officials. He had complained to Andrew Ross the then officiating Political Agent in Upper Sindh that the new officers were less polite and humble and sees the office of munshi with great sense of inferiority. He said that such attitude was bound to effect

⁶¹From Acting Resident of Lucknow to T.H.Maddoch Secretary to Governor General, Foreign Dept., Political consultation, 25th September 1839,no. 180

the performance of the Munshis.⁶² Therefore the indifference to this class proved to be expensive at the time of Revolt of 1857.

To say that the importance of this class had completely diminished would be wrong, as even at the time of turmoil in 1857, there were certain set of officers that continue to show their confidence in this class. Sir Charles Metcalfe reliance on his Munshi, Jeewan Lal helped him to receive valuable information about the rebels, from the four walls of the Delhi fort⁶³.

The highest in the ladder of native brigade was 'Vakils' or the ambassadors who represented their master in the court of the other ruler. They were the formal representatives of the ruler. They provided first hand information about the court matter to their masters. They further manoeuvred diplomats and lobbyist on their master's behalf. Along with the official Akhbarat they also send back intelligence reports. The system of appointing Vakil also traces its antecedents since the Mughal period. But the system came in use more extensively during the eighteenth century⁶⁴. The autonomous states appointed their vakils into various Indian courts irrespective of friends and foes. It was this instrument of information gathering, which was adopted on coming to India by the British. The British Resident had their Vakil virtually in all the important Indian states. During the initial days Indian states also managed to send their vakils to the British Presidency in Bombay, Calcutta and

⁶² M.Fisher, *Indirect rule in India*, op.cit., p.175

⁶³ Translation from the original by Late C.F.Metcalfe, *Two Narratives of the mutiny in Delhi*, Delhi: Seema Pub, (1974), Introduction.

⁶⁴ M.Fisher, *Indirect rule in India*, op.cit., p.317

Madras. However the growth in power enabled the British to eliminate Native rulers' Vakils from their Presidency and monopolise all the information.⁶⁵ The system proved to be very beneficial to the British. As they were not just able to get intelligence on the political happening but also about the criminal activity such as Thuggee in the Native states. As the Punna Lal vakeel gave British information about the nature of working of a criminal group. He said that the thugs never used to confine in a particular area (Ilaqa). Thus in order to apprehend them large number of forces was required. The Vakil helped the British to understand the complexity of the Indian court life⁶⁶. The service of the Vakil was widely used at the time of Mutiny, as these were the men who made the British aware about the secret plan of the rebellious rulers and also about the activities of the mutineers. Vakeel at Tehree regularly reported regarding movement of the rebels toward Jhansee against the British⁶⁷. The Vakil of Kutara sent further reports, he had given intelligence regarding the strength of rebellion moving to Jhansee⁶⁸. Intelligence was send by the Vakil of Narsinghpur that the bodies of 500 rebels' sawar were in jungle close to nuddee parkulee.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ M.Fisher, *Indirect rule in India*, op.cit., p.40

⁶⁶ Report from Captain Ludlow Political agent to Secretary to Governor General, Foreign Dept., Political consultation. 9th May , 1838, no.100

⁶⁷ Foreign dept, secret consultation, 28th May 1858, no. 123

⁶⁸ Foreign dept, secret consultation, 28th May 1858, no.122

⁶⁹From R.E.Hutchison, Political Agent in Bhopal, Foreign Dept., Political consultation, 8th July 1859, no.143.

Other Native Informants Nurtured by the British System

Besides these set of regular sources of information the British relied on certain private sources of intelligence. These were the professional men who had hereditary occupation of an intelligence service. These were the men who enjoyed great deal of patronage at the time of the Mughal, as they provided both political and commercial intelligence to their master. The coming of the Provincial states in no way led to decrease in their prestige. This class extended their support to the British as well. This was mainly because by doing so they could maintain their lineage's honour, prestige and status. Second was the handsome amount of salary or rewards, which they received from their new masters. These were the men with background of writer family such as Kayasth and Khatri and Muslim literati. The British were also able win over the some of the Brahmin communities from both north and south to their side. Their education enabled them to become excellent source of intelligence. These sets of informers used to maintain their own set of spies and harkaras to gain information.⁷⁰

The eighteenth century witnessed the rise of private intelligence services that associated them selves with the magnates and political servants. These were the men who also played significant role in the conquest of the British by giving them their services. Many of these men were from traditional Islamic literati background. They included Mohammed Reza Khan, Maulvi Abdul Kader Khan. The one eye Maulvi of Ambala helped William Hodson in penetrating the defences of Delhi, and Maulvi

⁷⁰ C.A.Bayly, "Knowing the Country". op.cit.,pp.26-27

Amir Ali who establish a great network of collaborating magnates through out Bihar and Eastern India during the worst times of 1857.⁷¹

The another important source of intelligence was that of the traders and the financiers. This was a class who from the ages has maintained their own set of spies and harkaras in order to get the information of the market. With the coming of the British and mixing up of the political and commercial interest, we see that the useful intelligence was provided by this community to the British regarding both politics and commercial happenings⁷². The Indian merchants and traders with the help of their network could provide accurate picture of economy and polity. Bayly remarks that this source was the most flexible and fastest system in the country. The information provided by this class was more reliable as they could not afford to be treacherous. Secondly their own material interests run parallel to that of the British. The interaction with the big merchant houses helped the British to procure information like how exchange rates were expected to affect British military and naval operation throughout India, the location of the army and many court gossips as well.⁷³

English Educated Munshi Class

By 1830's there was introduction of many new elements, which were more British in their character. Similar changes were also visible in the intelligence system as well.

⁷¹ C.A.Bayly, "Knowing the Country". op.cit , p.47

⁷²C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op. cit., pp.80-81

⁷³ C.A.Bayly, "Knowing the Country". op.cit.,pp. 28-29

There was coming up new type of the Munshi class in the British intelligence set up. This was the generation of English educated youth, which acted as the native informer to the British. These were the men who had profound knowledge of both the English and the Persian language. Unlike the former class of Munshi they were detached from the Indo- Islamic culture. They were highly impressed with the British philosophy and had adopted European thought and culture. These men provided excellent information and intelligence of the place where they were deputed. They enjoyed the British patronage and trust as they worked in accordance to the taste of the British administrators. One the important name that we come across is of Mohanlal, a Kashmiri Pandit of Delhi. He was appointed as Munshi for the diplomatic and fact finding mission with Alexander Burnes to Afghanistan and Central Asia. He belonged to the family who had distinguished history of serving to the Mughal royal family. Thus enabled him to have good contacts in the Punjab, Kashmir and Northwest. His English and Persian education and his ability to converse in both the languages made him a delight for the local ruler where the British fear the Russian influence. Bayly says, "his mixture of fortitude and deference was more to the taste of his superiors." He was the best informer of his time. He provided knowledge about the land he visited including polity, culture and society along with the private information of that state⁷⁴. Mohanlal maintained a wide range of correspondent in the Punjab, by which he was able give first hand information about Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his polity. He in his memoirs mentions that at Bakrala the robbers had become menace to the Ranjit Singh administration and he

⁷⁴ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op. cit., pp.230-231

was unable to control such gangs, who used to vanish in the vicinity of the neighbouring jungles. He in his memoirs gives us the detail and minute information about his visit to the other land beyond Indus⁷⁵. His accounts are the valuable source of information. Mohanlal's intelligence and adaptability to the British mode of thinking brought him to the attention of Charles Trevelyan. Trevelyan opined that the Mohanlal's intelligence and skills has provided a new window for the world. Trevelyan has mention that:

“He [Mohan Lal] was one of the valuable source for the British as his English and Persian education not only helped to win the heart of the British but also of the high society beyond the Indus in the Mohammedan land. It was this ability which enabled him to enjoy possession of immense knowledge and information. The honour and the success that he received in his mission specially in the Mohammedan land was great importance and Mohan Lal deserves honour for this.”⁷⁶

The other important name of the new generation of Munshi that we have come across is of Shahamat Ali. He accompanied Claude Wade as a Secretary during his embassy to Ranjit Singh in 1837-38. Finally he became Mir Munshi to Wade when he was the Resident at Lahore. Shahamat Ali used to write journal in which he mentions all sort of observations he made along with the intelligence report. He also recorded routes, quantities and population. He in his accounts mentions about the despotic nature of Ranjit Singh administration. Like Mohan Lal he was also well versed in the English and the Persian education.⁷⁷ He also had deep faith in the English culture and was fully divorced from the intellectual and moral aura of the

⁷⁵ Mohanlal, *Travels in Punjab, Afghanistan and Turkistan to Balk, Bokhara and visit to Great Britain and Germany*, London: W.M.H.Allen and co.(1846), pp.19-25

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.3

⁷⁷Shahamat Ali was a class fellow of Mohan Lal in the English department, he was patronised by Trevelyan and Metcalfe

Mughal Empire.⁷⁸ A third example of the new style of native informer was Raja Shiva Prasad. He was educated in Persian, Sanskrit and English. He acted as intelligence officer in various parts of Punjab and N.W. Province between 1845-48. Ending up as Mir Munshi of the Simla agency under Herbert Edwardes.⁷⁹

This intelligence network under the Residency had expanded enormously and by 1820 Residencies began to share and circulate their information among themselves, thus making the intelligence network more interwoven. A well-knitted work of intelligence helped British to receive information from and outside the native states and also from the other parts of the British Empire. The 1830 marked the intelligence system to have more of the British element. The information what it was seeking was no longer restricted to commercial interest of the British but it had much more. The system kept an eye on the on going political development within and outside the Indian subcontinent. The intelligence received by the political agent suggested that there was a matrimonial alliance between Abass Mirza, the Persian Prince and Shah Kamran the ruler of Herat. The information of this alliance was also received from the traveller from Kabul. The Resident informed that such alliance was in no way forceful, it was through negotiation. It was said that the alliance was made to suit the Russian design to extend their influence in the south and western part of Afghanistan. The Prince of Herat was most useful to Persia in supporting its needs in Afghanistan.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op. cit., p. 233

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 234

⁸⁰ From Political agent, C.M Wade to Secretary to Governor General, Foreign Dept., Secret consultation, 4th June 1832, no. 29.

In India, the British feared the constant threat to their Empire from Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Therefore, a special vigil was kept on the various activities of Maharaja. The Company kept account of the diplomatic ties made by Maharaja with the Afghan tribal chiefs, the Sikhs and the European powers especially the French. As the growing ties with the Afghans and the French had immensely strengthen the power of Ranjit Singh.⁸¹ C.M Wade had mentioned that the additional boost to Ranjit Singh power was received by his alliance with the various Sikh Misls. Ranjit Singh used to provide a ready supports to these Misls by giving them protection against any kind of insurrection and also pleased them by providing Jagirs to them.⁸² The intelligence was also received regarding the establishment of fort in the territory of Peshawar and Fatehgurh by Maharaja.⁸³

An intelligence was received that the Ranjit Singh was had no hostile designs toward the British, it said that the Maharaja was ready to help its fullest extend to the wish of the British government that is setting up of the British factory in the Sindh. And Maharaja has full intention to have peace between the two.⁸⁴ In order to gain more information from the camp of Ranjit Singh number of harakara lines were

⁸¹From Political Agent of Ludhiana to Secretary to Governor General, Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 28th August 1837, no.49and no.50.

⁸² To C.M. Wade Political Agent, Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 31st July, 1837, no. 20

⁸³From Political Agent of Lahore to Secretary to Governor General Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 7th August 1837, no. 95

⁸⁴From Political Agent of Lahore to Secretary to Governor General, Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 7th August, 1837, no.100,

established. In 1839, the Department of Intelligence or Akhbrat was establishing in Lahore Residency.⁸⁵

By 1830 we see a great degree of involvement by the British in each aspect of society. They undertook various social reforms; in order to keep surveillance over the anti social activities help of Akhbrat Department was taken up.⁸⁶ In order to establish their direct rule the Akhbrat Department also kept a great degree of vigilance on the degenerated state of administration under the native states. Awadh was one such state in which even trivial mistakes of the administration were reported by the intelligence agencies. An intelligence agency had reported that troops of Awadh have mutinied on the pretext of the non-payment of their arrear for last sixteen months.⁸⁷ The Resident further mentioned that king of Oudh was good in peacetime but was incapable of handling such situation. Thus he requested that some men of vigour and ability should be appointed at the head of his Majesty's Government. He further provided information was that the problem with Oudh was its empty treasury and inability to satisfy demands of army men.⁸⁸

The intelligence service besides gaining such type of information also had one major duty to perform. It maintained an eye on the parallel line of intelligence run by the merchants and landlords and rulers. This was mainly because the intelligence gathered by such sources were "... filled with trivial details, with idle reports and

⁸⁵ Foreign Dept., Secret Consultation, 4th September 1839, no.176 and no.177

⁸⁶ Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 30th November 1840, no.148 and no.149

⁸⁷ Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 18TH June, 1830, no.34

⁸⁸ Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 18TH June, 1830, no.35

often with extravagant falsehood suited to the capacity of ignorant and credulous readers. They were often scurrilous far beyond and paper that appear in print either in English or in native languages. They often contained abuse of the government and its servants and sarcasm's on our national character and manner.”⁸⁹ Such circulation of anti British feeling through the medium of private Akhbarat or the printed newspaper was kept under strict vigil.

