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The Trident on the Palace.

An Anti-Vaishnava Cabal in a Hindu Kingdom during the Colonial Period

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Foreword (abstract)

In July 1950, the abbot of Salemabad received a triumphant welcome in the neighboring city of Jaipur. The previous year the Kacchvaha kingdom of Amber-Jaipur had ceased to exist but its capital had become the political center of Rajasthan, the State of the new Indian Republic integrating the former kingdoms of Rajputana. For the inhabitants of Jaipur, the coming of the young Vaishnava ascetic marked the end of a serious religious crisis that had erupted in 1864 during the reign of Ramsingh II (1851-1880). That year, forced into exile by the Maharaja, the predecessor of the young man on the seat of the sect of Nimbarka had permanently abandoned thousands of rupees of annual income. The story was told to me by Pandit Ram Gopal Shastri (himself a Nimbārkī) when I first met him in Jaipur in September 1988. I mentioned it casually to some other people in the town. They all confirmed it, explaining that in the 1860s the Vaishnavas of Jaipur were harassed by a zealous devotee of Śiva who was very close to Ramsingh II. For months, his men had stopped the Vaishnavas on the streets of the city and forcibly replaced their U shaped vertical mark (*tilaka*), symbols of Viṣṇu, by the triple horizontal sign of Siva.

During the month of September 1988, it was enough to mention the “*tilaka-vivāda*”, the quarrel of the religious marks, to be told over and again the same series of anecdotes by the inhabitants of Jaipur! I was soon to discover that this strange phenomenon of collective memory rested on a exciting series of articles published in the *Rājasthāna Patrikā*, the main Hindi daily, under the signature of “Nāgarika” (the city-dweller). This pseudonym was that of the talented Nand Kishore Parikh. To the delight of his readers, N.K. Parikh, who had retired from the Civil Administration several years before, was conjuring up day after day memories of the Jaipur of yore.

Was I to renounce further investigation then?

Back in France, I found that the historians of the kingdom of Amber-Jaipur had not said a word about the above mentioned episode of Ramsingh II's reign. However A.K. Roy, in his history of the capital city, had quoted a report by the Political Agent that clearly dealt with it. But although the Political agent reported that the Vaishnavas had felt persecuted (and described in dramatic terms the flight of the Vallabhī priests from Jaipur), his main task had been to exonerate the Maharaja completely. According to him, Ramsingh had been fully tolerant in his conduct. My interest was renewed.

In 1988, then, the modern city of Jaipur was still resounding with the din of the battle between the verticals and the horizontals, a picrocholin war which I discovered had really taken place. And the contradictory comments associated with the event suggested that more had been at stake than the shape given to religious marks. All this aroused my curiosity. What had really happened in Jaipur? What had been the meaning of this quarrel and who had been its main protagonists?

Translation of Chapter 4:
Ten years in the Reign of Ramsingh II (1863-1872)

Quarrel over tilakas

In 1862, Ramsingh declared himself a Shaiva. Actually, as we are going to see, he had felt an affinity with Śiva right from his adolescence. However, for a long time, he had kept this preference to himself. It only acquired a State dimension when the Maharaja revealed his religious leaning by erecting a Shaiva temple within the palace, in the immediate proximity of his living quarters. The foundation of the new temple to (Śiva)-Rājarājeśvara was laid in 1862 and its inauguration took place a year later, in July 1863 on the day of the Tij Festival.

The advent of Rājarājeśvara did not constitute a reappraisal of the privileged position that the palace had already granted to other deities. Rājarājeśvara did not replace the two Vaishnava deities, Sītārāma and Govindadeva, but succeeded them. He simply became an additional symbol of the power of the king and of the dynasty of Jaipur. But, while in Ramsingh's mind Śiva had not replaced Viṣṇu, his conversion dealt nonetheless a fatal blow to the interests of the human custodians of the Vaishnava deities and temples, and, beyond them, to the Vaishnava traditions themselves whose religious ascendancy was overriding in Jaipur. By adopting Siva as his new personal deity, Ramsingh gave up the Vaishnava faith he had been brought up in and which was predominant in the palace. He also began to criticize it. This became apparent during the two years following the founding of the Rājarājeśvara temple. The Maharaja set up a Dharma-sabhā or consultative assembly of learned Brahmans and entrusted it with the task of conducting an enquiry into the religious practices of the Vaishnavas. At the end of 1864, the Dharma-sabhā drew up a list of sixty-four questions casting doubt over a number of Vaishnava beliefs, rituals and conducts. It is learnt from Rangacharya, a well-known Rāmānujī scholar from Vrindavan and one of the main Vaishnava protagonists of the "quarrel of the religious marks", that the author of these questions was a Shaiva ascetic named Lakshmannath¹.

