

○ EDUCATING GOVIND SINGH

'PRINCELY CHARACTER' AND THE FAILURE OF INDIRECT RULE IN COLONIAL INDIA

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If Government accept my proposal for a new Diwan and if we get the man I suggest as early as possible, I hope we shall soon get matters fairly straight and even succeed in putting the young Maharaja on the right path. He is now in a fairly penitent frame of mind, and if we can set good influences to work around him, he may turn over a new leaf.¹

In November 1910, the Agent to the Governor-General (AGG) for Central India, Michael O'Dwyer, reported that Govind Singh, a ruler under his supervision, was implicated in the 'very shocking' murder-suicide of ten of his subjects.² The 24-year-old ruler had been the Maharaja of the princely state of Datia, in what is now northeastern Madhya Pradesh, since 1907. Further investigation of this and similar occurrences revealed 'a callous disregard [by Govind Singh] of the most elementary principles of justice'.³ Consequently, in March 1911 the British Government of India accepted O'Dwyer's recommendation that Datia's ineffective *dewan* (chief minister) be replaced by a British appointee. The newcomer should be given a broad mandate to reform the state's administration. The Maharaja was formally warned that in the event of 'further gross misconduct' he would be deprived of his ruling powers.⁴ A few months later, however, in the face of Govind Singh's inadequate contrition, broken promises and renewed machinations, O'Dwyer conceded that his assessment of the situation had been 'over-sanguine'.⁵ He was subsequently instructed to inform the Maharaja that:

Your Highness's failure to profit by the very definite and repeated warnings conveyed to you, clearly indicate[s] that Your Highness is no longer fit to be entrusted with any voice in the administration of the State ... It has therefore been decided that Your Highness should be immediately relieved of your powers and reside outside your State on a suitable allowance at some place to be selected by you in consultation with the political authorities.⁶

The scandals that culminated in the crisis of 1911 in Datia were sufficiently serious to have ended the Maharaja's reign. However, the deprivation of Govind Singh's ruling powers and his exile from Datia by the British political authorities were never intended to be permanent. To the contrary, Govind Singh was from the outset advised that his powers and privileges would be restored when he had demonstrated that he could once again be entrusted with such responsibilities.⁷ Within a few years the Government of India felt confident that the Maharaja was a new man, and restored him to the Datia *gaddi* (throne), although they imposed restrictions upon his exercise of authority usually associated with a minor prince or new ruler. This renewal of confidence in Govind Singh's character was not to last. In response to a succession of similar crises over the

next three decades, the Maharaja's powers were repeatedly restricted, then restored, as officials failed to maintain effective control over Datia by indirect means alone.

This chapter will explore how British perceptions of Govind Singh as a man and a ruler were fundamentally qualified by the power relationship between political officers (as representatives of the British Crown) and the subordinate rulers of princely India they supervised, by the internal dynamics of the imperial administrative apparatus, and by circumstances within Datia and colonial India more broadly. It is not concerned with identifying the reality of Govind Singh's personality and behaviour, nor with determining to what extent British perceptions were an accurate reflection of this reality. Rather, it focuses on the imperial gaze and the dialogue between the forms of knowledge produced by the British in India, and the forms of authority that they simultaneously exercised.

What is of significance in the British deprivation of Govind Singh's powers in 1911 is that instead of utilising their preconceptions about princely character and conduct in order to justify deposing the young prince, these preconceptions were, on the whole, marshalled by political officers in support of the ruler's retention. Govind Singh's youth, his lack of preparation for administrative duties, and his declared willingness to abandon bad habits and undesirable associates, appear to have inspired British officials to locate their perceptions of poor judgement, moral weaknesses and administrative abuses within the available stereotype of the minor prince, or heir to the throne. With the appropriate guidance, training and supervision, provided by suitable British men, it was assumed that a young prince could become a model 'native' ruler. The logical consequence of thus infantilising Govind Singh was the politically appealing notion that officials could 'start again' with the Maharaja, which led to persistently optimistic assessments of his capacity for 'reform', and discouraged more punitive responses to his alleged misdeeds.

Such optimism eventually faded as the ageing Maharaja repeatedly failed to perform the role of compliant ruler and his personal deficiencies increasingly appeared incurable. Indeed, over the course of Govind Singh's reign, the British became convinced that his personal life – in particular, his abuse of alcohol and indulgence in 'irregular' sexual acts – impaired his capacity to rule. If Govind Singh could not be reformed, it was argued, then the state and his subjects would have to be protected from him. This would only be achieved, it was thought, by imposing a *dewan* who could manipulate both Govind Singh and the complex internal politics of the state. The crucial role of the *dewan* in securing control for the British over a recalcitrant ruler can be seen in the crises that developed in Datia whenever the state lacked a strong *dewan*. The constant need for a *dewan* who was capable both of controlling the Maharaja and of protecting himself demonstrates that the use of indirect methods in Datia was ultimately unsuccessful. The British consistently failed to secure the cooperation expected of Govind Singh through the use of 'advice' and 'influence' – the methods characteristic of indirect rule across the Empire – alone.

The survival of Govind Singh, from his accession in 1907 to the eve of Independence, however inglorious his career might have been, suggests that British conceptions of princely 'character' could operate to support and retain princes who, according to these ideas, were capable of governing neither themselves nor their subjects. Moreover, given the opportunity, a perceptive ruler could utilise such ideas to their own advantage. While Govind Singh's success in this regard was only ever partial, his long (albeit troubled) reign reflects both the degree of influence that British

assumptions about elite Indian ‘character’ could have upon their interactions with their client princes, and their extreme reluctance to depose even the worst of the princes.⁸

The ‘shocking’ revelations of injustice and maladministration in Datia discussed at the outset of this chapter occurred in late 1910. On a visit in October, Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Macdonald, the local Political Agent, had been informed that a few days earlier an elite household had been virtually obliterated by a murder-suicide that appeared to be linked to the Maharaja.⁹ Further enquiries revealed that the head of the family in question, Govind Das, had been arrested and imprisoned by the *Ijlas-e-khas*, a tribunal operating in parallel to the *darbar* (state bureaucracy) and under the orders of the Maharaja. Govind Das had been accused of embezzling state funds (prior to his arrest he had administered the privy purse), and told that unless he produced the money ‘his skin would be taken off and filled with *bhusa*’.¹⁰ After two days in custody, and with his hands bound in an act of public humiliation, Govind Das was paraded by police through the capital to his home, so that he might persuade his two brothers to pay the debt. Seeing him approach, the brothers assembled the other nine family members – two of whom were pregnant women – in the courtyard and murdered them, before killing themselves. The only survivor was Govind Das’s teenage son. Upon examination, he recounted that one uncle had claimed it would be ‘better to die’ than to be treated in the same manner as the Latorias, a family that had been similarly harassed a year earlier.¹¹

The murder-suicide of the Das family was, by any measure, horrific. Beyond the immediate human cost, however, it had significant political consequences. First, official speculation about what had motivated the Das brothers soon concluded:

either (1) that the Maharaja is such a tyrant that people prefer death to obeying a summons to his presence, or (2) that these unfortunate people had been threatened in such a way that they thought it better to die than to expose themselves to the fury of the *Ijlas-e-khas*.¹²

Second, the responses of Govind Singh and his officials were judged inadequate and inappropriate, and they were soon suspected of being to some extent responsible for the deaths. The Maharaja, when presented by Macdonald with the two explanations quoted above, was unable to provide any other.¹³ Indeed, he was initially ‘inclined to treat the matter lightly’, and ascribed the actions of the brothers to their ‘guilty fears’.¹⁴ The Maharaja later observed in an interview with O’Dwyer that ‘suicide was very common in Datia’, which provoked the indignant response that ‘it was only when injustice and oppression were given free play, and people had lost all hope of living with honour that they became desperate and committed suicide’.¹⁵ Further, the fact that the political authorities had heard of the deaths not from Datia, but from British officials nearby at Jhansi rankled, especially as the deaths had so closely preceded Macdonald’s visit. O’Dwyer thought that the explanation given by the *dewan* for not having reported the deaths showed ‘a flippant and callous view of a particularly atrocious case’ and indicated that neither Govind Singh nor his officials grasped the extent of their responsibility.¹⁶