The Company's indirect rule under the Residency was a successful attempt. It was able to establish their own political dominance on the large part of the Indian Territory. This was possible only through the good system of surveillance and intelligence, which provided the Company with detail information about the political, diplomatic and economic affairs of the native states. By 1830 the Residency set up had become closer knit. Its dependence on the pre existing element of intelligence had declined. The British were now able to modify the set up of Akhbrat according to its own requirement. This success of the intelligence agency can be attributed to its military might, economic strength and diplomatic eminence of the British East India Company. By the virtue of the economic strength they were able to win over many native informers to their side. The native informers were highly paid by the British as compared to their counter parts in the Native states. The efficient newswriters were paid handsome salary of Rs 300 per month, while the

⁸⁹ Minute of T.B. Macaulay, 2, September 1836. Quoted in sanial the newspaper. , It is taken from M.Fisher, “The Office of Akhbar Nawis”. op.cit., p.77

most important native diplomatists and informants were given large landholdings or Jagir at the termination of their service.⁹⁰

The Resident was able to redirect the loyalty of nobles of Awadh to their side by forwarding their protection, and ownership right to property and wealth.⁹¹ The growth of the British power attracted many Indian informants and writers families, who readily gave their service to the Company in order to maintain the honour of their lineage.⁹²

The Diwani of Bengal gave the Company a degree of legitimacy to their manipulation of the imperial system of surveillance and information. They kept surveillance on the private correspondence of the rulers, landlords and the merchants. The native rulers were insisted to pass all their communication through the Resident. The regional rulers were punished for communicating with another ruler except via Resident. The first ruler to come under such strict surveillance was the Nawab of Awadh, Muhammad Ali Shah. The long-standing system of Dak or private postal service maintained by the Awadh ruler was terminated by the Company order. This system had linked the Awadh ruler with fourteen most important cities in the north India, ensuring not only privacy of his letter and dissemination of his newsletter but also his participation in the political events of the sub-continent. Further in 1792 about fifty-five of the native rulers signed treaty by

⁹⁰ C.A. Bayly, "Knowing the Country", op.cit.p.26

⁹¹ M. Fisher, *A Clash of Culture* op.cit., pp. 4-5

⁹² C. A. Bayly, "Knowing the Country" op.cit., p. 26

which all their political communication with the other ruler had to be passed through the office of the Residency. This step of the company helped it to have virtual control on the all sort of Intelligence that circulated in the native's states. In order to have regular and uninterrupted flow of communication, the Company established its own special Dak between Residency and the Presidency town in 1789.⁹³

Challenges Faced by the Nascent British Intelligence System.

The intelligence system helped the British to reach at the helm of the Indian political scenario. They were able to gain intelligence from the large segment of India. However the Company faced certain set of challenges in this process of intelligence gathering. The Native courts saw the presence of the Resident and his agent in the native courts as an infringement of their sovereignty. The activities of the native agents like procurement of intelligence related to personal matter of the ruler and details of the policy making was considered as act on intrusion on the behalf of the British authority. In order to counter such activities the native ruler undertook several overt and covert measures. The native ruler subjected the British newswriters to adverse condition. They were harassed, as complained were often made that the company newswriters were confined or plunder on the apparent instigation of the court. The Akhbar Nawis at Jaipur recounted in 1833, how prior to him no one dares to take up this service of the Company, in the Jaipur court:

⁹³ M.Fisher, *A Clash of Culture* op.cit.p.64, also see M.Fisher, "The Office of Akhbar Nawis". op.cit. , p.65.

“ ... The court of Jaipur will wreak its vengeance by imprisonment and seizure of his household, for opposing the order and the acts in general of the Government... first by entering into the service of the British agency against the positive injunction from that court and secondly, in the discharge of his duties during his servitude in the department where he was on several occasions made direct instrument to oppose and cross the in the course of business and in dispute etc.”⁹⁴ Similarly at Bhulpoor, Company informer within the court was debarred from providing information by one of the king’s confidential officer.⁹⁵

The breach of the Company’s intelligence network was one of the main challenge that company faced. As mention earlier that the Company never had trust on the native informers. This lack of confidence was not baseless. There is evidence, which suggest that natives became disloyal to their master either in lieu of bribe or the loyalty to the Native ruler, which they had from generation. We come across the common practise in which the native informers of the British have shared their intelligence with the Native rulers. As an example the Wazir of Kabul proposed that the Company’s newswriter in Peshawar shared information with him.⁹⁶ The minister and other District officer also used the newswriter for their own purpose. The minister may bribe the newswriter to put forward his case of pension as important or urgent in his newsletter⁹⁷. Similarly the district officials used to lure newswriter for either inserting or removing their names or activities from the newsletter⁹⁸. The British Wakil present in the Native states sometime provided the information of the British policy to the Native rulers, they were also used by the rulers for influencing

⁹⁴ M.Fisher, “The Office of Akhbar Nawis”, op.cit., p.71

⁹⁵ Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 28th May 1830, no. 41.

⁹⁶ M.Fisher, “The Office of Akhbar Nawis”, op.cit., p.71

⁹⁷ Peeter Reeves, *Sleeman in Oudh*, Delhi: CUP, (1971), p.56

⁹⁸ M. Fisher, *A Clash of Culture*, op.cit., p.169

policy of the British in their favour. Many of the official letters of the company were secretly transmitted to the Ruler much before the Resident. In 1844 the Ruler of Awadh and his court learned the governor-general's secret instruction to the Resident before the Resident himself. The copy of daily diary of the Resident also reached to the Ruler before Secretary of State.

“ A copy of this identical letter arrived at Lucknow three days before the original reached me and its content were actually known to the king, minister and the one or two other before I myself aware of them... my head intelligence writer, previously to the perusal of the original read out to me letter which tallied with it nearly word for word...”⁹⁹

A constant challenge faced by the British officers was the efficiency and loyalty of the Indian agents. The newswriter under the British administration proved to be incompetent in accordance to the British needs. As the Political Agent of Peshawar made a complaint to the Political Agent of Ludhiana that the newswriter accompanying him was neither efficient nor reliable. Thus there was a need to establish the Department of Akhbrat at the Lahore Residency.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

In the presence of various impediments the Company's' Residency was able to achieve its aim of strengthening the British information system. The success of the Residency can be attributed to its well-organised web of intelligence system. A

⁹⁹M.Fisher, *Indirect rule in India*, op.cit., p.318

¹⁰⁰From Political Agent,(Peshawar), to Political Agent (Ludhiana), J.A.Maddock, foreign Dept. Secret Consultation, 24th July, 1839, no.45

system based on pre-existing legacy was modified and moulded to facilitate the Imperialist regimes' objective of drawing information from the native class of informants. The class of native informants which included runners, Vakils, Munshis and newswriters assisted up to middle of nineteenth century in procuring information. Although the Company made several attempts to do away with this class by introducing new elements as intelligence gatherers, the vitality of the native informant network did not allowed the British to overlook this class completely. In the entire process what the British did was to make a perfect blend between traditional and modern components in order to achieve an efficient system of intelligence. The system, within few years, became competent enough to receive information not only from within India but also from overseas and bordering region. It was a system, which enabled the British to maintain their strong hold over India in face of challenges from their European counterparts and the Native Indian Rulers.

CHAPTER TWO

THUGGEE AND ITS SURVEILLANCE

*THE INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM DEVELOPED BY
W.H.SLEEMAN*

In 1830, William Sleeman gave a formalised shape to his efforts in curbing criminality by establishing the 'Thuggee and Dakaiti' Department. It was an attempt to unveil the most important criminal conspiracy of the nineteenth century. This conspiracy was called Thuggee in which the hereditary criminals spooked the Indian roads in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. Thugs' presence on the roads was not only a terror for travellers but also a matter of concern for the British law and order machinery. These set of the criminals and robbers belong to different backgrounds, transcending both the Hindus and the Muslims and of various castes. Majorities of these groups were the worshippers of 'Goddess Kali' and all their beliefs and practices revolved around the myths and stories related to the cult of 'Kali'. This chapter tries to examine the work of intelligence agency of 'Thuggee and Dakaiti' Department in gathering information about this dreaded crime and in what way it enabled the government to overthrow the age-old crime from the Indian roads and made it safe for the travellers.

Thugs were the fraternity of murderers whose activities stretched throughout India. Thugs were more active and dreaded in the Northern province and in the Central India. The thug modus operandi was to murder and rob their innocent victims on highways in honour of Goddess kali. After committing the crime thugs hushed to relatively safe distant abodes. Some of these groups were well organised with well-planned strategy based on accurate information about wealth that their victim possessed¹.

¹ R.J.Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence, 1904-1924*, London: Frank Cass,(1995),p. 11

Insufficiency of Information

For a long time the British government knew little or was misinformed about the very existence of such crime and criminals. The term thug was interchangeably used for thieves and highway dacoits. First official thug arrest records back to 1799. However at this point of time it was not evident to the British that occasional strangler or stray incidents of loot were done by thugs or hereditary killer. The British first became wary of travelling at night with huge cash only when the British sepoy never came back from their journey. This incident took place in 1810, leaving many questions to be answered for decades to come.² Over the next few years the British acquired more evidence of seriousness of the problem in the Central India. No serious steps were taken to deal with crime.³ The primary reason for inaction as cited by Dr Sherwood, was that in 1816 political officer, magistrate and law enforcement officers failed to recognise the very existence of such a fraternity.

British did not acknowledge 'Thuggee' because of lack of evidence or reliable information on the crime or the criminals. Bayly while suggesting the reason of such paucity of information opines that at this time Orientals knowledge provided a 'distorted mirror'. The representation of Thuggee was clearly a reflection of current European ethnographic preconception and their inherent ambiguities. Secondly, the intelligence from the local sources was not available. This was mainly because, as Homes Perry suggests, "In 1808 the greater part of the inhabitants were extremely averse and openly hostile to the form and principles of our government." Bayly

²Parama Roy, "Discovering India, Imaging Thuggee", *Yale Journal of criticism*, Vol.9 no.1, (1996), pp.121-125.

³ R.J.Popplewell, op.cit.,p.11

further mentions that due to these reasons the intelligence from local source was not available or if available was either unreliable or obscured.⁴

Bayly in support of this view brings out the case of Ghulam Hussein. While discussing the case of Ghulam Hussein he highlights inadequate information from local sources and misconception around the true nature of Thuggee and thugs“. In March 1810, one Ghulam Hussain, inhabitant of khiva pergunneh, Shikohabad reported that a police officer had asked whether he was a thug and he agreed that he was.” The word thug at that time meant little more than cheat and was not clearly identifiable with the term phansigar_or strangler which appeared in some earlier and indigenous accounts. During first examination Ghulam Hussain refused to discuss the murders of the travellers that he performed by saying, “ I have no reliance on the English, whether you intend to kill me or reward me therefore I shall not speak”. In his second examination when he was promised pardon, he gave information not just about his activities but also about the whole range of thugs.⁵ Such initial measures did help the government to get acquainted with the meaning of the term thug. Further investigation revealed the gruesome nature of crime. Criminals after strangling and robbing their victims use to bury them. However, such unconventional measures of investigations were not regularly adopted while dealing with such criminals. Knowledge regarding the working, motives, practises and believes of thugs were still a challenge to the British law enforcement agencies.

⁴ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, New York :Cambridge University Press, (1996),p.174

⁵Ibid.p.175

Brief Account of Sleeman's Background

The thug conspiracy was finally crackdown with the skilful enterprise of W.H.Sleeman, he pioneered in defining the Thuggee as an organised crime. He gave a new dimension to the intelligence services under the Department. Sleeman in his work defines thug as man who plunder and loot people on the roads for wealth, believer of Kali cult⁶. Sleeman was well acquainted with the fact in order to struck the root of Thuggee there was necessary requirement of the intelligence to be gathered from the local people and the members of thug community. He opined that in order to give death sentence to the criminals was an easy way of punishing the criminals but in no way helps in resolving the problem. Rather it was beneficial to make them approvers and get the intelligence about their crime. The kind of new dimension, which Sleeman gave to the intelligence agencies, is remarkable. R.J.Popplewell opines that Indian espionage was only found in right sense under 'Thuggee and Dakaiti' Department.⁷ Kaye opined that right policies of William Bentick and the energies of W. Sleeman had helped to slice the core of Thuggee to thin pieces within ten years. This was mainly due to the presence of the remarkable intelligence agencies⁸.

Sleeman's endeavours could be trace back to 1820's, where in his capacity as a District officer and later as a Magistrate of Narsinghpur, he was able to curtail crime

⁶ W.H.Sleeman, *Report on Budhuk alias Bagree Dacoits and other Gang Robbers by Hereditary Profession*, Calcutta: Bengal Millitary Orphan press, (1849). p. 5.

⁷ R.J.Popplewell, op.cit.p.11

⁸ J.W.Kaye, *The Administration of East India Company*, London: Messr Richard Bentley, (1853). p.50

to large extent. This was possible due to his well-established network of information and intelligence. Sleeman's zeal for anti-thug campaign drew attention of the Governor General William Bentick. Thus, resulting into formation of 'Thuggee and Dakaiti' Department in 1830. The Department aimed to suppress and curtail crimes like Thuggee and Dakaiti. W Sleeman was promoted to General Superintendent of Thuggee and Dakaiti Department due to his commendable effort in 1830's. Hundreds of thugs were imprisoned, dozen of gangs were in disarray, and roads of India were gradually becoming safer for traveller. By 1838 Sleeman had captured and tried a total of 3266 thugs. The significant role played by intelligence system under this Department cannot be ignored while discussing the role of intelligence.⁹

Working of the Department

In 1830, the maximum total strength of officer working in the Department was just 18, their duties covered British India and princely states.¹⁰ The success lied in thoroughness of operation, which the Department conducted in collaboration with the provincial forces. Meadow Taylor claimed, "no body of men could transverse the country in any direction without being subjected to strictest scrutiny by the police and by informers, who were stationed with them upon all the great thoroughfares and in the principal towns."¹¹

Secondly, intelligence provided by informers were recorded in a daily diary maintained by the Department officials. Details of which were transmitted to the

⁹ R.J.Popplewell, op.cit.pp.12-13

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

General Superintendent of the Department. In these diaries the official used to maintain the confession of the important criminal, information from their contacts and sources and also their personal observation, thus their diaries acted as an important source of information.¹²

Sources of Information and Intelligence

The Department received intelligence broadly from the natives of the area, spies, the Akhbrat and most importantly from the approvers. These set of sources had helped to gain precise and elaborate intelligence regarding, criminals and their crime.