The troubles of the Vaishnavas of Jaipur began therefore from the moment Ramsingh decided to make his personal faith the religious norm for all his subjects. This is confirmed by those who were direct witnesses to the events. The pretext put forward was clearly summed up by the British political agent when, departing from his normal non-interference in religious matters, he noted in his official report for 1865-1866 that the Maharaja considered the existing form of Vaishnava worship as being "opposed to the ordinances laid down in the Shastras". This was an apt observation that what Ramsingh contested was not Viṣṇu or his worship as such, but

¹ VV, p.382.

rather the characteristics that his cult was taking within some Vaishnava sects. However the Political Agent remained silent on the means adopted to make the Vaishnavas conform to the “shastras”. Not only that, he denied that they had been dealt with harshly. To know what happened we have to turn to the account left by the Dharma-sabhā as well as to the testimonies of the Vaishnavas themselves, particularly to the correspondence of the Rāmānandīs of Galtā with their fellow believers and patrons based outside the kingdom of Jaipur.

This mass of pronouncements brings out the fact that from 1864 the Dharma-sabhā, which set to work on the express order of the Maharaja, summoned the heads of the Vaishnava sects of Jaipur to interrogate them on their beliefs and practices. On their side, the Vaishnavas alerted their fellow believers settled outside the kingdom, asking for their help. That was how Hariprasad of Galtā, not well-versed in theological quibbling, enlisted the help of Rangacharya, the eminent Rāmānujī of Vrindavan, and was able to send to the Maharaja of Jaipur a preliminary reply to the sixty-four questions as early as in end 1864. The discussions with the palace covered also the organizing of a “disputation”, that is to say a public religious debate, in keeping with the prescriptions in force in Brahman intellectual circles².

A debate of this nature had probably been contemplated for the first time in Benares when in December 1864 the Maharaja accompanied by two pandits had gone there to consult some Brahmanical authorities. He had returned to Jaipur with a *vyavasthā-patra*, a written declaration, which castigated the Four Vaishnava Sects (*catuḥ sampradāya*) in the name of the defence of *sanātana dharma*, the eternal religion. Fortified by this support from the representatives of Brahmanical orthodoxy in Benares, a prestigious centre of Hindu learning, the advisers of Ramsingh in matters pertaining to religion decided to hold a disputation in due form with the Vaishnavas.

In 1865 therefore, discussions over the modalities for arranging an extensive debate were held in the new Shaiva temple of Rājārājeśvara. Contemporary witnesses mention the constant stream of Vaishnava delegations going towards the palace and the interminable deliberations over the organization, each of the two parties insisting that the other accept and sign its ruling principles. However, while a large number of discussions were held during the years of crisis, the much awaited disputation never took place. It seems that the court pandits, on second thoughts, gave up the idea of organizing a disputation whose outcome might not necessarily go in their favour. They managed matters in such a way as to make their conditions unacceptable to the Vaishnavas who, on their part, had been counting a great deal on the opportunity of a debate to justify themselves in public.

² The scholastic word “disputation” aims at translating those of *śāstrārtha* and *dharma-nirṇaya* encountered in the documents. The first means literally “[debate on] the meaning of the treatises”, the second “decision concerning dharma”. In both cases the arguments are conducted orally.

At the same time, the Maharaja made it obligatory on the Vaishnava monastic authorities, priests and laity, to give up their religious mark (*tilaka*) and to adopt the one that he himself sported since his conversion and which most of the dignitaries of his court also bore³ henceforth. This was the triple horizontal mark (*tripuṇḍra*) drawn with the holy ashes of cow dung cakes. Glorifying one's own tilaka and removing that of the enemy are important symbolic wagers in sectarian rivalries, as testified in hagiographies and religious propaganda. But in Jaipur it was not only a discourse, it was advocated as a permanent measure. The steps taken to ensure the removal of the marks of Vaishnava affiliation and the imposition of the horizontal sign on the Vaishnavas shook the sentiments of the inhabitants to such an extent that more than anything else it is those facts that have remained rooted in their memory as the consequences of the conversion of the Maharaja to Shaivism. Rumour even had it that the Shaivas "caught hold of Vaishnavas in the streets and licked off their tilaka"⁴. While this latter eventuality appears exaggerated, the correspondence of the Ramanandis substantiates without a shadow of a doubt the factual consequence of Ramsingh's injunction. The archives of the monastic establishment of Galta contain, for instance, the specimen of a missive which the abbot got reproduced in several copies which were sent to those in charge of the various Nāgā monasteries in Maksudabad (?), Patna and Ayodhya, this latter city housing the first centre of Rāmānandī warrior-ascetics of the country⁵. It reads as follows:

Our Lord Śrī Rāma

[eulogy in sanskrit]