Finally, further investigation revealed a series of suspicious deaths since the Maharaja’s accession in 1907. The most recent was that of Anant Singh, who was fatally shot while on a shooting trip with the Maharaja; his death had never been fully investigated. In the Latoria case, referred to in the course of the Das family’s murder-suicide, two brothers, accused in 1909 of

embezzling funds, were imprisoned and ill treated by the *Ijlas-e-khas*. One allegedly died in gaol. In August 1908, a young man died after falling into a well. While the circumstances were suspicious, no enquiry was made into the death and his relatives apparently believed it had been accidental. Only a month earlier, Diwan Kamta Parshad, a senior bureaucrat in the service of the Maharaja's mother, had killed his wife and then himself after being stripped of his job and humiliated by the *dewan*. Despite leaving a written statement that his actions were due to the *dewan* having 'spoken harshly' to him, the *darbar* concluded that the deaths were the result of a marital dispute.¹⁷

Given such disturbing revelations, how did British officials articulate their perceptions of Govind Singh's character, conduct and prospects as a ruler? From the outset, expectations of the Maharaja were low, due to the circumstances in which he came to power. His father, Bhavani Singh, had mismanaged Datia for much of the late nineteenth century, and had deliberately neglected the 'English' education of his heir, to which he had objected. Consequently not only was Datia judged to be 'perhaps the most mis-governed State in Bundelkhand',¹⁸ but Govind Singh was ill-prepared for the administrative and political challenges awaiting him on his accession at the age of 21, and was considered 'wholly incapable of rising to the situation'.¹⁹ With the exception of a brief period spent at the Imperial Cadet Corps college, British officials thought Govind Singh's education typified the worst aspects of palace life in an Indian state: 'he had grown up among all the evil influences of a corrupt and vicious petty Court, surrounded by depraved and disreputable companions who set themselves to obtain an influence over his weak nature by humouring his whims, pandering to his vices, and encouraging his natural tendency to arrogance and arbitrariness'.²⁰ By the beginning of the twentieth century, the education of princely heirs (and their relatives) had become a key site of British intervention in princely India. While the extent of Govind Singh's preparation for rulership was by no means rare in 1907, British officials increasingly saw it as woefully inadequate. They could thus grant the young Maharaja, involuntarily deprived of training in the tools of his trade, some leniency in evaluating his early performance.

Even so, Govind Singh's conduct during his first years in power failed to satisfy even the low expectations of British officials. He had neglected the undertakings made at his installation to rule in the interests of his subjects and to consult (and obtain the consent of) the Political Agent in all important matters. In public, he had allowed his 'favourites' to assume control of Datia's administration and commit a range of abuses of power. In private, he had 'given himself up to evil associates', with whom he indulged in 'the most disgraceful orgies'.²¹ Indeed, his indulgence in alcohol and 'licentious pleasures' appeared to have become an addiction and was readily identified as the cause of his administrative failings.²² Moreover, the Maharaja seemed incapable of realising the gravity of the situation, or the responsibility he bore for lending his support, however tacit, to those practices that had led to the Das murder-suicide.²³

Consequently, there was little to commend Govind Singh to the British. His personal conduct offended their sensibilities, he lacked the judgement and willpower to prevent the administration being usurped by favourites, and he had failed to honour his commitment to properly involve the local political officer in the running of the state. Nonetheless, O'Dwyer stopped short of recommending drastic intervention in Datia, arguing that Govind Singh 'has had a bad start, and is not entirely to blame for what has happened within the last 2 or 3 years; though ignorant,

weak, and viciously inclined, he is still young and appears for the time being at least, to be anxious to reform himself'.²⁴ Indeed, because of the admonitory interviews to which he had been subjected, the Maharaja was now 'in a most exemplary frame of mind, much improved in health, and beginning to show an intelligent interest in State affairs'. More importantly, he had expressed his willingness to cooperate with administrative change and had dismissed two of his least desirable associates.²⁵ While Gulab Singh remained in a 'penitent' frame of mind, the opportunity existed to reform him. If he were exposed to positive influences, he might 'turn over a new leaf' and be set 'on the right path'.²⁶ O'Dwyer recommended that the incumbent *dewan* be replaced by someone more capable, who would be responsible for the administration, could not be dismissed without the Government of India's approval, and would exert a 'wholesome influence' over Govind Singh and gradually prepare him to rule without such constraints.²⁷

This minimalist approach was approved by the government, with the Foreign Secretary, Sir Henry McMahon, conceding that while more aggressive intervention was justified, Govind Singh was 'a young man' and seemed 'anxious to do better'.²⁸ The appointment of a 'reliable' *dewan* for three years was thus endorsed, and O'Dwyer was ordered to explain to the Maharaja that 'in the event of further gross misconduct His Excellency will not hesitate to deprive him of his powers and dissociate him from all matters connected with the administration of the State'.²⁹ The success of this strategy – of permitting Govind Singh to publicly retain power, while in effect depriving him of all but its most nominal forms – was dependent upon the Maharaja acknowledging the situation in which he was now placed, and cooperating fully with the new regime.

For a few months, all had appeared to be progressing smoothly. In September 1911, however, O'Dwyer reported that Govind Singh had 'adopted a hostile attitude' towards the new *dewan* and that intrigue was resurfacing:³⁰

he [has] reverted to his drunken and profligate habits and under the advice of evil counsellors and low companions openly insulted the Civil Officials of the State who have recently been appointed to assist the Dewan, intrigued against the Dewan and generally showed complete disregard of the advice tendered to him.³¹

O'Dwyer accordingly visited Datia and secured promises of amendment and improvement from the Maharaja. He attempted to confront Govind Singh with the impact of his habits upon the state, warning him against 'drink' and 'evil companions'. The Maharaja 'spoke of these as youthful follies which he could easily lay aside'. O'Dwyer's verdict was cautiously optimistic:

... I believe he means what he says but he has no stability and no permanent good influence ... near him, in fact all his environments rather encourage indulgence and dissipation. He has no real sense of responsibility for the welfare of his people, but is quick enough to approve and adopt schemes for improvement.³²

However, the report of the Political Agent, Lieutenant-Colonel L. Impey, on his visit the following month indicated that little had changed. The Maharaja was so drunk at the *darbar* (ceremony) held to celebrate the festival of *Dassehra* that he had to be assisted from the scene.

His associates continued to hamper the administration. Impey had even received reports of the Maharaja encouraging them to physically injure the *dewan*.³³ O'Dwyer conceded that he had accepted Govind Singh's promises too quickly. Nonetheless, the only response he recommended was that the Maharaja's invitation to attend the Coronation Durbar in Delhi on 12 December 1911 be cancelled, as the Maharaja attached great value to this invitation, and this public humiliation would exert influence for the better upon his conduct.³⁴

The Foreign Department were far from convinced that O'Dwyer's proposal was adequate. The Additional Foreign Secretary, J B Wood, argued that 'the Maharaja is incorrigible ... it is useless giving him a fair trial, and ... he ought to be deprived of his powers at once. It is not fair to the Dewan or to the people of the State to leave them at the Maharaja's mercy any longer'.³⁵

The construction of this statement is significant in that it gives clear precedence to the interests of the people of Datia *and* a 'foreign' (non-Datia) official over the rights of the ruler, which suggests that the British conceived of Govind Singh's stake in Datia narrowly, as merely a 'life-interest'.³⁶ As such, the Maharaja's influence had to be neutralised:

the failure of His Highness to profit by the very definite warning conveyed to him ... indicates clearly that he is no longer fit to be entrusted with any voice in the administration of his State and it would not be consistent with the duty of the Supreme Government to maintain him in a position of authority. I am therefore to request that steps may be immediately taken to relieve the Maharaja of the powers which he now possesses ...³⁷

Govind Singh was informed of the government's decision in mid-November, and by the end of the month had heard that the orders would not be reconsidered on the basis of any appeal. However, O'Dwyer made it clear to the Maharaja that the deprivation of his powers was intended to be temporary:

as you have brought this calamity on your own head by your misconduct and disregard of the advice and warning of Government, so it is in your own power to redeem your name and recover your position by reforming yourself and accepting the advice which will be tendered to you by those who really have at heart the interests of yourself and your State.³⁸

Tension and uncertainty developed in Datia in the following weeks. Agitation in the capital against the Maharaja's departure was considered sufficiently serious to warrant the despatch of troops. Govind Singh finally left the state on 22 December, accompanied by his new 'guardian', Captain Tyndall. As the arrangements for their residence were not yet confirmed, the two men and their entourage occupied themselves by embarking on a shooting expedition, before eventually moving into a rented house in the civil lines at Bareilly.³⁹