Local People

The success of the Department in collecting valuable intelligence relied on the fact that, it was able to tap sources of information, which were missing earlier. One such source of information was the local people. In his campaign against Thuggee, Sleeman opined that there was a need to interact with the local people. Firstly because as many of English administrator knew nothing about the Indian society. Secondly such sources could provide cardinal information about the criminals and crime. By the local people Sleeman meant wanderers, villagers, Goalahas and travellers. Sleeman in his account mentions that in the area of South Cuttack he was able to convert a set of Goalahas as the informer, who later on helped in breaking down various thugs groups.¹³ Sleeman made pioneering endeavour by depending on the local people for the intelligence purpose. These efforts gave a new dimension to

¹² Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, A-1 no. 8, 1871

¹³ W.H.Sleeman, *Report on Budhuk alias Bagree Dacoits*, op.cit. ,p.10

intelligence service not only under this Department but also to the future police intelligence service and even its contemporary intelligence agency under Residency.

Sleeman while making 18 guiding rules for the search parties emphasised that they should take specific information from the local villagers. Existence of such information enabled the search parties to get familiarised with the geographical surroundings and hideouts of criminals.¹⁴ The native people as a source of intelligence were important as the activities of thugs many time meshed with existing indigenous network of wealth and power, since they drew support from the Zamindars, Indian Princes, law enforcement officials and merchants. S.Freitag suggests that among organised criminals the thugs may have been the groups most thoroughly embedded in the local society, this fact further stressed relationship between the intelligence agency and local informers.¹⁵ Further in their long distant expedition thugs many times forcefully took refuge in the house of the villagers. Thus relying on the inhabitants of the region for the intelligence proved to be one of the effective means of intelligence gathering for the government.¹⁶

Role of Akhbrat

The Thuggee and Dakaiti Department received valuable information from the intelligence network working under the Residency system. Resident furnished the Department with intelligence about whereabouts, movements of thugs and also

¹⁴From W. H. Sleeman to Governor General, W. Bentick, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, A-1, no.1, 3rd August 1836

¹⁵Parama Roy, op.cit.p. 135.

¹⁶From W. H. Sleeman to Governor General, W. Bentick, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, A-1, no.1, 3rd August 1836.

helped intelligence officers in gaining support of the local rulers and chiefs. In Gwalior, residents provided valuable piece of information about the Abdool Ahmed Khan – a dacoit whose party spreader in some parts of Gujrat and Gwalior. Arrest of these dacoits was facilitated by information provided by the Residents of Gwalior and the strategic support from the amildars and zamindars of the region. Residents were able to pressurise Gwalior Durbar to give its ready support¹⁷ The Maharaja of Gwalior provided its troops and Persian newswriter to accompany the search parties. Later, Maharaja also gave assurance to give his support in seizing not just these particular dacoits but also other Buddaks and Thugs gangs¹⁸.

The Political agent of Alwar provided valuable information regarding the movement of Bheels. He informed the Department that the Bheels were organising their large bodies along with the Meenas in the jungles of Rajasthan. The attack was targeted to make plunder in the Gujrat. This news alarmed the government in advance thus enabled to avert the forthcoming danger of such tribal attacks¹⁹. Residents of Lucknow used to provide regular list of approvers to Sleeman.²⁰

Persian writer of Indore Residency was sent to collect information about Naib Loomundar. He had attacked tour officer and had murdered Allayar a sawar of the 16th Irregular cavalry. Persian writer had informed that Loomundar and his party was stationed in the village of Dhowrara, where they were oppressing villagers. He wrote

¹⁷ From Resident Allen Spiers, Gwalior Residency to W.H.Sleeman, 13th October, 1840, Foreign dept, Political Consultation, 23rd, November 1840, S.NO.41-46 ,

¹⁸ Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, B-2, no. 21, 1840

¹⁹ Foreign Dept., political Branch, 18th may, 1835, no.35

²⁰ Home Dept, Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-9, 1839.

that Naib was exploiting and forcing people to serve him. Even the Raja of Dhowarara was forced not to use Harkaras sent by the British officers but one of Naib. This information provided a proof to the Department to take action against the dacoit Naib Loomundar²¹. The report provided by the Akhbrat Department of Residency was incorporated with the information gathered by the Thuggee and Dakaiti Department through its own spies or their native source. Thus enabling in taking further investigation and action.

Thug Informers as Approvers

One of the important pillars of the intelligence system under Thuggee Department was the set of 'Approvers'. These were the former thugs and dacoits who acted as informer to the government. Sleeman, who is credited to have unveiled and vanquish the most important criminal conspiracy of 19th century, is said to be the mastermind behind such method. Sleeman used to capture thugs and used them as informants to identify other thugs, location of bodies of murdered victims and gain information regarding their working. Kaye mentions that Sleeman was successful to penetrate into secret world of thugs by making them approvers. By 1837, 483 thugs had become informers²². The thugs' gang agreed to become informers on their partners in crime, as it was only alternative to death sentence. Thus what began as

²¹ From Lt G.R.Weston (Assistant General Superintendent of external Affairs in Indore Residency) to Captain James Sleeman, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, B-2, no.25, 1852.

²² R.J.Popplewell, op.cit.pp. 12-13.

trickle of arrest turned into flood, enabling Sleeman to develop a grid of information, which was efficient and reliable to locate any thug.²³

Sleeman was able to get information about genealogical and geographical backgrounds of thugs and also about their present whereabouts. Sleeman in his anti – Thuggee campaign came across a man, who said to be prince of Thuggee, called Freingeea. He was a man who lived in the independent state of Gwalior to the north- east of Narsinghpur. Freingeea, on becoming approver proved his loyalty by directing Sleeman to mass grave outside Selohda. In his interview with Sleeman presented shocking picture of a dark amoral existence of thugs.²⁴ Further in his account, Sleeman mention that Buddaks thugs made him acquainted with the parties of thug residing in Cuddapah and other in Chittor Zilla. Bundah thugs provided intelligence regarding existence of mussalman thugs' colony in Vizagapatam district. Bundah thugs also gave information about the Cuddapah and other Chittor Zilla thugs.²⁵

The confession of the thug ‘ Approvers’ helped the Department to distinguish between thug gangs and dacoits. There was not much difference between the two criminal gangs. However, the dacoit gangs were more organised, they had their own espionage network, which made them well informed with wealth possessed by the travellers. Their attack on the travellers was well planned and they waited for their

²³ Anonymous, “ SIR WILLIAM HENERY SLEEMAN”1788- 1856, Internet Website, www.sleeman.com p. 4

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ W.H.Sleeman,*Report on Budhuk alias Bagree Dacoits* op.cit.p.11

victim to come on right position. Further, official records mention that the dacoits lived a life of simplicity in abodes of jungles.

On the other hand thug gang attacks were less organised and more spontaneous in nature. They travel long distance to carry on attacks. After completing their task they went back to the distant places where they lived a life of luxury.²⁶ As one of the Buddak thug approver had acquainted Lt Mill about the existence of some 100 families of Bauries thugs bring home their booty by making attacks in the region of Saharanpore, western and southern district of Muzzaffarnagar. The Buddak approvers further helped the Department in distinguishing between Buddak and Burriea, as both the groups spoke same dialect.²⁷

Sleeman in his work mentions that these thugs belong to different castes and tribes, which included Brahmins, Lodhee, Aheer, Mussalman, Pura, Rajpoot, Chummar and Meenas.²⁸ Another striking feature, which came in front of Sleeman during his interview with thug, was that they believed in the cult of Kali irrespective of religion i.e. Hindu or Muslim. The following exchange, which took place between Sleeman and Muslim thug, named Sahib Khan reveal this fact.

²⁶ Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, B-1 no. 6, 1854, also see Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, F-1 1847, also see, From Superintendent of Bnaglore to W.H. Sleeman, Home Dept, Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, E-1, 1837.

²⁷ From Sleeman to M.H.Edgworth , Magistrate of Saharanpur, 29th July, 1841, Home Dept, Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-14, 1841-44

²⁸ W.H.Sleeman, *report on Budhuk alias Bagree Dacoits* op.cit.P. 54.

“Sleeman: You are a Musulman?

Khan: Yes, most of the Thugs of the south are Musulmans.

S: And you still marry; inherit; pray; eat and drink according to the Koran; and your paradise is to be the paradise promised by Mahommud?

K: Yes, all, all.

S: Has Bhowanee [Kali] been anywhere named in the Koran?

K: Nowhere.

S: Then has Bhowanee anything to do with your paradise?

K: Nothing.

S: She has no influence upon your future state?

K: None.

S: Does Mohammed, your prophet, anywhere sanctions crimes like yours the murder in cold blood of your fellow creatures for the sake of money?

K: No.

S: Does he not say that God will punish such crimes in the next world?

K: Yes.

S: Then do you never feel any dread of punishment hereafter?

K: Never; we never murder unless the omens are favourable; we consider favourable omens as the mandates of the deity.

S: What deity?

K: Bhowanee.

S: But Bhowanee, you say, has no influence upon the welfare or otherwise of your soul hereafter?

K: None, we believe; but she influences our fates in this world and what she orders in this world, we believe that God will not punish in the next.’²⁹

The omens mentioned by the Muslim Thugs are indicative to the world of meticulously observed rituals and superstitions in which the thugs lived. Every thug expedition was planned in a careful consultation with omens and signs. The call of a crane betokened good fortune, while owl calls were inauspicious. A wolf crossing the road from left to right was a bad omen, but crossing from right to left was good. The bark of a jackal was also a very bad sign. During the first week of an expedition, Thugs were not allowed to bathe, shave, clean their teeth, have sexual intercourse, wash their clothes, eat any animal food besides fish, or dress any food in ghee (clarified butter). Throughout the course of their travel, a company of Thugs kept a close eye on the signs and omens, certain of which were considered so severe that they could cause the Thugs to instantly leave an area or discontinue an expedition altogether.³⁰

Sleeman was able to crack down the secret language used by the criminals. Sleeman mentions that thugs had developed a secret language, which they called ‘Ramasee’, enabling them to converse among them selves and discuss their plans in the presence of outsider. While some of the morphology, such as auxiliary verbs and infinitive ending were clearly in Hindi, many of the words were of obscure origin. For example, ‘adhoreea’ was some one who had escaped being murdered by the thugs. ‘Bhurtote’ was a thug who was strangler per se, ‘dhurdlna’ meant to strangle.

²⁹ Anonymous op.cit.p.7

³⁰ Anonymous, op.cit.,p. 8

A 'tonkal' was a party of people larger than a gang of thugs could destroy, 'thibana' meant to cause traveller to sit down on some pretence, so they could be murdered.³¹

Sleeman's techniques received respect and appreciation from all the men who were motivated to suppress various crimes in the country. His techniques acted as a magical rod that provided new perception to deal with crime and criminality. The efforts of Sleeman, which started from a small district, were used to break down the thug network existing in the steamy jungles of the south to that of the border of the Himalayas in the north. Measures initiated by Sleeman to gain information from approvers and other local informers were not only appreciated but was used by the next generation as a potent source of information.

G. Vallanvey from Vizagapatam had reported to Captain P.A Reynold that he had arrested Jammal khan jamdar a noted leader of thug in the Northern Circar. His arrest had helped, as he provided information about a murder conducted in last five to six months. He had also given a list of his associates and other thugs.³² A similar report was send by Lt. James Sleeman to Captain Reynolds from camp in Benares according to which he had Jubbar khan a notorious thug who had given information of three thugs named kubool, Bahadoor, and kurum.³³

³¹ W.H.Sleeman, *Ramaseena or vocabulary of the peculiar language used by the Thugs*, Calcutta: G.H.Huttmann, military orphan press,(1836) pp. 32-33

³²From G.Vallancy (Assistant General Superintendent) to P.A.Reynold (General Superintendent of Subulpore). Foreign Dept., Political consultation branch 8TH May, 1835 no.57

³³From J.Sleeman (Assistant General Superintendent from camp of Benares) to Captain P.A.Reynold (Officiating General Superintendent), Foreign Dept., Political Branch, 8th May 1837 no.56, no.57, no.58 and no.59.

Further J.Sleeman informed captain G.Ramsay that Kishore Singh (approver) information had helped in the arrest of Mooltanee dacoits and information had been furnished regarding the Mooltanee dacoits of Bhopal, Saugor and Naramada territory. These set of criminals were professional dacoits for last the fifty years and cattle lifting was favourite pursuits of these thieves as it owed ready sale for their plunder. The most serious dacoites which occurred in these territories during the last ten or twelve years had been committed by Mooltanee. Kishore Singh further mention that the Mooltanies also acted as an opium carrier in Malwa and their operation extended in Deccan as well.³⁴ In 1850, about ninety people had made confession to J.Sleeman that they belonged to a class of professional dacoits and they further stated that there were some 600 more who follow dakoiti as a profession and were still at large in the Beror and on the frontier of Nagpore territory. On such intelligence, further order and arrangements were made to arrest dakoits.³⁵

The approvers helped in cracking down of various thug groups. Like the activities of the gang of Ghureela alias Motee Singh, in the Buddak colony of Oajanee in Sehsovan district near the bank of the Ganges was put to halt with help of Buddak approver. This approver belonged to the other gang from the same region.³⁶

³⁴From J.Sleeman to Captain G.Ramsay, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakati Branch, G-19, 16th June 1849.

³⁵ From J.Sleeman to I.N Smith (session judge Jubbolpore) Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-19, 1849-50, 14th June 1850.

³⁶ From W.H.Sleeman (General Superintendent), Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakati Branch, G-9, '1839 no. 51.