The Vaishnava dharma with the mantras of Nārāyaṇa, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, the worship (*upāsana*) of the chosen deity (*iṣṭa*), the vertical mark (*ūrdhva-puṇḍra*), the tilaka of gopi-candana, the necklace of basilica (*tulasī*) and lotus seeds, the marking with the "hot disc" (*cakra-aṅkita*) and with the "cold" disc (*śīṭala*), the nine-fold bhakti, the tantric rites (*anuṣṭhāna*), etc., all of these have always existed. At present, two or three persons belonging to Śrījī [the Maharaja] have invented new rules; they oblige the followers of this [Vaishnava] dharma (*dharmavāle*) to wear ashes, the triple [horizontal] sign (*tripuṇḍra*) and the rudrākṣa [necklace] and they make them do expiation (*prāyaścitta*). It has therefore been decided that a disputation (*śāstrārtha*) be organized. That is why all the sant-mahatmas and pandits who are followers of the Vaishnava creed, must absolutely all come together to the help of the dharma and respond without fail. Tell us if you would accept to come to the place to be decided upon for the disputation. Reply without fail to this letter by post. Do not delay.

Śrī Rāmājī

³ As is apparent on their photographic portraits.

⁴ Shastri 1966 : 43

⁵ G, undated.

Ramsingh's stipulations were combined with threats. If the Vaishnavas did not obey him, their property would be confiscated. Alarmed, the abbot of Salemabad who, as we have seen [in a preceding chapter], was already under a cloud, was the first to leave Jaipur surreptitiously. He left in October 1864 without informing the Maharaja, as he was ordinarily obliged to do, and he took refuge in his monastery of Salemabad in the small kingdom of Kishangarh. But the other Vaishnavas were not spared. Hariprasad of Galta, to begin with, was not invited to join the court festivities for some time. Then, since despite this humiliation, he persisted in refusing to sport the Shaiva emblems, he was punished. In early July 1865, his temples were removed from his charge. We know this from a message sent by his fellow believer the Balanandi abbot to someone named Ramdas: "note the fact that the keys (*talik*) of the royal temple (*rāja-mandira*) of Sitarama have been taken away from Galta and that the king (*rāja*) has appointed a Brahman priest (*pujārī*) [there]"⁶, that is to say, a non-Vaishnava Brahman had been put in charge. The palace archives confirm this. They report that the temples of Sītārāma, Madanamohana and Lakṣminārāyaṇa had been taken away from the custody of Hariprasad and entrusted to Bakshiram Vyas, the head priest of the Rājārājeśvara temple, and to the officials of the Treasury (*khazānā*). They even note that the Shaiva Bakshiram Vyas celebrated the occasion by having sweetmeats distributed among his entourage⁷. The decision was an exceptionally serious one for Hariprasad since it deprived him of his religious rights in the palace. He lost on this date all access to the court, all right to the honours due to him as the custodian of Sītārāma and, as a result, he was probably subjected to certain financial constraints. As if to confirm his disgrace, the following month, the Rākhī ceremonies, traditionally celebrated at the Sītārāma temple, were held for the first time at Rājārājeśvara. Neither he nor the custodians of the other Vaishnava temples were invited to take part in them. Ramsingh was clearly notifying to them that he no longer considered himself their ritual patron.

That however was not the end of the matter. In the wake of the confiscation of the Sītārāma temple, the Vallabhī custodians of Madanamohana and of Gokulacandramā, who a few days earlier had left their Gangori Bazar temples and were camping in one of their gardens outside the Kishanpol Gate (convinced that the Maharaja would not dare to let them leave his kingdom), departed from the capital carrying away with them the images of their precious deities. They went to Bikaner accompanied by their families and a multitude of assistants and hereditary servants (washermen, sweepers, gardeners, etc.)⁸. The Vallabhīs reportedly relinquished in Jaipur an income of 300,000 (or 3 lakhs) rupees per year and jewels worth 50,000 to 60,000

⁶ B, undated.

⁷ SH, dated Āṣāḍha bādi 10 VS 1922; TDK 26, same date.

⁸ Mital 1968b : 99

rupees⁹, which was three times the income of the Nimbārkīs of Salemadad. However, according to the official confiscation document dating to 1867, the annual income of their two Houses chargeable to the royal patronage of Jaipur rose to some 35,000 rupees only, of which 6,000 rupees was for the upkeep of each one of the deities (*bhoga*)¹⁰; the rest came from the numerous gifts received from rich trader disciples. The palace used to get delivered also 100 *maunds* [*sic*] of salt per year (from the Sambhar Lake) for the savoury preparations (*salni*) offered to the divine images¹¹. This fortune was large enough to attract envy at a time when the annual income of the kingdom was around 45 lakhs (4,500,000). It may be noted that it was negligible compared to the income of the Vallabhīs of Nathadvāra (in Mewar) who every year amassed more than 6 lakhs rupees¹²!