Given the scale of allegations against him, Govind Singh was lucky to retain the prospect of reinstatement. That he did so was not due to any political ability he might have possessed. Rather, it was because his relative youth corresponded with the value attached by the British at that time to princely education and training; who believed that the subordinate 'traditional' elites of empire should be trained to perform their important role to the greatest effect. The preparation of princely heirs for the responsibilities of rulership (and of sons of nobles for senior positions in

their durbars) was therefore of great political importance. Indeed, it has been argued that adolescence and young adulthood were the stages in the princely life-cycle over which the British claimed, and exerted, the greatest influence and control.⁴⁰

While British officials and princely families fiercely contested the form of education that would achieve the best results, the intensity of the debate indicates that most participants took the importance of education for granted. Indeed, initiatives by rulers could lead to British action on the matter. In 1911, an enquiry from the Raja of Nabha prompted the Foreign Department to assess whether quantitative evidence actually upheld their conviction that an 'English' education created effective, successful rulers.⁴¹ Similarly, the chiefs' colleges, established from 1870 for the purpose of educating the sons of rulers and nobles, and other elite young men, were supported by varying levels of personal and financial assistance from princely families.⁴² Lord Curzon, while serving as Viceroy from 1898 to 1905, was a central figure in the promotion of an 'appropriate' education for princes. He not only attempted to improve the chiefs' colleges, but also conceived of the Imperial Cadet Corps, established in 1900, as a suitably martial, active vocation for such men. The Imperial Cadet Corps College was envisaged as an institution where future rulers would imbibe just the right mixture of 'oriental tradition' and 'western modernity'.⁴³

In contrast, Curzon condemned – and, in an embarrassing political misjudgement that alienated many rulers, attempted in 1900 to control – the European travel of rulers and heirs. He argued that such travel 'does not do good, but positive harm. It unsettles the Chief, implants in him foreign tastes, ideas, and inclinations, tempts him to spend large sums of money which are drawn from his subjects, and sends him back to his State a discontented alien, who is divorced in sentiment from his people'.⁴⁴ Whether travelling for education, medical treatment or pleasure, the 'denationalised' and 'debauched' men who emerged from such experiences were thought to be of little further political utility, as they had lost their supposedly primal bonds of shared culture and beliefs with, and thus presumably their authority over, their subjects. Without appropriate education and control of princes, Curzon feared that 'the institution of Native principalities [would] be irretrievably doomed'.⁴⁵

In the case of Govind Singh, his propensity to alcoholism and 'deviant' sexual practices led the AGG to recommend that he be placed under the 'guardianship' of a medical officer, who could medicate or restrain him if attempts to restrict his access to alcohol failed. If a medical officer was (as it transpired) unavailable, then a 'suitable military officer' would be adequate.⁴⁶ The appointment of Captain Tyndall reflects the emphasis placed on the close supervision of the Maharaja, in order to isolate him physically from the supposedly corrupting and enervating influences of palace life as a prerequisite for equipping him with the personal qualities and skills to return to power. His subsequent education consisted not only of instruction in governmental theory and administrative methods, but involvement in activities that, it was assumed, would 'cure' him of his pathological desires and instil in him a new, stronger character. To this end, travel was employed as part of the 'treatment', although travel of a different kind to that which Curzon criticised. The Maharaja and his guardian were sent to East Africa on a hunting trip. The ostensibly simple, manly pleasures of the hunt (in what Europeans generally saw as the inherently more masculine African environment) soon fostered the desired changes in Govind Singh, who 'became a total abstainer and [showed] no inclination to return to his other disgraceful vice'.⁴⁷

The program of reform to which Govind Singh was subjected had a predictably positive effect in the eyes of its executors. In May 1914, the Deputy Foreign Secretary, Robert Holland, solicited information on the Maharaja's progress from the AGG (now Oswald Bosanquet), explaining that the Viceroy (Baron Hardinge) was inclined 'to reinstate him early with fairly full powers' if recent reports were satisfactory.⁴⁸ Bosanquet had not yet met Govind Singh, who was then living at Ajmer. However, on the basis of reports from the Agent, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Pritchard, and Govind Singh's guardian, he considered that – although his intellectual development was 'slow' and his preparation for government 'still rudimentary' – the Maharaja's progress was 'most satisfactory'. Nonetheless, Bosanquet urged that Govind Singh's return be postponed, partly because he needed further training, but mainly due to Datia's administration still being in a 'transitional' state. Consequently, Govind Singh should acquire the relevant skills by 'a stay in Indore of two or three months, during which he could attend the Residency Courts and receive a certain amount of instruction', and should then 'be allowed to return to Datia on probation to study administration with the Diwan preparatory to being granted powers by degrees'.⁴⁹ His education would thus be completed after, rather than before, his return to Datia, and he would continue to be treated as a minor.

Pritchard had spent a week with Govind Singh the previous year and could thus provide a more substantive assessment of his progress. In particular, Pritchard ascribed positive significance to the development of the Maharaja's interest in sport and games, which would 'help to keep him satisfactorily and healthily' occupied on his return to Datia – thus limiting the time available for (and hopefully preventing any renewal of interest in) less 'satisfactory' or 'healthy' pursuits. To this end, Pritchard had been involved in ensuring that polo facilities were ready for the Maharaja's return, and was heartened by the knowledge that both Captain Tyndall and the state's Revenue Settlement Officer, Mr Bomford, played the game.⁵⁰ This emphasis on sport was not unique. It is evident in the predominance of 'appropriate' physical activity in the curricula of the chiefs' colleges,⁵¹ as well as in the importance in colonial India of a British official's enthusiasm for, and conduct during, sport in assessing eligibility for promotion. Both in the Empire and – albeit in subtly different ways – at home, sport and recreation more broadly were readily used in this period as a tool with which to mould and to assess a man's character – particularly in relation to such values as honour and 'team-spirit'.⁵²

The encouraging news that Govind Singh happily played polo, tennis, badminton and billiards also enabled Pritchard to discourage his superiors from attaching significance to the Maharaja's involvement in an 'intrigue' in Ajmer. Govind Singh had paid a man 12,000 rupees and promised more in the hope that the recipient would advance his case with the political authorities. Although the incident demonstrated an 'inherent weakness' of character, Pritchard resorted to stereotype in dismissing it, arguing that 'The interest of such an intrigue in the humdrum life at Ajmer, is perhaps more than any Oriental could resist'.⁵³ In order to determine exactly how far this 'Oriental' had progressed, it would be necessary therefore to *test* his conduct:

this test should ... be to allow him to go to Datia for a week to ten days ... and there let him live in the Guest House with Captain Tyndall, *just as a Minor chief would live with his guardian*, and having nothing whatsoever to do with the State administration, and then ... lengthen his visits ... if we find he shows himself equal to the test. *Treating him thus just like a minor Chief is treated ...*

there would ... be no difficulty or trouble ... The Maharaja has, I think, *learnt his lesson too thoroughly* to attempt any intrigue or to interfere in the State administration in any way.⁵⁴ [italics added]

This use of the language of childhood and schooling is significant, not merely in its resonance with the tendency of colonising powers in this period to infantilise colonial subjects, but also for the complacent naivety of British officials about the Maharaja's relationships with individuals and groups within his own state that it reveals.