Approver further gave information not just of thug's whereabouts but they also made Department aware about their hidden treasury and also about the burial of their victims. This kind of information enabled the government to solve various cases. As approver mentioned that in the direction of Ludhiana a traveller was murdered near Mullarkotta, taking 8 rupees. In the direction of Ambala a barber was murdered near Shahabad for Rs100 were taken along with his clothing. In the both the cases the body of victim was recovered from the spot mentioned by the approver.³⁷

In 1851, spies of C.Hervey of Bombay Residency had provided information that Pindaree hoarders generally became active at the time of Dussehra because they consider it to be an auspicious time for their activities and this was time that they made most of the raids. The spy further informed that due to this reason the Magistrate of the region has become high alert. The knowledge of which is with the gangs, so they may not go far for expedition. Spy further informed that this could be an ideal time to get hold of this gang. J.Sleeman incorporated this intelligence with the information gathered from his own set of approvers. Approvers confirmed the presence of four gangs in Sattarah and one in Goa territory. These four gangs operated in the part of Sholapur zillah lying between the Seenah and the Bheernah rivers. One of the gang was in the Ahmilla or in the churchur talook of same zillah. Based on these information successful raids were conducted to arrest the criminals.³⁸

³⁷ Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakati Branch, F, no. 3,1853.

³⁸ Report by C.Hervey on his operation to suppress dakoits in Bombay Residency to J.Sleeman, Home Dept., Thuggee and dakati Branch, F, no. 2, and 1851.

Kind of Information Received

The system of making thugs as approvers not only provided detail intelligence regarding various crimes, but also enabled the company officials to penetrate into the realm of their thoughts, culture, beliefs and practices.

Method of Attack

Intelligence received by the Department that thugs in Oudh used to come from Nepal or bordering region of Oudh. It further mentions that these thugs used to split before making attacks and took different roads to accomplish their evil task. These men used to attack in the early part of the night so that they could escape back home in night only and it was impossible to recognise them by police and local people.³⁹

The approver further provided information regarding their method of making plunder. Futteh Singh an approver mentions that the old professional thugs used to consider strangulation by the saffa as the only legitimate way of affecting the victims.⁴⁰ Sleeman in his account mentions that the thug method of killing by strangulation was usually from behind the victim with skilful handled yellow silk cloth called a 'Rumal'. The rumal was used mainly because it was suppose to have talismanic power of Goddess kali. Sleeman further mention that the name thug came from the Hindi verb *thaglana*, to deceive or to reflected. The uncanny ability of

³⁹ From W.H.Sleeman (General Superintendent) to F.Fraser ,(commissioner for suppression of dakoity)., Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, B-2, no. 13 1838

⁴⁰ Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, F no.3, 1853.

thugs to befriend their intended victim, to lure them into a state of complacency and vulnerability, thus criminals full of deceit and pretensions were called thugs. Thugs typically choose the spot for murder ahead of time and used certain groves, called *beles*. A secret command such as “bring tobacco” was uttered and with the practised efficiency the thug sprang into action, casting their rumals around their victims neck and garrotting them, swiftly and silently from behind.⁴¹

Futteh Singh further mention that around 1850's the practise of poisoning the victim by Datoora had become a common practice than strangulation. The consumption of Datoora made victim anaesthetised and in most cases led to the death of victim. Police had made four approvers who were admitted on sentence as poisoner. These men belonged to the caste of Punjabi Mussalman. In their confession they confessed that they used to be in forefront while poisoning and rest used to be in the back stage in order to assist in plunder. They further mention that they prefer to perform their activities either single handily or in party of two or three, as in larger group of 30- 40 they always had fear of detection.⁴²

The practise of poisoning was not new for this time; we get evidence regarding the existence of such practise for the earlier period as well. W.M.Ramsay received intelligence regarding a class of professional thugs, known as 'Meeta Wallas'. These men used to carry poison with them composed of datoora, khirharhee opium and

⁴¹ W.H.Sleeman *Ramble and Recollection of an Indian Official*, Ed Vincent. A.Smith, London: Humphrey Milford, O.U.P (1915). p.555

⁴² Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti branch, F no.3, and 1853.

mahirree, which were mixed with the food of their victim. The information provided by the approver enabled in the arrest of five Meeta Walla.⁴³

The role of women in the system of Thuggee is still not unveiled due to paucity of evidences. However little evidences that suggests women did not practise actively in the thuggee raids and definitely had passive role to play. Sleeman mentions that wives or other female relatives of the thugs acted as an informer to the thugs. They used to visit market places to collect information about movement of wealthy travellers or merchants. Sleeman opined that wives and female relatives of thugs could thus act as one of the important source of intelligence to the Department. Regarding the active role of the women we do come across one or two reports indicating the existence of women thug gangs.⁴⁴ But not much is known regarding their working.

The intelligence provided by the approvers was helpful not just identifying the thug gangs but also distinguishing them from the other criminal gangs. The approvers had provided information that the Oothaiegeers were not the thugs they were the kind of professional thieves residing at Tehere, Dulnal, Shahgurb and Banpore State.⁴⁵ Further the approver identified set of people known as khunjurs. These men used to maintain them selves as Buddaks, however approver clarified that this was not the case as these men were neither Buddaks nor belonged to Rajpoot clan. The

⁴³ W.M.Ramsay to W.H.Sleeman, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, J-2, 1837-38.

⁴⁴ From W.H.Sleeman to W.A.Ludlow (assistant at Gorukhpur), Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-14, 10TH July 1844.

⁴⁵ Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, D-1, S.NO.9, 1851

approvers said that the kunjurs were present all over India. They have been thieves and robbers but they were not Buddak class.⁴⁶

The approvers used to keep information regarding the subordinate agents of the Department. In an effort to check the practice of oppression or extortion conducted by them or exercised on them.⁴⁷

Legislative measures to make Approvers

The system of making approvers proved to be a beneficial in suppression of Thuggee. It was a successful attempt to study criminality from the opposite side from where it was conducted. Various legislative measures were taken so that approver could provide complete truth and no malicious act could be performed on their behalf.

The thugs were made approvers under the Act XXX of 1836. It directed that any person who was convicted of "having belong to a gang thugs, liable to penalty of imprisonment of life."⁴⁸ This Act also legitimated the arrest of entire family in order to entrap the active male thug, since Thuggee was supposed to be a family affair and it passed on from father to son. The Act admitted the testimony of approver in lieu of testimony of independent witness, a move that created a remarkable mechanic of

⁴⁶ From W.H.Sleeman (Mooradabad) to Captain Paton (Appointed Resident of Lucknow), Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-9, no.79, 1839.

⁴⁷ Foreign Dept., political branch, no.109-112, 7TH January, 1835

⁴⁸ From W.H.Sleeman to Lt Mills, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-5 1836-39, no.124

truth production and criminal conviction.⁴⁹ In a special provision under the Act XXX of 1836 the testimonies of thugs were not required to match with the independent witness or against the weight of circumstantial evidence.⁵⁰

The Act of XIX of 1837 made testimony of approvers admissible in all courts of law, not just those prosecuting the case of Thuggee.⁵¹ Such provision in the law gave assistance to the process of making approvers. The act XVIII and XIX of 1837 gave detail instruction regarding pardon or mercy to be given to the approver by the Government officials. The law notified that thugs could be considered for the mercy by the government only when they gave useful information and when they gave full and indigenous confession. It said that the promise of pardon does not authorise to give entire pardon. The mercy that the officer was authorised to give was only related to exemption from the capital punishment or transportation.⁵² The Act XXIV of 1843, extended the punitive sanction of the thuggee laws to those found guilty of belonging to dacoit groups.⁵³

Efforts to win Loyalty of Approvers

Truth production and to receive full confession from thugs was a difficult task in the initial days of the campaign against the crime. Mainly because the thug gangs had no

⁴⁹ Parama Roy, op.cit., pp. 128-129

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Radhika Singha "Providential Circumstances: The Thuggee Campaign of the 1830's and Legal Innovation." *Modern Asian studies*, vol. 27, no.1,(1993) pp. 136-137

⁵² From W.H.Sleeman (general superintendent), Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, A-1 no.2 1837.

⁵³ Radhika Singha op.cit.pp. 136-137

faith in the British government. Secondly thugs and dacoits that were the devotees of Goddess Kali, believed that the punishment which is given to them by the government is a curse of goddess. Thugs single minded commitment to the goddess Kali in whose name all murders were done and compared themselves to the priest who performed human sacrifice to gain blessing from the God. Similarly they believed that all the murder that they were doing is to please the deity with all offerings and observance. Even if then they are instilled with punishment that is only because they might not have done proper rites or some observance. The punishment of death therefore inflicted by the law was considered as manifestations of displeasure of the deity.⁵⁴

Thus, in order to break this ice of silence, the thugs were not just tempted with pardon but were also given opportunity of employment and respectable livelihood. The Government made efforts to rehabilitate and give social security to the families and dependent of the criminals. All these efforts assured the continuous flow of intelligence and information from the thug “Approvers”.

Approvers in Public Service

The able thugs and dakoits were given employment in the lower rank of the administration as a mean to bring them into mainstream of administration. The Nujeesbs were like sepoy who played a significant role in procuring intelligence. These were the men who used to assist search parties, thus making the task of

⁵⁴ From W.H.Sleeman, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti branch, G-1, 14TH August 1832.

arresting fugitives easy.⁵⁵ I.H.Chamberlin mentions of receiving information from very smart nujeeb (a pardoned Buddak). The Nujeeb informed number of old approver and their son after committing crime, had turned Shajehanpore district into their safe haven. I.H.Chamberlin said:

“I took an opportunity whilst some of the Buddak nujeebs were in my camp on a day in July and spoke casually about measures for capturing the absconded approvers said to be in the Gwalior state. My plan succeeded beautifully. In few hours 2 or 3 of the class had very important information they wish to communicate to me, finding I had roused a spirit the excitement by which I wished to profit very advantage was taken to make them more communicative and at the same time to let them feel more suspicious of the probable source from which my unknown information suppose to spring.”⁵⁶ The Nujeebs were preferred to arrest fugitive rather than the regular force. Mainly because Nujeebs were well acquainted with the practice and method of thugs. This enabled the operation to take place in more peaceful manner. The long and loyal service of nujeebs credited them to promotion to the rank of lance duffadar. The arrest made by Nujeebs entitles them some time with rewards also.⁵⁷

Some of the most distinguish among the thugs were recruited into the police force

Sleeman mentions that:

“The greater part of our old Badduak approver who did us so much good services against the gangs of Oudh Turae of Gwalior and Rajpootana have been drafted into police battalion. In Bundelkhand battalion, they have done much good service any many of them have been promoted to this. I attribute in great measures the readiness with which they have and are surrendering themselves up and I rejoice in the result because I believe that the only possible way to suppress their system is to confine them as prisoner or to absorb them among public establishment where they will forget their exclusive language and feelings.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ From W.H.Sleeman to J.Graham (assistant superintendent) Home Dept. Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-10 1839-40

⁵⁶ From I.H.Chamberlin , Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti branch, E-8 ,1860

⁵⁷ From J.Sleeman to Captain C.Harvey (assistant General superintendent Jubbolpore), Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, J-3, 1845-49 Part 1,

⁵⁸ From W.H.Sleeman to W.Pampier (Assistant Superintendent of Police Lower Province) Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-16, 1843-45 13TH September, 1844

Social Security to their Family

A special jail at Jubbulpore in the Central Province was build for the approver. This was mainly to keep them safe from their associates who were still quite active. At Jubbulpore a school of industry was opened in 1855, to give the technical education to the thugs.⁵⁹The Department not only provided security to an individual but to their entire families. The families of thugs were given protection from other thugs as well as they were given social and monetary security. The families of thugs used to receive Re 1 for wife and Re 1 for each child per month. In doing so government was benefited in three terms. First the new generation would not take up the same business as of their father and grandfather because they received monetary assistance and, formal and technical education to support their families. Secondly, these measures made the families of thugs loyal to the company and they became fresh source of intelligence to the Government ⁶⁰. Thirdly, families of the thugs were kept under the British protection enjoyed gainful employment in the British households and British factories. Families of the approvers were like a pledge for the good behaviour of the thug. Further it prevented thug from absconding from the jail⁶¹.

The children of the thugs were many times absorbed in government service such as magazine workmen, bullock driver, sepoy and even writer in the administration.

⁵⁹ From J.Sleeman Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch , H-3 Part-II , 1854-55

⁶⁰ From the Resident of Lucknow to W.H.Sleeman, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, B-2, no.10, 1838.

⁶¹ J.Sleeman to Captain C.Harvey (Assistant General Superintendent Jubbulpore), Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, J-3, 1845-49.

Son of approver Syed Meeum worked in British factory and was earning two and half rupees; he also received professional training, which enabled him to maintain an honest independent livelihood.⁶²

The Governor General from the Upper Doab region received the information regarding the evil practise, which came into prominence in 1826. It was the practise in which thug used to murder the parents of a girl child so that she could be used for prostitution, Even the female child of the former thugs were also forced to indulge into such practises. Secretary of State had advised the Department to take strict measures to check such practises and if needed a special judge may be appointed to try such offenders.⁶³ Further in order to give protection to female orphans many female orphanages were opened. Here they were given certain professional training as well as education to become better housewives in near future.⁶⁴ In doing so the help of Christian missionaries was also taken up.

Thugs were also given pardon from capital punishment or from transportation, but it was done only when government became confident that the confession made by the criminal was truthful and all the information provided by them was satisfactory. It also depended on their good behaviour in custody.⁶⁵ In the case of Cheyenne Lal,

⁶² J.Sleeman to Captain C.Harvey (Assistant General Superintendent Jubbulpore), Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, J-3, 1845-49.

⁶³ From Secretary to Governor General to W.H.Sleeman (General Superintendent of Operation), B-2, no. 16, 1839

⁶⁴ From the Resident of Lucknow to W.H.Sleeman, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, B-2, no.10, 1838.

⁶⁵ From W.H.Sleeman to Secretary to Governor General, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, B-2, no.19, 1839.

Sleeman had appealed for the conditional pardon as he was convinced of loyalty of this approver. Sleeman wrote

“ I have the honour to forward Cheyenne Lal who seems very likely to be able as he seems willing to make himself very useful in tracing out perpetrators of several dacoities in the Futtehgur district. It would be given stimulus to his exertions to promise him the conditional pardon.”⁶⁶

The informers were also given cash award from RS 100-300 depending on the kind of information they provided. J.Sleeman had rewarded Rs 100 to Nujeeb as he helped in the arrest of two notorious dacoits i.e. Rajasingh and Shersingh.⁶⁷ The reward and expenses made to the loyal approvers or to the search party were all met from the Contingency bill.

As we know, that Thuggee was a hereditary profession, however, there were some men like land less labourer or other poor, who out of unemployment took up thuggee as their source of livelihood. For such type of thugs efforts were taken up to reform them and bring them back into the normal stream of society.

Sleeman said,

“ Those thugs who have apprehended and found that they took profession due to their unemployment. These criminals could be pardon for confinement, if respectable inhabitants of village give security of their good behaviour. They were set free from the confinement but were restrains on their movement. But at the same time they are also encourage resorting to

⁶⁶ W.H.Sleeman to W.H.Casal (Mooradabad), Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-9 no.57, 1839.

⁶⁷ W.H.Sleeman to Captain J.Sleeman Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-19, 10TH November 1848.

a useful and honest mode of livelihood. They might be allowed to cultivate land free of rent for some years, the assistance with advance money and even in some cases a small money allowance of Rs 2 a month might be given till they could support themselves by the profits of their own labour.”⁶⁸

Along with the Company own intelligence service the service of the native rulers were also utilised. Sleeman with his diplomatic skill was able to win over the native rulers to support him in the suppression of Thuggee. The support was in term of intelligence and forces to catch the fugitives. The ready support was provided from the ruler of Oudh and Gwalior. It has been mention that the ruler of Gwalior had sent his own newswriter with the search party to get regular intelligence from the site of action. He also enabled the search party to receive information from the local villagers regarding the existence of Budduk thugs in the region.

Impediments in the Path of Campaign

To believe that the success achieved by the Department was without any failure or challenges would be wrong. The thugs often used a counter intelligence system of their own. For example the search parties did face failure in catching up the fugitives. As mentioned before the search party to Sattarah region was successful to a large extent. The same party could not get hold of one of the gangs as the gang had send their spy to the British camp from where they were well informed about the plan of search party before hand.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ The agent of Nerbudda to Secretary to Governor General Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, B-2, no.1, 1832.

⁶⁹ Report by C.Hervey (on his operation to suppress dakoits in Bombay Residency) to J.Sleeman, Home Dept., Thuggee and dakaiti Branch, F, no. 2, and 1851.

A major impediment to Sleeman's efforts was the sympathy and outright protection that Thugs often enjoyed from local political figures, especially in territories not under British jurisdiction. Many nabobs saw in the Thugs a way to acquire spoils indirectly, and shielded them from arrest and persecution in return for ample remuneration. On several occasions, when confronted with outright defiance from local officials at his request to surrender known Thugs, Sleeman had to resort to direct and forceful action. In June 1831, the Raja of Jhansi, who occupied a well-fortified castle on a hilltop defended by two cannons and at least a thousand men, refused to surrender thugs. In response, Sleeman called on the resources of the Army, and the castle was attacked with artillery and infantry. In the smoke and confusion, the Thugs managed to slip away, but this erstwhile Thug sanctuary was levelled.⁷⁰

During the mid 1830's, the Department faced stiff opposition in the Rajpootana region. The states of Jaipur, Alwar, Jodhpur and kishengurh were the state where the thugs enjoyed complete shelter. The thugs used to move for their security to these states and from here they used to make plans for their further attacks in Serohee, Palimpoor, Surat and Gujrat. The government had sent their repeated demand for assistance in the suppression of crime in terms of both intelligence and force. The stiff opposition was received from the state of Jodhpur. As they saw the coming of the British forces in order to capture the Meena thugs in the jungles of Rajasthan as a direct attack on their sovereign right. Secondly, the state was not in the position to

⁷⁰ Anonymous, op.cit., p.9

maintain the financial burden of extra British troops in their State.⁷¹ Along with these set of problems the British munshi in Jodhpur further mentions that the political control in the state had weakened. This was the reason that the local officials had no control on the Thakoors of the region. They had free hand in their doing. The Thakoors of the village used to forbid shopkeepers to sell any provision to the people who were under the British service. Another incidence considered mentioning in which officials of the British government were forcibly driven out from the village at night. There are incidences where the local magnates used to provide shelter to thugs.⁷² The official investigations made in 1850, traced out a glaring fact that the ruler of Banpoor and Tehree openly supported the cause of thugs. This was done to the extent that they did not hesitated in confessing their links with the thugs and vagabonds of the region. The official records mention that such ties were forged due to two reasons. Primarily, the rulers of these states drew their lineage from the families of such thugs and dakoits gangs. It was plundered booty, which helped to achieve such status. Secondly, newly born principalities drew a constant flow of wealth from these thug fraternities. The ruler of Banpoor was reported to receive its share in the spoils of Palan dacoity. The activities of the thugs were defended to such an extent that they could sell their looted wealth openly in the market.⁷³

⁷¹ Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, J-1 1833-34.

⁷² From H.W.Trevelyn (secretary of state) to W.H.Sleeman, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, C-1, no.2, 1835

⁷³ Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, H-3, 1850-51 Part-I, February 1851.

Sleeman in the later years was able to bring many Rajpootana states to its term through the diplomatic terms. But the assistance was received only through the ruler, many of the subordinate officers of the state continue to pose problems for the government. For example, the Magistrate at Jaipur had complained William Muir regarding the misconduct of Amil at Mohwa in Jaipur. He said, "The police had appropriate information regarding the Doora dacoity but there was no real assistance was given by the official concern. Thus indicating that the dacoits had paid for protection and connivance as indeed, is generally asserted to be their practise in native states." In another report it was mentioned that the Bhurtpoor official gave a similar assistance to the Meena dacoits involved in the Palam dacoity, as reported by the police of the Zilla Murhura. The police had mentioned that these were the gangs who were also involved in the recent dacoities committed in Agra and Mathura.⁷⁴

We do see a close nexus between the landlords and that of the thugs. As approvers had mention that at Etawah and Doab there were several criminal involved directly or indirectly in dacoitie. These were the men who were associates of landlords and aide in dacoities.⁷⁵ Sleeman further reported that some of the Buddak approvers have acquainted him with hundred families of Bauries in the district of Saharanpur and Muzzafarnagar who bring home valuable booty every year from the west and the south district and share it with the landlords and police.⁷⁶ Sleeman said that he

⁷⁴ Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, H-3, Part -2, 1954.

⁷⁵ From I.H.Chamberlin (Assistant Superintendent Lucknow) to Major C.Heracy, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, B-2, no.26, 30TH May, 1859.

⁷⁶ From Sleeman to M.H.Edgworth (Magistrate Saharnpur), Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti branch, G-14, 1841-1844, 29TH July 1841.

had information regarding a close connection between the Buddak colonies of Oudh with that of landlord in their neighbour and the landlord mainly did so in order to get share in the booty.⁷⁷ The landlord on the other hand used to give protection to thugs from government official and police. There are several incidents where the intentional refuge was given to thugs. In a village of Choli in Muzzaffarnagar a thug gang was arrested in the building of zamindar, from investigation it was found that this refuge was intentional. As both zamindar and Banjara thug gang were involved in evil practise of selling female in the town for the purpose of prostitution.⁷⁸ In lieu of wealth from the thugs local magnates used to support the families of thugs in their absence.

Occasionally local landowners, rulers and policemen used to conceal the murder performed by the thugs for their own benefit. As Sleeman has mentioned that

“A list of all the dacoits deposed to before me by all different buddaks approvers in their narratives as far as they have been confined on a reference to local authority. When they were taken as all my narratives have been with great care, it is generally found on reference that the dacoits have really taken place. However in our territory it is often found that the police have reported such dacoites as theft to save themselves from threatened or dead punishment given to them by the magistrate and in some cases in the native states the local officer never reported such gory crimes to their chiefs and superiors.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷From Sleeman to G.E Hollengs, Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-14, 1841-1844,

30TH March 1842.

⁷⁸ Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, H-3 Part –I, 12TH June 1850.

⁷⁹ From W.H.Sleeman to Lt H.M.Notion, Home Dept, Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-14, 1841-44 28TH July 1841.

More curious still were the shadowy ties that existed between the Thug fraternity and certain prominent members of the Indian banking community.

One particularly wealthy and influential banker, Dhunraj Seth, was relieved of a large shipment of gold and silver by Thug marauders. Through his own agents, he quickly discovered the identity of the Thugs responsible, and recovered much of his stolen wealth with the help of Indian authorities. However, Sleeman in his interrogation with Bearee lal, a close associate of Seth, found that the story that Seth told was hypothecated. The truth was that there was a close tie between Dhunraj Seth and thugs, and Seth was attempting to become major financial banker of thugs. Sleeman wrote:

“It is essentially necessary for the success of this or any other plan for the suppression of Thuggee that we should prevent Dhunraj Seth, the great banker of Omrautee, or any of his partners or numerous agents from having communication with the Thugs seized; or any attempts to indemnify themselves, to profit by their murders, to effect their release by bribery, corruption, intrigue or solicitation from all the native chiefs in whose dominions they have found them imprisoned; and to send them again upon the roads with advances of money or subsistence till fresh murders have brought them fresh treasure for division.” “Had their attempts not been providentially checked by our operations I declare before God that I believe that this House would have become the great capitalists and patrons of murder from Lahore to Cape Comorin; and that the price of blood would have flowed into their coffers from every road throughout this enormous empire”.⁸⁰

One of serious challenge which Department faced was the practise of false witness on the behalf of thugs. In the town of Mehidpoor several respectable people were arrested on the basis of information provided by approver, whereas in reality there

⁸⁰ Anonymous, op.cit.pp.9-10

was not even the shadow of evidence was available.⁸¹ Similarly Rissaldar (approver) had given his witness against a person in relation to kholatee Dakoitie. However after investigation it was found that it was a false witness.⁸²

Many more such cases were registered by the Department. These malicious practices of false witness were taken by the approvers in order to get the release of their acquaintances or for their personal gains. As in one of the case approver gave false witness for a person who was not guilty of it. This was done so that person could get life imprisonment, by doing this approver wanted to equate his personal enmity with the person. Thus, in order to check such activity strict rules were formulated. According to which before making any criminal an approver, government should know about his history, about his associates and what was their present state. There should be proof of their sincerity before granting them pardon. The plundered property should be confiscated and information should be gathered regarding the burial of their victims. Finally if the approver made any false witness even after becoming an approver, then he should be tried not just for the false testimony but also for all the crime that he had made.⁸³ Some time they were also liable of the capital punishment.

⁸¹ From Lt A.Hearries (Assistant General Superintendent in Malwa) to Captain J.Sleeman (superintendent of Jubbulpore) Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti branch, B-2 S.NO -23, 1846.

⁸² From J.Sleeman to C.Hervey, Home Dept, Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-19 1848-49, 22ND May 1849.

⁸³ From Etwall (Officiating Superintendent of Banglore) to commissioner for affairs of his highness Rajah of Mysore. Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch B-2 no. 11, 1838

The government also faced act of treason from the two Nujeebs, Adhar Singh and Gopal Singh, who had helped in the escape of Goulab Singh a thug while he was transported to other jail.⁸⁴

Conclusion

The age-old criminal conspiracy was pushed to fringe ends of society by the 'Thuggee and Dakaiti' Department in few decades. Achievements of the Department were more commendable in the light of the fact that before its establishment the information about this crime was too obscure. The ring of superstitions, rituals and rites, which encompassed this crime, was never ventured by anyone to break. The success of the Department showcased the power of one. Sleeman's vision and his acumen to understand the scenario added impetus to daunting task. Sleeman's techniques provided the world a new brand of knowledge gathered from the means of domestic surveillance. Sleeman's understanding of the problem helped him to use the men in crime for espionage of the crime they performed; also it helped to eradicate the crime from its root. In its proceeding to eradicate crime the Department did faced challenges like complete reliance on the information provided by the thugs and practice of false witnesses, such practice did draw much criticism from the various British officials. The method of criminal detection raised several questions on the moral and legislative grounds. However such impediments never as such paused the campaign. The Department set forth a new trend in the field of criminal intelligence. The source of native as a significant source of intelligence will be further evaluated in the following chapter

⁸⁴ Home Dept., Thuggee and Dakaiti Branch, G-5, no. 3, 1836.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TEST OF 1857

The success of the British Empire in establishing its hegemony very much rested on its well-knit web of intelligence. Information that gathered by the intelligence agency in mid of the nineteenth century virtually covered the entire country. Kaye had mentioned in his work, “to know anything about the native people is profitable to turn on to our knowledge account.”¹ This chapter examine the thoroughness of a knowledge about the natives, possessed by the British in the light of ‘rebellion of 1857’. The year 1857 marked a turning point both in Indian and British Empire history. The outbreak of the rebellion resulted into several debates on its causes and nature. However in the recent times, studies on the events of 1857 have taken a new course. The new sets of studies have made attempts to study the rebellion in relation to the concept like social communication and reciprocal relation between ‘power and knowledge’. The works of Bayly and Fisher have significantly contributed to this field. The following chapter will evaluate the role of the intelligence system in the course of ‘Rebellion of 1857’ on such lines.

Causes of the Revolt of 1857

Before examining the role of intelligence, there is need to have a brief account of the causes, which resulted into such mass upheaval. The outbreak of 1857 rebellion has left deep and abiding mark both on the delicate fabric of the Indian society and on the character of British rule. In the hot summer of May 1857, the issue of grease

¹ J.W.Kaye, *The Administration of the East India Company; A History of Indian Progress*, London: Messar Richard Bentley, (1853), p.345

cartridge was enough to light the fire on a heap of discontent, which was accumulating for more than two decades.