The proposal that Govind Singh should 'go to school under his own Minister' was not welcomed by the Foreign Department.⁵⁵ Instead, Bosanquet's appeals for postponement of any decision until he could see the Maharaja were met with impatience by Hardinge, who stated that it had always been his intention to restore the Maharaja to Datia in the spring, and that Bosanquet was procrastinating. He therefore set a deadline for Govind Singh's return of 1 August 1914, subject to the receipt of a favourable report, and requested a revised set of recommendations from Bosanquet.⁵⁶ The AGG was given explicit guidance in framing his revised proposals – to 'consider' the department's suggestion that Govind Singh should return to Datia with slightly restricted powers, exercised subject to the advice of the Agent or a specially deputed British officer.⁵⁷

In the interim, the Maharaja had been Bosanquet's guest at Indore for a week. This visit, and the pressure now placed on him from above, encouraged a modification of Bosanquet's opinion – it was now time to recognise the efforts made by Govind Singh to 'reform himself' by 'allowing him to return to his State with limited powers'. However, Bosanquet emphasised that although substantial progress had been made, the prince's character was still far from perfect. In particular, his dishonesty and 'outbursts of temper' persisted and would remain liabilities. His depiction of Govind Singh's 'preference for the society of his servants', 'entire lack of human affection', 'want of will and moral courage', and 'natural vindictiveness' further conveyed the impression of a ruler requiring close supervision. Consequently, Bosanquet specified an array of preconditions for restoration of the Maharaja's powers. These included the indefinite retention of a British officer to cohabit as 'personal friend and adviser', exclusion from Govind Singh's remit of the key governmental departments (judicial, police, revenue, settlement, customs and excise, and finance), and the imposition of significant restrictions upon his management of the remaining departments. Moreover, without the Agent's consent, Govind Singh could not correspond with, or bring back to Datia, any associates who had previously been expelled. The Agent would also retain the right to remove any 'undesirables'. Finally, Bosanquet ignored Hardinge's deadline, specifying a return date of mid-September.⁵⁸

Hardinge's response was both predictable and understandable: Bosanquet's recommended restrictions were 'absurd and quite unacceptable'.⁵⁹ Wood duly suggested to Bosanquet that the proposed restrictions need not be codified formally beyond 'one general condition ... that His Highness must consult Mr. Tyndall in all matters public and private and be guided by his advice thereon subject to general control of [the] Political Agent'. Specifics could be arranged between the Agent and the Maharaja.⁶⁰ Bosanquet now agreed to adhere to the deadline set by Hardinge, but insisted that 'with a Chief so absolutely unreliable as the Maharaja ... it is very desirable to tie him down beforehand' in relation to the state's judicial system.⁶¹ The retention of judicial

powers by the Agent was approved. Bosanquet's other proposals, however, were definitively rejected, Wood arguing that 'if His Highness loyally abides by the advice of Captain Tyndall and the Political Agent, there is no need for the further stipulations'.⁶²

As ordered, the Maharaja was formally re-invested with ruling powers at a durbar held at Datia on 1 August 1914. The Agent announced that:

the Viceroy has been graciously pleased to restore to Your Highness under certain conditions, which have been carefully recorded and explained and willingly accepted by you, the authority and powers of a ruling Chief ... I formally place Your Highness in charge of your State subject to those conditions ...⁶³

Govind Singh expressed his gratitude and promised:

I shall try my humble best to prove myself a *fit agent to carry on the behests of the Paramount Power*, and to unflinchingly continue in my staunch and unswerving loyalty for the sacred Person of His Most Gracious and Imperial Majesty the King-Emperor and for the British Raj ...⁶⁴ [italics added]

By December 1915, Bosanquet felt sufficiently confident of the Maharaja's improvement to report that their confidence in him had been justified. He recommended that, as a 'mark of appreciation' and 'incentive to further efforts', Govind Singh should have the majority of his judicial powers restored to him. Bosanquet's report was unambiguously optimistic: the Maharaja had 'applied himself with assiduity and ability to *all* the details' of the administration and his relations with his *dewan* were 'entirely harmonious'. He possessed 'an intimate knowledge of his territory', and if he continued in his present course, there was '*every promise* of his proving an efficient and enlightened ruler' [italics added].⁶⁵ Based on this glowing report, the Government of India approved the relaxation of the restrictions imposed in 1914.⁶⁶ With virtually all of his powers restored, and no longer under close supervision (Captain Tyndall had returned to active service in July 1915 and was not replaced), Govind Singh had now effectively regained the status, responsibilities and opportunities of a ruling prince. His *de facto* minority was now over.

In determining their course of action in 1910, officials' assessments of the Maharaja of Datia's capacity for reform and rehabilitation were markedly optimistic. This optimism persisted throughout the resolution of the crisis and remained a prominent feature of subsequent decisions. However, while it dominated official discussion of the Maharaja's character, conduct and prospects, it was by no means hegemonic. From the outset, some officials expressed concern about Govind Singh's capacity for reform. The method of intervention initially selected – to replace the state's *dewan*, enhance his powers, but maintain the appearance that the Maharaja had retained his – was also criticised. The Assistant Foreign Secretary, Major S B Patterson, warned in March 1911 that the experiment would 'be futile unless a very strong word of warning is conveyed to the Maharaja, pointing out that on its success his future depends', adding that without the 'veiled superintendence' of the new *dewan*, 'a further relapse [was] almost certain to take place'.⁶⁷

The shortcomings of O'Dwyer's initial proposals were stressed by the Government of India in their acceptance, Wood emphasising that the *dewan*'s task would be 'very difficult' while the Maharaja remained nominally in power.⁶⁸ The prompt failure of the first solution to the crisis

reinforced such doubts. Wood described Govind Singh as ‘incorrigible’ and Impey argued that ‘no reliance can be placed on the Maharaja’s promises ... and only by constant visits to Datia will it be possible to support the Dewan in his difficult task’.⁶⁹ Events vindicated these doubts in 1921, when the British became aware that conditions within Datia had once again deteriorated. Two further crises in political relations, in 1921 and in 1941, will now be examined. They were both products of the optimism that informed the decision in 1911 to educate, rather than depose, Govind Singh, and are opportunities to see how such optimism fared in the light of abundant evidence to the contrary.

In late October 1921, the AGG, Lieutenant-Colonel D B Blakeway, reported on the unsatisfactory condition of affairs in Datia. In addition to his extended official report, Blakeway sent a demi-official communication, so that he could forward a letter written in March 1920 by the then Political Agent, Colonel Minchin – its contents were ‘so shocking’ they could not be referred to in official correspondence.⁷⁰ Blakeway’s reticence was not without justification: Minchin argued in his letter that ‘the time has come to cleanse the Augean stable of His Highness’ entourage’:

He [Govind Singh] is suffering from syphilis and an ulcerated anus, and with his vicious habits and persistent indulgence in strong drink has no chance of being cured. He is entirely in the hands of scoundrels ... who meditate evil continually and do as much as they dare.⁷¹

The Maharaja’s troubled family relationships had prompted Minchin’s report. The senior Maharani had alleged that an ‘outrage’ had been attempted against her by the Maharaja and his associates, and urged that her son (the heir) be kept away from the ‘evil influences’ at Datia.

The complaints of the senior Maharani and the *dewan* were responded to initially by local officials.⁷² By August 1921, however, conditions had failed to improve. Accordingly, Blakeway summoned the new Political Agent, Major E D Colvin, and Govind Singh’s companion, Major (previously Captain) Tyndall, to Indore to receive their views, hoping that Tyndall could persuade the Maharaja to adopt any measures that they agreed upon. However, it soon became obvious that the influence Tyndall had once exerted over Govind Singh had evaporated during his long absence, and that ‘the Maharaja had passed completely under the influence of the evil counsellors surrounding him’. Blakeway consequently requested an audience with Govind Singh, giving him the opportunity to explain or defend himself before reporting to the Government of India, and informing him beforehand of the array of allegations against him.⁷³

At their interview, the Maharaja denied the validity of these complaints, and presented Blakeway with a statement in which he declared his own grievances – against his *dewan*, Lal Panna Lal, and Major Tyndall, whom he accused of misrepresenting him to the political authorities and obstructing his attempts to improve Datia’s administration.⁷⁴ However, the Maharaja’s denials were far from comprehensive: he ‘admitted his drunkenness, but said that it was a common thing and did no harm to the State ... [and] did not specifically repudiate the imputation of vice’.⁷⁵ At this interview, Govind Singh gave the impression that he might cooperate with the expulsion of several ‘objectionable persons’. At another interview the next day, however, the Maharaja was openly recalcitrant, refusing to consent to their removal unless a judicial enquiry was conducted into each case. He maintained this position even after Blakeway reminded him

that it was his duty to remove ‘harmful people on the requisition of the Political Agent’ and that he had no right to demand such an enquiry.⁷⁶

Blakeway’s verdict was damning – Datia was approaching crisis, due largely to the bad habits and character flaws of Govind Singh:

Of the three counts in the indictment against the Maharaja in 1911, namely, profligate habits, neglect of duties, and callous disregard of justice, a similar charge to the first has now been admitted ... to me by the Maharaja; the second defect, of which there are signs, follows almost inevitably from the first, and ... unless suitable remedies are applied, progressive deterioration will lead again to the administrative disasters arising out of moral depravity similar to that implied by the last of the previous charges.⁷⁷