T.R.Metcalf in his account cites three indisputable factors behind the outbreak of rebellion of 1857. Primarily he sees accumulating grievances of the sepoys of the Bengal army as the most important factor. Inferior status of the Indian sepoys, lack of promotion possibilities and withdrawal of foreign "batta" or allowance to name a few of grievances that worried sepoys did weaken morale of army but were not enough to trigger the mutiny. It was attack on sepoy's religious sentiments that prompted sepoys to believe that the British government was preparing to dismantle the age-old caste system and convert them against their will to Christianity.²

The 1830's marked the age of reforms in the term of social, legal and administrative set up. The age of reforms was looked up by the Princes and landed aristocracy with suspicion. The policies like Subsidiary alliance and Doctrine of lapse was a direct attack on the prestige and honor of the Indian courts. Treatment given to the Mughal and Oudh court was seen by a large section of society as acts of disdain and dishonor. The unwarranted annexation of Oudh in 1856 was also seen as a challenge to Mughal sovereignty.³ The British legal system in which everybody was equal in the eyes of law was taken by the upper class as a matter of disrespect to their authority and challenge to their privileges, which kept them above the law. On the flip side

² T.R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt –India, 1857- 1870*, Berkley; Princeton University press,(1965), p.66

³ C.A Bayly, "Two Colonial Revolts: The Java War, 1825-30, And The Indian Mutiny of 1857-59". In C.A.Bayly and Koff (ed.) *Two Colonial Empires: A Comparative Essay on the History of India and Indonesia in the Nineteenth Century*, Dordrecht: Martinus Nishoff (1986), pp. 116-117.

poor villagers and other lower classes for which the legal system aimed to provide protection, they failed to understand the complex and expensive British legal system, to them court was just another instrument of oppression in the hands of rich.⁴

In Oudh we see a large section of a taluqdari supported the rebellion either actively or passively. As Taluqdars were reacting to the British system of land revenue due to which many of them were forced to give away control of their estates and villages.⁵ The social issues like abolition of Sati or widow remarriage were seen as a part of the British foul play. From rulers to general masses saw these attempts as an act of intervention on the part of British in age-old traditions and customs. Such intervention in Hindu customs made Muslim also insecure about the defilement of their religion. Further, activities of the Christian missionaries and promotion of English education on their behalf acted as catalyst to such fears.⁶

Rumours and Warnings

These set of discontent, fear and disaffection received further air from the various set of rumours, which made people convinced that the company rule was not for them and it will not last long. One of the rumours that affected soldiers of the Bengal army were particularly the stories related to pollution of religion and caste by the British. Around the month of April of 1857, a rumour started making rounds in air of cantonment that there was mixing of bone dust with flour and sugar available

⁴ T.R.Metcalf, op.cit.,p 156

⁵ Ibid.,p.130

⁶ S.N.Sen, *Eighteen Fifty- Seven*, Calcutta: publication division, ministry of information and broadcasting, government of India(1957),p.5

in the bazaar especially that of the cantonment. In the Bazaar of Kanpur a story that circulated was that grain had been ground in the camel mill under the European supervision and that the dust of cow's bone had been mixed up with the intention of destroying the caste of those who eat it.⁷ Rumours of adulterating ghee (clarified butter) with animal fat, bone have been burnt with the common sugar of the country and the flesh of cow and pig had been thrown into the well to pollute the drinking water of the people were slowly but surely charging environment with fear, insecurity and dissension. Such fables sunk deeply into men's psyche permanently and acted as bases for the story of grease cartridge thus making the outbreak inevitable.

An interesting phenomenon of circulating chappatis was observed just a few months prior to rebellion. This phenomenon was not unique as it was observed in the seventeenth century too, along with chappatis flesh of goat and lotus were also circulated. Many saw circulation of chappatis as a manifestation of subversion. The exact motives behind such circulation is varied and based on different interpretations. Hindu might have circulated chappatis to effect the removal of epidemic disease or could have been an attempt to preserve unpolluted religion which government proposed to subvert or was a mere chain. Some interpret it as a call to unite for common cause and represent some sort of discontentment toward aliens.

⁷ Kaye and Malleson, *History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58*, Vol.1, London: (1897-98), pp.568-569

Instead of debating on what these chappatis were circulated for, there is need to bring out the fact that such phenomena surely kept popular excitement alive may be accidentally.⁸

Further it is worth observing that this entire process of chappti circulation undertook well under the eye of the British. The officer like General Heresy could sense that such movement might be indication of discontent toward the government. Though a large number of the officials failed to perceive potentiality of such movement by calling them as mere superstition belief.⁹

The fear of religion pollution was one set of stories that engulfed mindset of many Indians. The coming of the Persian Shah into power and bestowing his power to the Mughal Emperor was the another set of popular believes that were circulating just before rebellion, thus making a direct indication of subversion. The rumour that spread in context was that Shah of Persia would help to remove infidels from the country. Further these rumours were published and talked all over in open. The native newspaper published many such articles of subversion. One of the reports had mentioned that Shah of Persia was collecting ammunition for past five years to attack India and now the time was ripe for action. It was declared in the native newspaper that “most people say that the Emperor of France and the Emperor of Turkey will be on the side of Persia”. The talks regarding the coming of Shah of Persia was not just restricted to the newspaper but was openly talked in the court of

⁸ R.C.Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and The Revolt of 1857*, Calcutta: Firma, K.L.Mukhopadhyay,(1957),p.45, also see, S.N.Sen, op.cit., pp. 398-400

⁹ Kaye, Vol.1 op.cit., pp 570-571

Delhi. Two of the king personal attendants were heard of talking about an attack to be made by Persia and to bestow Mughal Sovereignty. In March of 1857 the native correspondent had reported lieutenant Governor of N.W.Province that the king was intriguing with the Shah of Persia. This news may not hold entire truth, as the king was not intriguing but he did rejoice on the saying of Hassan Askari (a Mohammedan priest). Hassan Askari had told to the king that he had learned through a divine revelation that the dominion of the king of Persia will certainly extend to Delhi or rather over whole of Hindustan. He further said that the splendour of the sovereignty of Delhi would again revive, as sovereign of Persia will bestow the crown upon the king. The native correspondent further reported such belief has provided a great joy in the palace and Hassan Askari has entered upon the daily performance of propitiator ceremonies to expedite the arrival of the Persian and expulsion of the Christian.¹⁰ But such news did not receive much response from the officers.

Few months before the outbreak of the mutiny there were certain sets of British officials, whose official sensitivity help them to see the forthcoming danger. Sir Charles Metcalfe admitted, “ He expected to wake up one morning to find that the whole of India lost to English crown”. In Calcutta at the beginning of 1857 General Hearsay expressed his fear in the following words, “ we have at Barruckpur been dwelling on a mine ready for explosion”.¹¹ Sir Henry Lawrence had written a letter

¹⁰ Kaye, vol.2, op.cit., pp.34-42

¹¹ B.J.Cork, *Rider on a Grey Horse. A Life of Hodson of Hodson's Horse*, London: Cassell & Co (1958), p.90.

to Lord Canning just one month before the mutiny expressing his fear on the on going discontentment in Oudh. He could sense the disaffection of sepoys and that of Taluqdars who were alienated from their land. Sir Henry Lawrence on the 18th of April, 1857 wrote to Canning “the city is said to contain six or seven hundred thousands souls and does certainly contain many thousand of disbanded soldiers and of hungry and starving dependants of the late government. There must be intrigue and disaffection in such a mass. I hear no incivility but I observe angry looks... much discontent has been accused by the demolition of the buildings and still more by threats of further similar measured.”¹²

Failure in Perceiving and Responding to the Warnings

There were many rumours and warnings prior to the outbreak of 1857 nevertheless the British officials failed to respond to any of them. One can call it the failure of intelligence. It was a failure to get an accurate intelligence regarding the Indian mentalities. The message of unease, which came from so many sources during 1850's, was all unseen. The negligence can be rooted into official confidence of their own strength and sense of superiority and “ the haughty contempt for the mechanisation of others”.¹³ The rumours related to bone dust or coming of the Persian king may be an exaggeration or fables and can be credited as mere follies, but these set of rumours were not baseless. They were based on prevailing sentiments of the people and the fact that there was a rife in the Delhi and

¹² T.R.Metcalf,op.cit., p.67

¹³ kaye, Vol. 2, op.cit., pp.37-38

neighbouring region. However the British official failed to look beyond these exaggerations. As Kaye remarks “ he (British official) will not suffer himself to see that there may be grave and significant truth beneath the outer crust of wild exaggeration”.¹⁴

Failure of Gathering Intelligence in Princely States

Besides these sets of rumour, another set of warning was in shape of the political and diplomatic developments that were taking place in the native states. However we do see failure on behalf of the intelligence department in viewing and understanding these developments. In the mid of April 1857, Nana Sahib took a visit to the court of Delhi, Kalpee and Lucknow. These set of meeting if not were for some sort of intrigue but surely they were for the words of exchange on the on going discontents that were faced by the native rulers. The journey undertaken by Nana could have aroused speculation in the mind of many British officials because Nana never had gone beyond the boundaries of Bhitoor and pace at which journey took place indicated that it was taken up with some serious motive. Nevertheless British official failed to perceive any grave motives behind such visits.¹⁵

It was not just the failure of the getting the intelligence but also inability of official mindset to react on the appropriate intelligence that was coming before the mutiny. Intelligence was received, according to which the people in Bihar had asked for support from the ruler of Patiala, Nepal and Emperor of Delhi in order to launch a

¹⁴ kaye, Vol. 2, op.cit., pp.37-38

¹⁵Kaye, Vol.1, op.cit., pp.574-577

struggle against the British. The British official did receive certain set of letters filled with warnings, but these warnings were not taken seriously. In August 1855, an anonymous letter was sent to Lieutenant General of Bengal conveying a threat to, of open war against the British government. The letter expressed:

“The government need not plainly declare that what its real intention are, they are well known from the notification, when the above design of the government will be carried out, the whole of inhabitants of hindoostan will unite and prepare themselves for battle. The people of hindoostan say that when they have no fear for life, they will find no difficulty to fight with government. Let the government carry out its intention but it will repent at last.” “The government do not bear in mind the well known saying of Sadi that the subject is the root, and that the king is tree. As government entertains such evils designs, let it know that there is not the last doubt that the whole of inhabitants of Hindoostan shall soon unite and plunder its territories like santhals.”¹⁶ The process of receiving such seditious letter continued up to the eve of outbreak. Just few days before outbreak of mutiny, a letter was intercepted by the intelligence agencies. Letter pointed out the fact that Raja of Patiala was in league with the people of the Punjab and was arranging troops for some sort of insurrection. The intelligence had pointed out possibility, “ the whole of the people of hindustan will within a short time gathered like ants either in one quarter or in every district to fight for the cause of their religion. The people of Hindoostan have made preparation for battle.”¹⁷

The Magistrate in Delhi received another similar communication, a few days before the outbreak of revolt, communicating that in course of a few weeks Cashmere (Kashmir) would be taken. The Kashmir here signified that Kashmir gate of Delhi, which would be in hands of enemies of the British government.¹⁸

Above set of warnings concretely implies that British were precariously perched on a dormant volcano ready to burst. These sets of warnings were ignored due to various

¹⁶ K.K.Datta, *Unrest Against British Rule in Bihar, 1831-59*, Bihar: the Superintendent Secretarial press,(1957),pp. 34-37

¹⁷ KK Datta, op.cit.,pp 34-37

¹⁸ Kaye, Vol.1, op.cit., 575

reasons. C.F.Metcalfe sought out for two reasons first was that the warnings were too many and too varied which resulted into confusion. Secondly, he mentions that high-grade officers were likely to hear what was going on around them. He further added that just a few days before the outbreak both civil and military sub officers reported warnings about some portentous events were brooding but little credit was attach to them.¹⁹

The ignorance of intelligence or failure to receive authenticated intelligence has been negated completely by R.J.Popplewell. He writes that there was no failure of the British intelligence organisation because there was no organisation systematically gathering political intelligence in the British India.²⁰

To say that there was no intelligence organisation would be seriously wrong in a view that there was an well-organised department of intelligence under the Residency system, the Department that was capable of receiving information about political and diplomatic happenings of all courts within the boundaries of India. By 1830's, Residency network provided Company's headquarter both in London and India, with the information procured from the length and breadth of the country.

British received a considerable amount of intelligence regarding the Indian revenue set up, military system, economic mechanism and political service but beneath this level of information of the British there was a level which was unknown to the British. It was the area where the colonial institution failed to understand the

¹⁹ C.F.Metcalfe, *Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi* Delhi: Seema Publications (1974), pp.10-11

²⁰ R.J.Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence, 1904- 24* , London: Frank Cass, (1995), p.14

sentiments of the people, their customs, tradition and family life. The gap between state level and community information had resulted into what Bayly calls 'information panic' of 1857.²¹ A information void were also expressed by J.W.Kaye, as he writes, "we know little of the native society beyond its merest external colour of the people's skin, the forms of their garment the outer aspect of their house we knew nothing." He further said, "this ignorance was matched with the native subtle line of information and secret knowledge."²²

The patchy community knowledge and lack of intelligence is what Bayly sorts into the official stiffness and sense of superiority over Indian. The linguistic difference was definitely one of the causes. Indian rulers prior to coming of the British were well knitted into the social fabric of Indian Society. They were able to received very rudimentary information about the native people. However such information remain be enlarge away from the British as what T.F.Metcalf call it was due to their 'social isolation'. The formal structure of information gathering under Residency set up failed to provide British coherent insight into the working of Indian society, the Indian experience, philosophy and sensibility. This was the reason that the social and religious issues became burning topic for both sepoys and civilians

The British officials also failed to exploit fully pre-colonial ruler system of information. They withdrew themselves from the involvement with the Indian religious institution classically a potent source of advice to the Indian ruler. British

²¹ C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, New York :Cambridge University Press, 1996,p.317

²² J.W.Kaye, op.cit. p.361

failed to utilise the information of wandering religious mendicants. They in the official eyes were in no more than an enemy who was suspected to have links with the criminal group that of thugs or pindaries raiders.