Only the timing of the official response gave him cause for optimism, as it might be possible to prevent a full-blown crisis developing and thus avoid more drastic intervention. Consequently, he did not recommend that a commission of enquiry be conducted into Govind Singh’s fitness to rule.⁷⁸

Before the government could respond, Govind Singh submitted a memorial to the Viceroy, Lord Reading, in which he reiterated his request for a ‘full and impartial’ enquiry into the cases of the men whom Colvin wished to expel. He also claimed to be the victim of intrigues instigated by his *dewan*, and accused Colvin and Blakeway of gross discourtesy.⁷⁹ Govind Singh’s memorial demonstrated an obvious lack of understanding of the system, and Blakeway was able easily to refute the allegations made against himself and his subordinate.⁸⁰

Blakeway recommended that the *dewan* and Major Tyndall should leave Datia, that the nine ‘objectionable persons’ should be expelled, and that he should communicate to the Maharaja the Government of India’s displeasure regarding his refusal to acknowledge the rights of the Political Agent. His proposals were not, however, wholly endorsed.⁸¹ Wood’s view was more moderate: he described the Maharaja’s request for an enquiry as ‘fair and reasonable’, and argued that it seemed ‘unjust and contrary to the spirit’ of British relations with Datia ‘that he should be required to assent to the immediate dismissal of nine of his servants and officials on the *ipse dixit* of the Political Agent acting on the advice of a Diwan, who is admittedly unsuitable and alleged to be hostile to His Highness’.⁸² It was nonetheless agreed that the *dewan* and Tyndall should leave Datia, and that the Maharaja should be asked to dismiss three of the nine men; the remaining six would not be considered until the new Agent and *dewan* had settled into their positions. While the statement of disapproval urged by Blakeway was rejected, he was asked to convey to Govind Singh ‘the disappointment with which His Excellency the Viceroy had read the story of his frequent lapses’.⁸³

On receipt of these orders Govind Singh wrote to Wood, thanking him for his kind consideration and assuring him that he had passed the orders in relation to the three men.⁸⁴ Although he had been forced to concede the loss of several close associates, and had lost political capital by openly criticising the local British political officers, the Maharaja had nonetheless gained something from this crisis: release from the unwanted control of a hostile *dewan* and the unwelcome advice of his former guardian.

There were no further major crises in Datia until after World War II began. With Britain and her Empire patently more vulnerable than ever to external threats, it was crucial that powerful internal allies – including the rulers of the princely states – remained loyal and did nothing that might undermine the imperial war effort. In July 1941, the Resident in Central India, Lieutenant-Colonel Gerald Fisher, reported that the Maharaja's drinking had worsened, and it was generally believed that he would not live much longer.⁸⁵ A few weeks later, the situation had deteriorated further: Govind Singh had decided to remove his *dewan*, Khan Sahib Hashmat Ali, and replace him with a council consisting of 'local intriguers'.⁸⁶ It seemed that the Maharaja had been spending most of his time at Seondha, where he was drinking continuously. His associates were manipulating his consequent mental incapacity and physical isolation to their advantage. First, they denied Ali access to the Maharaja. They then persuaded him to conduct a corruption investigation into one of the ruler's closest allies, Raghunath Singh. The investigation predictably led the latter to attack Ali, which prompted the Maharaja's attempt to dismiss him without consulting the Agent.⁸⁷ On hearing of the situation, the Agent, Major Henry Poulton, visited Datia and advised Govind Singh that, except for Ali, the government had no confidence in Datia officials, and that 'no changes should be made without the Political Agent's previous concurrence, which should not be accorded until he has gone into the conduct of the administration ... and also satisfied himself that the state of His Highness's health ... permit[s] him to exercise adequate and independent control'.⁸⁸ When the Maharaja refused to retract his dismissal of Ali, Poulton warned him that he would be held personally responsible for any consequent 'developments'.⁸⁹

Fisher then requested an interview with Govind Singh, who evaded it on the pretext of his son's illness, but conceded in writing that he might have acted in haste. Fisher depicted conditions within Datia as dire – most officials were unqualified for the positions they held, and any *dewan* risked dismissal if his administrative efforts antagonised the Maharaja's allies at court. It was also likely (though not proven) that the Maharaja, his second wife and his 'favourites' had depleted Datia's financial reserves through personal extravagance and administrative inefficiency. Consequently, Fisher recommended that the state finances be subjected to an external audit, and that the Maharaja be informed of the Crown Representative's disapproval of Datia's unstable administration and his failure to accept British advice.⁹⁰ Fisher also urged, in a private letter to the Political Secretary, Sir Kenneth Fitze, that medical opinion be sought on Govind Singh's health, in order to ascertain his fitness to exercise power.⁹¹ Whereas in previous crises the Maharaja's personal character was thought not to have a detrimental impact upon conditions within Datia, it was now seen as the root of the problem. His constant drunkenness, his frailty and absence from the capital had enabled his 'undesirable' associates to acquire control over the state and its resources. Indeed, they had apparently gone so far as to impersonate Govind Singh by issuing orders to officials via telephone.⁹²

Poulton returned to Datia in late September and secured the Maharaja's agreement to the removal of four 'undesirables' and the appointment of a temporary *dewan* while the political authorities identified a replacement for Ali.⁹³ Rao Bahadur Lele, an Agency official, was duly installed on 29 September. On visiting Datia a week later, Poulton discovered that matters had only become worse. Although orders removing the four men had been passed, they had neither handed over their charges nor left Datia. Moreover, Lele had been denied access to the Maharaja from 30 September until 4 October, due to his constant inebriation over this period.

Unfortunately, this episode of incapacity coincided with the annual Dassehra celebrations on 1 October, resulting in Govind Singh publicly humiliating himself and embarrassing his guests, the Maharajas of Drangadhra and Jhalawar. Having been plied with whisky by two of his favourites, his behaviour became increasingly erratic at the morning parade. He rode his horse in small circles, eventually abandoning the reins and speaking incoherently to the horse. Ultimately, Govind Singh had to be helped from the animal, and the Maharaja of Drangadhra assumed his ceremonial responsibilities. Incapable of standing, Govind Singh was lifted to his feet for the playing of the state anthem, and carried to his car at the end of the parade. At the state durbar that evening, the Maharaja opened proceedings by shouting abuse at the Superintendent of Police. Later, he interrupted the official ceremonial by leaving the dais and spontaneously embracing the Maharajas of Drangadhra and Jhalawar.⁹⁴

The Maharaja's undignified conduct provoked exasperated condemnation from Poulton, who argued that the 'outburst' demonstrated 'beyond all shadow of a doubt that he is a complete slave to his weakness' for drink, and in light of recent events, 'any faint hope that he might improve' had vanished.⁹⁵ Poulton did not recommend Govind Singh's removal from power outright, due partly to the Maharaja's 'unquestionable loyalty and invariable support of all war measures', but also because of the negative consequences he anticipated for the state itself. He did, however, urge that the Maharaja's powers be restricted, with the Agency assuming financial control over Datia. Govind Singh should also 'for his own sake' be forced to spend most of his time in the capital, so as to avoid creating the impression that he was no longer the ruler.⁹⁶

The Political Department, unsatisfied with the 'confusing' correspondence, requested 'more definite recommendations', and warned Fisher that should the Maharaja ignore the advice they suggested giving him, the only option would be to offer him a commission of enquiry.⁹⁷ Fisher soon submitted new recommendations: Govind Singh would be asked to agree in writing to the appointment for a fixed term of a new *dewan*, approved by the Resident, who would conduct the state's administration (although the Maharaja would retain some control over the management of palace affairs and hunting). He was also to accept the creation of a separate civil list. The Maharaja could not give orders to the *dewan*, but would be kept informed and consulted about state affairs, and could discuss them with the Resident and Political Agent. He would also be required to spend more time in his capital. These arrangements would be kept secret, so as to 'spare him any appearance of public intervention in his affairs', but if Govind Singh did not agree then a commission would be appointed to assess his fitness to rule. Fisher further recommended that the chief medical officer in Central India should be a member of this commission.⁹⁸

Fisher's proposals were largely approved, although the confidentiality of the new system would be conditional upon the Maharaja's cooperation. The notion of a medical officer serving on any commission was also rejected.⁹⁹ These revised terms were accepted in writing by Govind Singh on 15 November.¹⁰⁰ In January 1942, the new *dewan*, Devi Singh, arrived in Datia; after his own visit that month, Fisher reported that 'the pulse of the Datia State is beating very feebly at present, and it is thought that His Excellency's recent decision to take over practical control of this Administration has come at a most opportune time'.¹⁰¹

For the third time in three decades, Govind Singh had avoided deposition. In contrast to the two earlier crises, the Maharaja's political survival in 1941 was due largely to consideration of factors external to his character and conduct – in particular, the anticipation that Govind Singh

would, through poor health resulting from his lifestyle, soon be removed from the political scene by natural causes.¹⁰² This assumption became the dominant theme in subsequent interactions with the Maharaja, and led the political authorities to concentrate their efforts upon preparing for the succession of his heir, and protecting the state's resources from depredation until that date.