Another potent source of information was that of the royal women quarter. Since the Mughal period or even earlier to it the royal ladies always used to have their own set of spies. They made private correspondent either under their own name or that of their husband. British however excluded themselves from the political activities and information line of women's quarter and there associated network of domestic information.²³ Ignorance of the women quarter by the British deprived them of intelligence of substantial event, which took place in the Apartment of Queen Zeenat Mahal. This event was surely a threat of subversion against the British power. The issue of subversion of infidel rule and rescue of the Mughal sovereignty with the help of the Persian was often discussed, the courtier did not even hesitated to talk in front of the European ladies. As Jawan Bakat in the queen quarter said to Mrs. Flemming, an English sergeant wife " in short time he will have all infidels English under his feet and after that he will kill Hindus. He further told to the lady that the Persian were coming to save Delhi". This entire incident took place in the mid of April 1857. British never took these fore warnings seriously and were consider as a part of loose talk that were generally a part of women's quarter gossip section.²⁴

²³ C. A.Bayly, "Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India," *M.A.S*, Vol.27, no.1 (1993). CUP p. 3-43.

²⁴ J.W.Kaye. History of Indian Mutiny. Vol.2 op.cit., pp.34-35

By the 1830's there was a greater degree of bureaucratisation of the administration on the behalf of the British. The similar trends were also witnessed in the intelligence department of the Residency. The new class of the munshis was appointed who were well trained both in the English and the Persian language. They with ease met the needs and the demands of their masters. The introduction of the new munshi class on the behalf of the British was an attempt to displace the older class, which they felt was incompetent and disloyal to the British, however the transition was slow but an imperfect one. The new class of Munshi's failed to reach at the very core of the society probably because they were instructed to collect information that was more factual and data based. The new set of British officials failed to realise the importance of information from grass root, which was provided by the conventional class. It was a class whose predecessors have been guided to intricacies of the Indian court life. Secondly the traditional class acted as a bridge between people and new masters. But by the 1820's this class was rejected and was consider no more than a translator of complex Persian verses. Fisher opines that the official attitude toward this munshi class was largely due to their racial reservation toward Indian. The new set of munshi and other British officials saw Akhbrat with contempt and disdain to put up the gossip of courts through spies and old ladies. Such lukewarm attitude toward the traditional class of Munshis was one of the reasons that British failed to respond to warnings that were coming from the different parts.²⁵

²⁵ M.Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Resident and Residency system, 1764-1857*, Delhi: OUP, (1991), pp.434-435, also see C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*. op.cit. ,pp.319

The Intelligence gaps were not cited for the first time during 1857, but were witnessed earlier as well. In 1806, at the time of Vellore mutiny mid night meeting of the soldier were taking place but no precautions were taken to strengthen the European garrison of Vellore. The mutiny of Vellore was first alarm for the existing information ignorance.²⁶ Later such information famine resulted into serious military debacles and financial losses in Nepal between 1824-26 and at Northwest frontier between 1838-42.²⁷ However no serious measures were taken to fill in the gap of information, which resulted into intelligence failure.

The intelligence failure that has been just discussed had a serious blow to the company's prestige and morale. It was difficult for the company officials to accept that any such event could take place under the British regime. Even at the outbreak of the mutiny the first telegram, which stated,

“ The great military station at Meerut was in a blaze that the cavalry formed a body and that every European met had been slain by the insurgents.”²⁸

This telegram was not accepted as truth or believed to be a fact by many European officials. English officer like Mr. Dorris on receiving the telegram wrote that news from Meerut is not true and there is terribly and significantly wrong in the very form of the message. The damage caused by intelligence failure was so much that the week following the outbreak was a week of telegram. The telegrams were flocking in and out from the various Residency and Presidency offices. Nevertheless these

²⁶ J.W.Kaye.Vol.1 op. Cit , pp.568-569

²⁷ C.A.Bayly, Empire and Information., op.cit., p.97

²⁸ J.W.Kaye, History of Indian Mutiny, op.cit., p.596

telegrams were filled with the patchy and vague information. The true picture was revealed only after a week.²⁹

The official insensitivity, misinterpretation of the Indian social thought and feeling and sense of British superiority resulted into intelligence failure, which in turn took British officials in India and Britain by surprise and shook the very roots of the British Empire. However within a period of few months this state of confusion was soon brought under control. The rebels at many places were either sliced down or were suppressed even before they could rise. This striking success of the British regime was only achieved due to the superior military might and outstanding performance of the intelligence agencies.

Rebuilding of the Intelligence System: Its Achievements

The outbreak of the mutiny forced company official to gear up their intelligence network, in which all the element of the intelligence gathering including the traditional and modern mean were involved. No stone was left unturned in the process of intelligence gathering. British were soon able to muster well-knitted webs of intelligence network, which kept check, not only to the movement of the rebels but also the rumours that could have caused further damages.

²⁹J.W.Kaye, History of Indian Mutiny, op.cit., p.596

Traditional forms of Intelligence Gathering

The British intelligence exercise during the rebellion was a blend of both traditional and the modern elements of intelligence gathering techniques. The traditional element likes Harakars, Munshis and Vakil proved to be quite beneficial for the British reaching where the modern types of intelligence gathering failed. Harkaras effectively replaced the functionality large number of telegraphic line disrupted by mutineers. The harakaras could easily mingle with the mutineers to get information about the strength, movement and action plan of the rebels, Thus serving dual purpose of spy and messenger. The harkara line in and around Lucknow helped Company headquarter to get regular and precise news about the success and failure of the rebels. One of the harkara provided information about the rebels at Lucknow. He said that about 18000 sepoys are present in Lucknow along with there were about 45 regiments of king's nujeebs counting 400 to 800 men in each and there were three regiments of irregular army. In the absence of telegraphic message the information regarding the movement of European army or reinforcement reaching to army or success and failure in battleground were all conveyed with the help of harkaras.³⁰ Along with these official lines of harkaras a parallel line of private harkaras was also functional. These sets of lines were maintained by the native informers, British officials and also by the private intelligence agencies. This line was useful as they enabled in commuting messages through the unusual line of dawk.³¹

³⁰From Mr Carnegie (the civil officer incharge of intelligence department in Jaunpore), Foreign Dept., Secret Consultation, 26th February 1858, no. 227& no.228

³¹ Foreign Dept., Secret Consultation, 31st July, 1859, no. 265

Another potent source of intelligence was the class of Munshis. The eminence of this traditional class of munshis began to reduce by 1830's. The British official felt that they were incompetent to suit the British need, however a few handful officials who continued to maintain their confidence in this class. This confidence paid them well at the time of mutiny in form of useful intelligence. The Traditional munshi class had close ties with the native rulers, courtiers and feudal lords. The patrimonial knowledge possessed by munshis helped the British to receive valuable intelligence about the enemy Camp. They were able to provide better picture of the sentiments, trends and emotions of dissatisfied Indian masses.

The native munshis in order to get information used their own set of spies and harkaras. The service of Munshi Hussein Begs and his agency helped with valuable information regarding the rebels in Narsinghpur State. His agents reported that in the village of Korwa situated within the Narsinghpur State, there was gathering of about one thousand men under the leadership of Bhawanee Singh, and they are said to be in possession of two guns. Their motive seems to break into a mutiny at Serohee.³²

Another important name, which comes across in this set, is of munshi Jeewan Lal. He was munshi with Sir Charles Metcalfe. As a Munshi he had a daily contact with the king and his family in Delhi. He was familiar with everyone in the palace. These ties of Jeewan Lal made him an excellent source of intelligence at the time of insurgency. He was actually within the walls of the palace when mutiny broke. As a

³² Foreign Dept., Secret consultation, 29th January 1858, no. 147 and no. 148.

result he was able to record and report the authentic news from the Palace. In the whole process he had a wide network of spies. The service, of two Brahmins Girdhari Lal Misser and Heera Lal Misser along with two Jats, were taken to get time-to-time information of all that had happened in the city gates and inside the palace. On 21st of May 1857, Munshi Jeewan Lal provided a valuable information that under the pressure of the king many officers and city bankers have raised an amount of one lakh for the payment to the rebellious troops.³³ Jeewan Lal information network also kept vigil on the information received by the rebels.

The vakeel of a friendly native ruler provided first hand information to the British government. They with their own network of intelligence provided minute details about the movement and strength of the rebels. This timely intelligence provided to British enabled them to curb activities of the rebels and control spread of mutiny.

The Vakeel of Kutara and killadar of Pitha had reported similar news that the forces from Mhow were assembling at Sagour. Further reports suggested that a letter be sent to Rani of Jhansee in which rebels have asked for guidance regarding the future course of action. Troops had informed their preparedness to attack the British on the night of Monday. The informer of the vakeel had reported that the rebels were informed by a harakara that there were only four regiments with the English to defend.³⁴

³³ C.F.Metcalf, *op.cit.*, translation of the accounts of Munshi Jeewan Lal.

³⁴ From Sir Robert Hamilton, (Agent to Governor General for Central India,) Foreign Dept., Secret consultation, 28th May 1858, no. 122

The Vakeel of Kutara had given British official detail intelligence about the strength of the rebels. It mentioned:

“Marathas were 4000, with one large and three small guns, shahgurdh chieftain have 2000 men and two guns at his disposal, Banpoor chief is with 3000 men and three guns, Nuruwr chief is with 1000 men, daisput chief strengthened the party with 4000 men and Tania tope brought 6000 men and 18 guns to gathering.” Vakeel of Tehree had further reported that all these troops intended to reach at Jhansee. On their way to Jhansee they were threatening the petty chiefs and the ruler to join their cause.³⁵

Another intelligence report was received by R.E.Hutchison, a political agent of Bhopal from the Vakeel of the Scindhia. This intelligence gave first intelligence regarding the eruption of Bundelas in rebellion. Thus enabling the political agent to alert all the military authorities at Saugor, Bhilsa and Basodda in advance. The Vakeel also provided the British authorities with a detailed name and strength of the rebels.³⁶

Information was supplied to a political agent of Bhopal through a memo of intelligence that Adil Mohammed khan and the followers were in Mahoudghee district.

“Bhopal Vakeel have written that Adil Mohammed khan accompanied by Deba Singh Jageerदार of Chowka with 500 Sawar and Sepoys have fled from Pooragoona toward Bundelkhand, Annant Khan Bukshee and Serferoz Khan with about 70 Cavalry and 300 infantry were left at Pooragoonah but intend to follow Adil Mohammed Khan into Bundelkhand.”³⁷

³⁵From Sir Robert Hamilton, (Agent to Governor General for Central India,) Foreign Dept., Secret consultation,, 28th May 1858, no. 124

³⁶ from Vakeel of Gwalior to R.E.Hutchison, Political Agent in Bhopal, Foreign Dept., Political consultation, 8th July, 1859.no. 140

³⁷ From Vakeel of Gwalior to R.E.Hutchison, Political Agent in Bhopal, Foreign Dept., Political Consultation, 8th July, 1859.no.143.

Further Vakeel of Tehree was able to intercept seditious parwana, which was written from an insurgent at Koolpahar to Sheikh Bahdoor, and other sepoys in service of Chutterpoor chief. It stated,

“ As the government wish to send all the infidel who attempt to encroach upon the Hindoos and Mohammeden religion to hell. Peshwa is leaving all his comforts, wealth and estate is wandering here and there in pursuit of their infidel. You are here by requested that should you feel any interest in your religion, join this force with all arms and ammunition you may have in your possession.”³⁸

In suppressing the rebellion the native informer performed a significant role. They provided very effective intelligence about their exact strength and whereabouts of the enemy. The native informer could easily penetrate into garrison of the enemy, thus providing a detailed picture of plans, their support system and also about their source of intelligence. Along with providing timely intelligence to the moving troops the native informers guided them into difficult geographical terrain as well. Another valuable help that the native informers extended to the British government was that they kept vigil on the circulation of the seditious material and rumours in order to prevent the situation from further worsening. A newsletter was received by the Chief Commissioner of the Oudh, which warned him that a serious surveillance should be kept on the movement of Shah Shooja Ul Mulk who had seditious material with him which he was supposed to disseminate in Rampoor, Delhi and Pillibheet. On receiving this intelligence, Shah and his associates were arrested with the seditious material, before they could cause harm further.³⁹ Along with a set of

³⁸ From Sir Robert Hamilton, (Agent to Governor General for Central India,) Foreign Dept., Secret consultation,, 28th May 1858, no. 124

³⁹ received by Chief commissioner of Oudh, Foreign Dept., Political consultation, 3rd December, 1858,no.166&no.167

official informers, the British officials during this period maintained a large number of spies. Many low-ranked Indian employees were brought into use as spies. For example the Deputy commissioner of Chindwara employed his peon in espionage in the city and the services of Tehsildar Mahmood Shoosha as a spy proved to be of great importance as well.⁴⁰

Significance of Telegraph

Along with these set of traditional mean of information British at this time were ripping the fruit of investment they made on the modern technology like telegraph and railways.