Given the serious flaws that British officials perceived in Govind Singh's character, how did they explain the relative stability of the intervening years between the crises of 1921 and 1941? Officials readily attributed this period of calm to the 'benevolent and astute handling' of the Maharaja and the administration by Qazi Sir Azizuddin Ahmed, who served as *dewan* from 1922 until his death in 1939.¹⁰³ 'The Kazi', as he was somewhat affectionately referred to by British officials, was considered an astute politician, a capable administrator, and a supremely effective manipulator of the Maharaja. Significantly, he was also a willing collaborator with British authorities and became a 'trusted confidant' of local officers.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, the improvement in Govind Singh's conduct, or its outward appearance, was seen as the result of the *dewan's* efforts, rather than any exertion by Govind Singh. As Kenneth Fitze, the Political Secretary in 1941, declared:

No one knew better than the Kazi his master's fundamental and incurable failings, but his skill in exploiting what good there was in His Highness, and concealing the bad, was such that during all that period of 18 years the Maharaja's record was *outwardly* almost blameless ... On the death of the astute Kazi it was hardly to be expected that anyone else could be found to keep up this standard of *stage management*.¹⁰⁵ [italics added]

Indeed, in the months following his death, several *dewans* followed 'the Kazi' in rapid succession, each failing to establish effective authority before their dismissal. This high turnover facilitated the ascendancy of Govind Singh's preferred associates, and the deterioration in affairs that culminated in 1941 in the attempt by this group (or 'gang of palace intriguers' as they were depicted by Fisher) to acquire control over the state.¹⁰⁶

The long period of calm in Datia affairs achieved by 'the Kazi' reflects the centrality of an 'astute' and cooperative *dewan* to any attempt by the British to influence events within a troublesome princely state without resorting to overt intervention. Such an official was both the primary source of reliable information concerning affairs within a state and the most effective means of influencing them. He could also be relied upon to foster a functional relationship between a ruler and the British.¹⁰⁷ Without a capable pro-British *dewan*, it was far easier for a ruler to restrict the flow of information to British officials and to resist their initiatives. However, a strong *dewan* could also champion the state's interests, as defined by himself or the ruler. If his policies failed to support, or conflicted with, broader British interests in the subcontinent, British energies would be focused on removing the *dewan* rather than the ruler.¹⁰⁸

While the triangular relationship between a ruler, his *dewan* and the local political officer was a fundamental feature of indirect rule,¹⁰⁹ there was also a range of powerful individuals and groups within a state who (through various forms of association) had some degree of influence over the ruler, and thus over decisions about the distribution of material, political and ritual resources. These individuals and groups varied significantly, from local merchants and financiers

to the relatives of the ruler. To British officials, their internal diversity and the density of the networks connecting them to the ruler and the administration rendered them a complex, opaque and largely unmanageable factor, with which they were forced to contend in attempting to manipulate conditions within a state (it should be noted, however, that the political authorities and these internal actors often attempted to utilise each other in pursuing their respective interests). Any influence exercised over a ruler could therefore provoke hostility from political officers, especially if the individual or group concerned was inaccessible to them (as were the vast majority of rulers' wives and female relatives) or offended British notions of morality and social propriety. The informal influence of friends, relatives and servants often led, as in the case of Govind Singh's associates, to their condemnation as 'favourites', 'intriguers' and 'undesirables' who, like a malignant growth, had to be excised if the state's health was to improve.

Moreover, as the isolation of the princely states declined in the twentieth century, their porous patchwork borders became increasingly vulnerable to what the British perceived as 'infiltration' by new kinds of actors – most importantly Indian nationalist politicians and members of communal organisations – seeking to win over the states' populations to their cause, or to use the states as a means of achieving their broader political objectives.¹¹⁰

It was the addition of this new factor to the political equation in Datia that precipitated the final crisis of Govind Singh's reign. In consideration of his age and recent good behaviour, and the perceived benefits to their long-term plans for Datia, British restrictions on the Maharaja's powers had again been relaxed in March 1946.¹¹¹ Within months – whether coincidentally or otherwise – agitation developed against the overtly Muslim *dewan*, Khan Bahadur Ainuddin (against whose appointment in December 1943 the Maharaja had protested).¹¹² Ainuddin was accused of ordering the recent desecration of temples within Datia. Intimidated and offended by the scale and intensity of the campaign against him, Ainuddin tendered his resignation to the Resident, Lieutenant-Colonel Walter Campbell, on 29 October 1946 – who rejected it on the grounds that it would be 'interpreted as surrender to these evil-minded people'. The Maharaja was exhorted 'to take the most stringent action against any persons attempting to create communal trouble at the instigation of outside hooligans'. He was also warned that his powers could once again be restricted if he failed to protect Ainuddin and restore order.¹¹³ A few days later, Campbell again advised Govind Singh that the best remedy was for him 'to support the Dewan to the fullest extent possible' – the inference being that while the Maharaja was not openly supporting the unrest, he had done little to discourage it, and that either he or those close to him were directing events.¹¹⁴

Despite the Resident's exhortations, conditions continued to deteriorate. On 6 November a *hartal* (a traditional protest, analogous to a strike) commenced in the capital's bazaar with the intention of securing Ainuddin's departure.¹¹⁵ According to the Political Agent, William Egerton, the situation in Datia was 'approaching that of siege'.¹¹⁶ The arrival of the Crown Representative's police eased tensions, and the *hartal* was called off on 8 November in response to a proclamation by Govind Singh, enabling Egerton to leave the following day.¹¹⁷ In his absence, however, the situation worsened once again. It transpired that the police were being kept outside the capital on the Maharaja's orders, and Ainuddin had reiterated his desire to resign – prompting Campbell to visit Datia in an attempt to resolve the crisis. Arriving on 11 November, he summoned the

Maharaja from Seondha to explain himself. Campbell's account of the interview (postponed so that Govind Singh could sober up) and its aftermath bears quoting at length:

He at once took up a truculent attitude saying that he was in no way to blame, that he had done nothing to interfere with the Dewan's administration and that this agitation was entirely the work of 'badmashes'. I taxed him with the accumulated evidence of his complicity but he merely met all these charges with a blank denial ... As it was impossible to make any headway with the Maharaja in this mood I told him quite clearly that I had been compelled, from what I had learned, to recommend ... that the previous restrictions on his powers should be restored ... His Highness' attitude this morning was unchanged and neither did an appeal to his better feelings nor threats have any effect on him so I decided ... to inform him, in anticipation of orders, that His Excellency the Crown Representative had reimposed the restrictions on his powers ... I therefore recommend most strongly that the restrictions should continue indefinitely ... as long as the Maharaja remains in the State there is always a danger of a recurrence of the trouble.¹¹⁸

Steps were promptly taken to reassert control: meetings were prohibited, activists arrested, and two more platoons of police were requested. Ainuddin was persuaded to stay for two months, despite his desire to leave.¹¹⁹ Govind Singh was forced to appoint both a governing council and a committee charged with drafting a new state constitution. The Maharaja's ruling powers, and his expenditure, were to be held in check by the Resident until the new constitution could be enacted.¹²⁰ Advice and influence – ostensibly the cornerstones of indirect rule in India and elsewhere – having failed yet again, the political authorities felt compelled to remove Govind Singh from power in order to regain control over Datia.

At the outset of his career, official perceptions of Govind Singh's character were markedly optimistic, and hopes were high that, despite his unpreparedness for the role, he would in time develop the necessary skills and qualities. Even the revelations of 1911 concerning the Maharaja's mismanagement of his personal life and his administration failed to dispel completely the image of a young prince, weak and ignorant but willing to improve, and in need of tutelage rather than punishment. The compatibility of the young Maharaja's first political crisis with prevailing attitudes towards elite Indian youth, masculinity and education thus prevented him being removed from power permanently. Instead, the education of Govind Singh became a major project for local officers and the political authorities more broadly – one that they were reluctant to abandon, even when it became increasingly evident that he possessed neither the capacity nor the inclination to reform himself.

Not only did the British fail to 'correct' the perceived flaws in Govind Singh's character, their use of indirect methods of control also failed to achieve a permanent solution to the administrative and political problems they perceived within Datia. The Maharaja's four decades on the *gaddi* were characterised by a recurring cycle: the imposition of British control upon the state and supervision of the Maharaja; the relaxation of control and supervision; the re-emergence of problems, even the development of a crisis; and the reimposition of more overt forms of control. Unlike many other rulers, Govind Singh was, despite his proclamations to the contrary, uninterested in

playing the role of subordinate ally. His cooperation could thus be secured only through the threat of having his powers restricted, or the prospect of having such restrictions relaxed. Officials' attempts to 'influence' him through the provision of 'advice' were far less successful than was the resort to a British-appointed authoritative and 'astute' dewan, capable of negotiating the shoals of state politics and procuring cooperation from the Maharaja through employing these same threats and prospects. Finally, the survival of Govind Singh demonstrates the extreme reluctance of the British to resort to the outright deposition of a ruler, even one of the very few whose misconduct or maladministration did appear to warrant permanent and unequivocal removal from power.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Demi-Official (DO) letter, Agent to the Governor-General in Central India (AGG CI) to Deputy Foreign Secretary, 23 February 1911, India Office Records (IOR) R/1/1/432, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London.
- 2 Confidential DO letter 633, AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 2 November 1910, IOR R/1/1/432. The Central India Agency supervised the regional grouping of princely states known as Central India. Its most senior official was the Agent to the Governor-General and its headquarters were at Indore.
- 3 Letter 161, AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 23 February 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 4 Letter 665-IA, Foreign Secretary to AGG CI, 27 March 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 5 Memorandum by J B Wood, 24 October 11, IOR R/1/1/470.
- 6 Letter, AGG CI to His Highness the Maharaja of (HH) Datia, 17 November 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.
- 7 AGG CI to HH Datia, 17 November 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.
- 8 My use of 'character' draws upon Stefan Collini's definition of the term as possessing both descriptive and evaluative elements, the latter being crucial in assigning causal power to personal, national or 'racial' character in explaining the fates of individuals and groups, and upon Peter Cain's recent study of the discursive centrality of ideas of character in the expansion and retention of British control over Egypt: S. Collini. 1991. *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850–1930*. Oxford: Clarendon Press: 95–97; P J Cain. 2006. 'Character and imperialism: the British financial administration of Egypt, 1878–1914'. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34 (6): 177–200.
- 9 Confidential DO letter 633, AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 2 November 1910, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 10 Statement of Govind Das, recorded by Political Agent, Bundelkhand, 16 October 1910, IOR R/1/1/432. *Bhusa* is straw or chaff.
- 11 Statement of Ram Charan, recorded by Political Agent, Bundelkhand, 16 October 1910, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 12 Note by Political Agent, Bundelkhand, 16 October 1910, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 13 Note by Political Agent, Bundelkhand, 16 October 1910, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 14 Confidential DO letter 633, AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 2 November 1910, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 15 Note of interview with HH Datia by AGG CI at Jhansi, 20 January 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 16 Copy of letter 575, Rai Bahadur Pandit Maharaj Narain Sheopuri, Dewan of Datia, to Political Agent, Bundelkhand, 8 November 1910. Note of interview with HH Datia by AGG CI at Jhansi, 20 January 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 17 Note of interview with HH Datia by AGG CI, 20 January 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.

- 18 Letter 161, AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 23 February 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 19 Memorandum by S B Patterson, 23 March 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 20 Office Memorandum by C E P, 25 August 1911, part B, appendix I of Notes, IOR R/1/1/470. AGG
CI to Foreign Secretary, 23 February 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 21 AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 23 February 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 22 AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 2 November 1910, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 23 AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 23 February 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 24 AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 23 February 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 25 AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 23 February 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 26 DO letter, AGG CI to Deputy Foreign Secretary, 23 February 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 27 AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 23 February 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 28 Memorandum by A H McMahan, 14 March 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 29 Letter 665-IA, Foreign Secretary to AGG CI, 27 March 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.
- 30 Extract from private DO letter, AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 9 September 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.
- 31 Letter 790, AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 18 October 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.
- 32 Memorandum of visit to Datia by AGG CI, 10–12 September 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.
- 33 Letter 5951, Political Agent, Bundelkhand to 1st Assistant AGG CI, October 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.
- 34 AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 18 October 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.
- 35 Memorandum by J B Wood, 24 October 1911, IOR R/1/1/470: reference to ‘a fair trial’ would not
have been meant literally, as such a process did not apply to princes.
- 36 Memorandum of visit to Datia by AGG CI, 10–12 September 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.
- 37 Letter 2407-IA, Additional Foreign Secretary to AGG CI, 4 November 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.
- 38 Letter, AGG CI to HH Datia, 17 November 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.
- 39 Letter 311-C, Political Agent, Bundelkhand to 1st Assistant AGG CI, 22 February 1912, IOR
R/1/1/478.
- 40 C Keen. 2003. ‘The power behind the throne: Relations between the British and the Indian States
1870–1909’. PhD thesis, London: University of London: 2.
- 41 Office Memorandum by C E P, 25 August 1911, appendix I of Notes, IOR R/1/1/470. Memorandum,
Raja Nabha to Foreign Secretary, Nabha House, Simla, 29 June 1911, appendix I of Notes, IOR
R/1/1/470. Memorandum by A H McMahan, 7 July 1911, appendix I of Notes, IOR R/1/1/470.
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Princes: Paramountcy in Western India, 1857–1930*. New Delhi: Orient Longman: 121.
- 43 The Imperial Cadet Corps was meant to resolve the racially charged issue of Indians becoming officers
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in 1897 that his son be allowed to pursue a career in the army until he assumed the *gaddi*: C Sundaram.
1997. ‘“Martial” Indian aristocrats and the military system of the Raj: the Imperial Cadet Corps,
1900–1914’. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25 (3): 415–439; C Sundaram. 1995.
‘Preventing idleness: the Maharajah of Cooch Behar’s proposal for officer commissions in the British
Army for the sons of Indian princes and gentlemen, 1897–1898’. *South Asia* 18 (1): 115–130.
- 44 Letter, Viceroy to His Majesty the King (HM), 19 June 1901, European Manuscripts (Mss Eur)
F111/136, Curzon Collection, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London.

45 Viceroy to HM, 19 June 1901, Mss Eur F111/136. See also S Sen. 2003. 'The politics of deracination:
46 empire, education and elite children in colonial India'. *Studies in History* 19 (1): 19–39.

47 Telegram P. 1-C, 11, AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, November 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.

48 Notes, Datia Affairs, Summary, appendix IOR R/1/1/1389 (1). See also IOR R/1/1/1290.

49 Confidential letter 769-IA, Deputy Foreign Secretary to AGG CI, 11 May 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

50 Confidential letter 187, AGG CI to Foreign Secretary, 21 May 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

51 Copy of Confidential letter, Political Agent, Bundelkhand to AGG CI, 17 April 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

S Sen. 2004. 'Schools, athletes and confrontation: the student body in colonial India'. In James H
Mills and Satadru Sen, editors. *Confronting the Body: The Politics of Physicality in Colonial and
Post-Colonial India*. London: Anthem Press: 58. Sen argues that the late nineteenth century saw the
development of an 'intensely politicized pedagogy of the body' in Indian schools such as the chiefs'
colleges.

52 I Copland. 1982. *The British Raj and the Indian Princes: Paramountcy in Western India, 1857–1930*.
New Delhi: Orient Longman: 77–78. Copland highlights how commanding officers and supervisors
of applicants for the Bombay Political Service favoured sporting ability, horsemanship and 'personality'
over intellectual aptitude.