The introduction of electric telegraph helped British to circulate the intelligence pertaining to any event at much faster rate, thus giving them an upper hand over the Indian rulers, who were still dependent on the traditional form of communication. The intelligence machinery was well greased at that time, the news coming from one centre was transmitted to all Presidency and all major Residencies within two days. The smallest of news of any area was given importance. The availability of the telegraph made this possible, the news travelled like a wild fire thus enabling British to curb revolt on many places at the initial phase and some time even before the outbreak, as was the case in Punjab.⁴¹

⁴⁰ From Captain C.G.Robesson deputy commissioner of Chindwara. 31st July, 1857, , Foreign Dept., Political consultation, no.39

⁴¹ From Murray from Kanpur to W.Muir at Allahabad, Foreign Dept., Secret consultation, 26th January, 1858,no. 82 also see received by E.J.Edmonstone, Allahabad, Foreign Dept., Secret consultation, 26th January, 1858,no.103

The news of outbreak of the mutiny at Meerut was flashed to all major Residencies. As mentioned above that such news was not taken by many of the British official with much of seriousness. However if we look into the case of Punjab news proved to be quite beneficial. The news first was transmitted to Ambala and then to Lahore. On the arrival of news, there was a rapid disarming of Bengal army sepais in Lahore within twenty-four hour of outbreak of the mutiny.⁴² In Punjab we see that there was not much of disturbance, the mutiny broke in places like Ferozepur and Lahore. In case of Ferozepur, the accurate intelligence helped to put the mutineers into slices. The news of the outbreak of mutiny at Ferozepur was flashed in all station thus leading to the rapid disarming of army in Punjab. The 45th native infantry, at Ferozepur was cut into slices this was all due to the efforts of Sir John Lawrence.⁴³ He was the man who valued all the intelligence that was coming from the various corner of the state and country. He was in a regular contact with the Calcutta, thus enabling to get much faster news of mutiny in Meerut and Delhi. It was his vigour and ability to react to the coming news which brought Punjab into silence at earliest. Sir John Lawrence was able to disarm native army in Punjab who was feared to be notorious or disloyal.⁴⁴ Any intelligence received by him was immediately telegraphed to all the officials posted in Punjab. On receiving intelligence report Brig

⁴² C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*, op.cit., p.317

⁴³ Major W.S.R Hodson, *Twelve Year of Soldier's Life in India*, London: (1859), John, w Parker & son, p.240

⁴⁴ From Chief commissioner of Rawalpindi, Sir John Lawrence, Foreign Dept., Secret Consultation, 29th May 1857, no. 38.

Corbett was successfully able to draw troops at Meerut in cordial fashion.⁴⁵ The effective telegraphic intelligence helped J. Lawrence to organise a movable force at Jhelum composing of her majesty's 24th and 27th, the Guides, Kumaon battalion and other irregular army to move on in any required direction.⁴⁶ Further he was also able to replace various supposedly notorious native troops with the European troops.⁴⁷

Thus till the mutineers could disrupt the telegraphic line to Punjab, the situation was brought under control. Thus in this case one can say the telegraphic set up saved British, if the Punjab were lost then the repercussion would have been much serious. The support of the force from Punjab helped them to concentrate their defence forces in Delhi. Thus electric telegraph became the life support of the company not only in case of Punjab but also in the other region. In case of disruption of telegraph line the officials were ordered to send regular messages to the company's headquarter through the indirect line. Like in the case of breakdown of the regular dawk and telegraphic line between Agra and Calcutta, the lieutenant Governor of Agra was instructed to forward telegraph message to be routed through express dawk via Jubbulpur and Nagpore to Calcutta.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ From Sir J. Lawrence to Brig Corbett, Foreign Dept., Secret Consultation, 29th May 1857, no. 39.

⁴⁶ From Chief commissioner of Rawalpindi, Sir John Lawrence Foreign dept, secret consultation, 29th May 1857, no. 40.

⁴⁷ From Chief commissioner of Rawalpindi to Secretary of Governor General of India Calcutta, Sir John Lawrence Foreign dept, secret consultation, 29th May 1857, no. 42.

⁴⁸ Foreign Dept., Secret consultation, 31st July 1859, no. 230.

Role-played by the Individuals

At this hour of need there were certain men with outstanding calibre, who with their sensibility, courage and open-mindedness were able to procure excellent intelligence. One such name is of William Muir, whose ability to procure articulate information in right manner enabled him to earn repute in intelligence history. Under the supervision and guidance of William Muir a small intelligence department was establish in September of the 1857 at Agra. This department used to disseminate all the information coming from Delhi to rest of the Presidency and Residencies. He appointed a large body of well-paid and confidential agents who scouted enemy lines and maintained the links between the forces advancing on Kanpur and the British forces besieging Delhi. Muir used to prepare daily diary and circulated around the various stations so as to get a more realistic picture of the rebels. The entire newsletters received by Muir were examined in light of information provided by the other sources like spies and newspaper. After doing so he transmitted compiled news to Calcutta and to the other neighbouring areas. For the speedy transmit he used telegraph and set up various Harkara lines. Muir closest informer during the revolt was Chaube Ghanshayam Das.⁴⁹

Another important intelligence department was established in Oudh under the chief commissioner Major Bruce. He had an excellently organised intelligence department with an efficient set of detectives and spies. Bruce received a crucial help from Man Raj. Bruce department procured regular information about the rebels of Oudh.

⁴⁹ C.A.Bayly,op.cit., p.325

Bruce major task was to build communication outward from the capital. He was further given a task to have a constant contact with General Havelock's forces, which were embattling to relieve the Lucknow Residency.⁵⁰

Major W.S.R Hodson a man of courage, whose success story does not just lie in his military ability but also in his skill to gather excellent intelligence. He opined that the right intelligence would save his time money and energy.⁵¹ After his successful campaign in Punjab he was appointed as Assistant quartermaster general in charge of intelligence department. The first task in his new office that he received was to revive the communication between Meerut and Karnal. Hodson also worked with Agra authority to keep the dak running between Punjab and the East.⁵²

Hodson in whole process was able to win the support of Raja of Jindh and other Sikh rulers. By the mid of August Hodson and Montgomery together had set up a more direct spy network in Delhi. Hodson was aided by Maulvi Rajab Ali, the one eyed maulvi. He was the man who in past had acted as an eye and ear of Henry Lawrence. The information, which Rajab Ali used to send, was written in the Urdu on a small piece of the Indian paper, which could be folded up and hidden in a stick or in clothing. The news send by Rajab Ali regarding the rebels was an elaborated one and week after week it continued to provide minute information of Delhi

⁵⁰ C.A.Bayly, op.cit., p.326, also see from Major Bruce (chief commissioner of Oudh), Foreign dept, secret consultation, 4th March 1859, no.403

⁵¹ B.J.Cork, *Rider on a Grey Horse. A Life of Hodson of Hodson's Horse.*, op.cit., p.90

⁵² Major W.S.R Hodson, op.cit., p.185

rebels.⁵³ Thus enabled Hodson in attacking the rebels in the right way. With his effort British were able to seize Delhi and forced Emperor of Delhi to surrender. His effort and success over the Delhi rebels provided an upper hand to the British over the other set of rebels across the country. A victory like this did help to weaken the morale of many mutineers.

Hodson besides depending on the set of spy used to go personally on an expedition to city. He interacted with people in order to know the sentiments and belief of the people and also mental state of the rebels. Hodson was successful in getting better intelligence, as he could spoke Punjabi and most of local dialects beginning from Yuasfzai to Lahore and accordingly had little difficulty in making contact with his command and also in gaining intelligence. His ability helped him to fetch information from a beggar, who warned Hodson that mutineers have slain his twenty-five men and he should take precaution in moving ahead. Hodson was also able to use some mutineers as spies on his behalf. Thus by all these means Hodson was able to get himself acquainted with mood strength and action plan of the rebels, which in turn helped him to have his military success, not only in Delhi but also in Lucknow.⁵⁴

⁵³ C.A.Bayly, op.cit., p.327.

⁵⁴ B.J.Cork, op.cit., p.95

Censorship and Control of Information

Steps were taken by the government to control the circulation of the inflammatory material, which travelled quite rapidly through mediums of letters and Press. The government made efforts to bring the censorship of the letter specially those between the various ruler and that of sepoys. The letters were scrutinised as many of them contained enigmatic and treasonable messages, which were cautiously worded wrapping up political information in everyday phrases. For example white wheat has become very scarce and country produce very abundant, or hats were hardly seen and white turban plentiful.

In order to intercept these kinds of letters each district magistrate was appointed as head postmaster with order all Indian letters should be opened and scrutinised by the British eye.⁵⁵ The officiating commissioner of Punjab intercepted one such letter. It was a letter written by the king of Delhi to Raja of Patiala, it stated,

“ You have heard of rumours and through the native newspaper of the organisation of authority and the existence of alarming disorder. Therefore on account of your process attachment to my family you are directed as quickly as possible to reappear here in person with all your army and resources. Delay not because there is neither a word of escape nor for opposition in my part.”⁵⁶

Many more such letters were found which were contaminated with the seditious material, thus the examination of such letter helped British to control the circulation

⁵⁵ C.A.Bayly, op.cit., p.319

⁵⁶ Received by officiating commissioner of Punjab, Foreign dept, secret consultation, 25th September 1857, no. 5.

of seditious material in general public. As well it helped company officials to know the design of the rebels.

Another source of circulation of the seditious material was the press. After the outbreak of rebel, the press was brought under strict censorship. As the newspaper or the other leaflets containing the anti government views, might be small in circulation, were read aloud in the public. Thus they had a much great impact on the mind of the natives. Kaye opined that every reader and ever hearer was, in an extreme degree, credulous and suspicion, every lie uttered and printed was believed as gospel. He further opines that circulation of seditious material in this way had more of impact on the people than any other source. As press held great degree of authority over the people's mind. In order to control circulation of such material strict censorship laws were passed. By these set of laws no printing press was kept without the license from the government. If so kept in defiance of law, it might be confiscated. The executive government was vested with full power to suppress at will any publication, which might be considered as injurious to the interest of the state.⁵⁷ Besides this the editor of the Chesma-I- Faiz of Sialkot was ordered to shift his press to Lahore where it was kept under the direct surveillance of the government. Many such efforts were made by which the press was put under strict circulation thus preventing it from the circulation of the treasonable and seditious material in the society. These mean of surveillance helped in controlling the anti British feeling in the general masses.

⁵⁷ Kaye and Malleeson, Vol.3, op.cit. ,pp.3-5

Conclusion

To conclude, the intelligence system built over a previous decades did not altogether failed the East India Company. It is true that, we have noted in the early part of this chapter, there was an intelligence failure. In many instances the rumours and warnings were ignored and that size and distance prevented many of the British officials from understanding the sentiments of the people and from appreciating the significance of the intelligence that was available. However the British managed to overcome these shortcomings and failure of the intelligence system in the 1857 because their native informants continued to be functional and a new technology of telegraph communication gave the British an advantage over the natives. Some British officers like Muir and Hodson used their experience in India to rebuild a network during and after the rebellion of the 1857. Thus a, balance view of the problem and means of intelligence system would suggest that the failure was at the initial stage, in the long run it was an asset for the empire in spying over the native rulers.

CONCLUSION

The work under study focuses on the building of a system of intelligence gathering on part of the British. The existing system of pre-colonial India was harnessed and shaped to suit the imperialist designs. The system received its formal shape under the Residency system. The system may be outwardly was like the pre colonial set up but its manner and nature of gathering information was very British. The reciprocity relation between power and knowledge was one of the under current trend which featured the entire work.

The first chapter focuses on the working and the significance of the intelligence gathering under the Residency system. The roles of Vakil, Munshi, Newswriter and Harkara have been examined in the formal framework of the Residency. In the entire structure of the intelligence gathering the natives had played a significant role. The natives proved to be a signifying element in not just procuring intelligence but by doing so they enabled the British to reach at the apex of the Indian polity. The natives were the bonds between the Indian courts and their new masters. They with their tremendous knowledge and experience about the Indian society were able to manipulate a situation in favour of their masters.

Thus by the 1830's, the British intelligence system had become a centralised set up. The information amassed from the length and breath of the country was transmitted to the various parts in the coherent form. It is true that military might of the British enabled them to establish the hegemony but availability of such integrated and

coherent information enabled the British officer to formulate and execute their plans with accuracy and in advance.

The 1830's witnessed a shift of British, from their dependence to the traditionally trained natives to that of the English educated Indians. Such a system had both its advantages and drawbacks. The new class provided an information, which was more precise and formulaic in nature based on data. But new class ceased to provide information from the very core of Indian society and court.

The second chapter examines the role of the natives as source of intelligence. The age-old crime of thuggee was sliced down in no time with the information provided by the native people and approvers. They provided information which, raised curtain from very existence of crime. A window was opened which let the British officials to peep into customs, beliefs and practises of a criminal that had been concealed into an unknown sphere of knowledge.

The nature of information received by the Thuggee and Dakaiti department was more related to rudimentary aspect of the society as compare to that of the Akhbrat, which dealt with the higher order of the society. W.H.Sleeman formulated the eye opening devise under this department. During his stay in India and his various endeavours to curtail crime, he realised the importance of the information that was very dear to the criminal itself, in order to end the crime. The method, which Sleeman propagated, did not just retain itself to the task of receiving information. But it was a plan, which ensured continuous and reliable information about the

criminals. Various rehabilitation measures were undertaken which aimed at both securities of the thugs and their family. Secondly they restricted the spread of a crime to the next generation of the criminals. Thus 'power of one', is a phrase which can be rightly used for the endeavours and the efforts made by Sleeman.

The success of the department of Thuggee and Dakaiti rested on the information provided by the natives. The third chapter evaluates the significance of native informants in the intelligence machinery at the time of rebellion of 1857.

The displacement of the native informants by the newly emerged class of informants in 1830's meant that native set of informer who earlier kept Company informed about the grievances was not available thus causing in a void between the British officials and the Indian masses. Consequently, a space for misinterpretation was created.

The rebellion of the 1857 on one hand brought the unpleasantly conspicuous weaknesses of the intelligence system but on the same time it exhibited an excellent show of the intelligence agency. The entire rebellion was brought to an end in a small period; its credit can be attributed to the military might and the intelligence agencies of the Company. The success of the intelligence network rested on the fact that it was able incorporate both traditional and modern means of intelligence and communication. The reliance on the natives at this time was immense, due to their possession of enormous and specialised knowledge about the rebels. The officials

like W.Muir and Hodson acknowledged the fact that this was the class, which could provide them a reliable information about the sentiments and feeling of the people.

In addition, the telegraphic communication aided the British. The telegraphic communication was not only a reliable but also the fastest mode of communication.

In this period of tribulation and adversity telegraphic innovation was the life support of the British regime.

To conclude that there was the intelligence failure at the time of the mutiny would not be wrong. This failure neither meant the collapse of the British regime nor that of the intelligence agencies. This failure the part of the teething problem faced by the nascent intelligence system. The success of the intelligence network at the time of the mutiny confirmed that it rested on the strong foundation, a foundation that was ready to bear future challenges of intelligence posed by the nationalist and revolutionary movements.

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