53 Copy of Confidential letter, Political Agent, Bundelkhand to AGG CI, 17 April 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

54 Copy of Political Agent, Bundelkhand to AGG CI, 17 April 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

55 Memorandum by J B Wood, 28 May 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

56 Memorandum by Hardinge, 1 June 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

57 DO letter, Political Secretary to AGG CI, 3 June 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

58 Confidential letter 234, AGG CI to Political Secretary, 6 July 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

59 Memorandum by Hardinge, 14 July 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

60 Telegram P. 425-S, Political Secretary to AGG CI, 14 July 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

61 Confidential letter 253, AGG CI to Political Secretary, 15 July 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

62 Memorandum by J B Wood, 18 July 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

63 Letter 345, AGG CI to Political Secretary, 13 August 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

64 Reply, HH Datia to speech of Political Agent at Datia, 1 August 1914, IOR R/1/1/529.

65 Letter 541, AGG CI to Political Secretary, 12 December 1915, IOR R/1/1/547.

66 Memorandum by R Chevenix Trench, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, 18 December 1915, IOR
R/1/1/547. Letter 91-D, Deputy Political Secretary to AGG CI, 8 November 1916, IOR R/1/1/547.
Full jurisdiction was restored in 1917, subject to the Political Agent's general control: Notes, Datia
Affairs, Summary, appendix, IOR R/1/1/1389 (1).

67 Memorandum by S B Patterson, 23 March 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.

68 Letter 665-IA, Foreign Secretary to AGG CI, 27 March 1911, IOR R/1/1/432.

69 Letter 5951, Political Agent, Bundelkhand to 1st Assistant AGG CI, October 1911, IOR R/1/1/470.

70 Confidential DO letter 998, AGG CI to Political Secretary, 22–24 October 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

71 Confidential DO letter 328-A, Political Agent, Bundelkhand to Secretary to AGG CI, 21 March 1920,
IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

72 Confidential letter 995, AGG CI to Political Secretary, 22–24 October 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

73 Major Tyndall had returned to Datia in May 1921: Confidential letter 995, AGG CI to Political
Secretary, 22–24 October 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

74 Statement of HH Datia, 4 October 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

75 Confidential letter 995, AGG CI to Political Secretary, 22–24 October 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

76 This obligation was imposed in 1914, in excess of the authority delegated to the AGG, and never
officially rescinded despite subsequent restoration of Govind Singh’s powers.

77 Confidential letter 995, AGG CI to Political Secretary, 22–24 October 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

78 Confidential letter 995, AGG CI to Political Secretary, 22–24 October 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).
The commission of enquiry process, codified in 1920, was intended to guide British actions when the
prospect of depriving a ruler of his powers arose. Foreign and Political Department Resolution 426-
R, 29 October 1920, IOR R/1/1/963.

79 Letter, HH Datia to Political Secretary, 29 October 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1). HH Datia to Viceroy,
29 October 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1). HH Datia to Viceroy, no date, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

80 DO letter, AGG CI to J P Thompson, Officer on Special Duty in the Foreign and Political Department,
11 November 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

81 Notes, Datia Affairs, Summary, appendix, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

82 Memorandum by J B Wood, 14 November 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

83 Notes, Datia Affairs, Summary, appendix, IOR R/1/1/1389(1). The GOI eventually agreed to the re-
moval of five of the six remaining men.

84 DO letter, HH Datia to Political Secretary, 17 December 1921, IOR R/1/1/1389(1).

85 Confidential DO letter 1319-Q, Resident CI to Political Secretary, 24 July 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.

86 Extract from fortnightly report of the Central India Agency, 15 September 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.

87 Confidential DO letter 1663-Q/115-41, Resident CI to Political Secretary, 22–23 September 1941,
IOR R/1/1/3718.

88 Message from Resident CI communicated by Political Agent, Bundelkhand to HH Datia, 16
September 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.

89 Resident CI to Political Secretary, 22–23 September 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.

90 Resident CI to Political Secretary, 22–23 September 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718. In 1937 the Viceroy’s
title was changed to Crown Representative with regard to his interactions with the princes, as a result
of broader constitutional change in India.

91 Extract from Private & Personal letter, Resident CI to Political Secretary, 23 September 1941, IOR
R/1/1/3718.

92 Resident CI to Political Secretary, 22–23 September 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.

93 Telegram R. 3706-P, Resident CI to Polindia, 24 September 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.

94 Copy of Confidential DO letter 420/32/41, Political Agent, Bundelkhand to Resident CI, 6 October
1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.

95 Copy of Confidential DO letter 420/32/41, Political Agent, Bundelkhand to Resident CI, 6 October
1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.

96 Copy of Political Agent, Bundelkhand to Resident CI, 6 October 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718. Seondha
was approximately 65 kilometres from Datia.

97 Memorandum by Thompson, 1 October 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718. Confidential DO letter F.182-P/41,
Deputy Political Secretary to Resident CI, 6 October 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.

98 Confidential DO letter 55-P, Resident CI to Political Secretary, 9 October 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.

99 Confidential DO letter F.182-P/41, Deputy Political Secretary to Resident CI, 27 October 1941, IOR
R/1/1/3718.

100 Copy of Confidential statement by HH Datia, 15 November 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.
101 Extract from note on tour in Bundelkhand by Resident CI, no date, IOR R/1/1/3718.
102 Deputy Political Secretary to Resident CI, 27 October 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.
103 Confidential DO letter F.182-P/41, Deputy Political Secretary to Resident CI, 6 October 1941, IOR
R/1/1/3718.
104 Confidential DO letter 1663-Q/115-41, Resident CI to Political Secretary, 22–23 September 1941,
IOR R/1/1/3718.
105 Memorandum by K Fitze, 20 October 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.
106 Resident CI to Political Secretary, 22–23 September 1941, IOR R/1/1/3718.
107 British officials had access to several sources of information regarding the princely states, including
their own networks of informants and spies within states, and the support provided by Agency and
provincial police forces. See C Bayly. 1996. *Empire & Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social
Communication in India, 1780–1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
108 An example is T Sethia. 1988. ‘Berar and the Nizam’s state railway: politics of British interests in
Hyderabad State, 1853–1883’. *Indo-British Review* 15 (2): 59–78.
109 R Jeffrey. 1975. ‘The politics of “indirect rule”: types of relationships among rulers, ministers and
residents in a “Native State”’. *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 13: 261–281.
This article focuses on the dynamics of this triangular relationship in Travancore.
110 On political activity, both indigenous and non-indigenous, in the states, see I Copland. 2005. *State,
Community and Neighbourhood in Princely North India, c.1900–1950*. New York: Palgrave Mac-
millan.
111 DO letter F.12-P/46, J S H Shattock DSI to Resident CI, 11 March 1946, IOR R/1/1/4388.
112 Confidential memorandum by F Wylie, 11 December 1943, IOR R/1/1/3718.
113 Confidential letter, Resident CI to HH Datia, 30 October 1946, IOR R/2/437/120.
114 Letter 2296-Q/138/46, Resident CI to HH Datia, 4 November 1946, IOR R/2/437/120.
115 Secret DO letter 163-T, Political Agent, Bundelkhand to Resident CI, 6 November 1946, IOR
R/2/437/120.
116 Secret DO letter 164-T, Political Agent, Bundelkhand to Resident CI, 7 November 1946, IOR
R/2/437/120.
117 DO Letter 168-T, Political Agent, Bundelkhand to Resident CI, 8 November 1946, IOR R/2/437/120.
118 Secret letter 138-Q/Camp, Resident CI to Political Secretary, 12 November 1946, IOR R/2/437/120.
119 ‘Immediate’ telegram, Resident CI to Polindia, date unclear (probably 12 November 1946), IOR
R/2/437/120.
120 ‘A brief report on Datia State affairs from the 12th November to the 12th December 1946’, Major
Basil Woods-Ballard, Political Agent, Bundelkhand, 24 December 1946, IOR R/2/437/120 (II).

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Cite this chapter as: Groenhout, Fiona. 2008. ‘Educating Govind Singh: “Princely character” and the failure of indirect rule in colonial India’. *Orb and Sceptre: Studies on British Imperialism and its Legacies, in Honour of Norman Etherington*, edited by Limb, Peter. Melbourne: Monash University ePress. pp 1.1 to 1.23. DOI: 10.2104/os080001.