In July 1865, the Vallabhīs were still very shaken by the famous Bombay libel case. Let us briefly recall the facts. On 21 October 1860, the *Satya Prakash* (Light of truth), a Gujarati magazine from Bombay, had published under the signature of its editor, Karsandas Mulji (1832-1871), a denunciation of the Vallabha sect. It contained three points of indictment. Firstly, the sect having come into existence after the start of the present cosmic age (*kali-yuga*), its origin was suspect. Secondly, its gosāīs were accused of teaching a heretical and immoral doctrine. Thirdly they were accused of indulging in reprehensible practices: on the one hand they took taxes on all the commercial transactions of their disciples (the majority of whom were traders), on the other hand they had carnal relations with the wives, daughters and sisters of the said disciples. Such accusations naturally caused a sensation. Tension reached its climax when seven months later, Gosai Jadunath Brijratan, implicated by name by the *Satya Prakash*, sued the editor of the magazine for libel. He demanded 50,000 rupees in damages. However, the lawsuit, which started on 26 January 1862, came to an end at the close of the following April with the case of the plaintiff being dismissed. The latter was sentenced to pay all expenses which, ironically enough, rose to exactly 50,000 rupees. In Bombay, where all the accused were very well-known, crowds had followed the trial. The judgement resulted in the loss of all credibility for all the Vallabhīs. It had brought to light some practices and ideas common in their circles but unknown to the general public who was considerably shocked at learning of them¹³. The distress of the Vallabhīs of Jaipur had been all the greater as they were closely related to the main witnesses in the Bombay lawsuit¹⁴. And over and above the Vallabhīs, it was the very name of Vaishnavism which had been tarnished in North-west India. The Vaishnava creed as a whole had received a terrible blow.

⁹ Kashinath 1900 [1991] : 31

¹⁰ SDV, file 57, dated VS 1924.

¹¹ SDV, file 57.

¹² CLFR (under Nathadvāra).

¹³ HSM.

¹⁴ Kashinath 1900 [1991] : 6-7.

It is undeniable that the departure of the Vallabhīs came as an immense shock to the inhabitants of Jaipur. In addition to the genuine grief at having lost two very beloved divine images, they also undoubtedly experienced great economic disappointment since the temples, by attracting numerous pilgrims and visitors, promoted trade. The clamour of their lamentations was such as to be felt as far as Calcutta, the seat of colonial power. Thus on 23 July 1866, one read in the *Hindoo Patriot*:

The Maharajah of Jeypore it appears has headed a religious reform movement in his territory. H.H. aims at returning more closely to the practices of the ancient Vedas. For the last three years he has been agitating the question, constantly discussing it, and occasionally writing on it. Some little time ago the Raja convened a meeting of the priests of the Maharaja sect of Vallabhacharyas of whom we heard so much in Bombay a short time back. Nothing came of it, however, but a great deal of popular excitement. The Raja wanted them to sign a paper either that they were willing to discuss the subject, or that they declined. They refused to sign either, and said they would return an answer in ten or twelve days. A report then got abroad that they were being or going to be persecuted and they threatened to leave the city. One of them did so followed by twenty-five thousands people, it is said, who were weeping, and showing other signs of sorrow, and distress. The wealth of the priests of the sect is represented to be enormous.

And on 20 September 1866 one read in *The Englishman*:

The Rajah of Jeypore is, we learn, making every endeavour to impose upon his subjects the worship of Shiva in the place of that of Vishnoo. Several temples of Vishnoo have been pulled down, and the votaries, with their idols, compelled to take flight to Bickaneer.

Finally, the Political Agent himself immortalized the scene, in his report dated March 1867, by mentioning in connection with this departure the “thousands of inhabitants crying and giving vent to their feelings by loud and frequent expressions of grief and sorrow at the great calamity that had befallen the city of Jeypore”¹⁵. We will return to that report later.

His testimony and that of the newspapers would lead one to conclude that the Vallabhis had left Jaipur in July 1866. Now, the palace administration archives state categorically that their departure dates back to July 1865¹⁶. And there is no error here in the noting, which possibility could occur, for this date is confirmed in a letter of Maharana Shambhusingh of Udaipur to Ramsingh, written nine days after the departure of the Vallabhīs¹⁷. While expressing his pleasure at the fact that Ramsingh had pledged himself to the *Śiva-dharam* (Shaiva creed) which he

¹⁵ R. 1865 – R.1867 : § 126.

¹⁶ SDV, file 57.

¹⁷ HKP, bundle 6, file 232, dated Āṣāḍha sūdi 5 VS 1922.

himself professed, the ruler of Mewar recommended tolerance to the Maharaja of Jaipur. He even suggested to him that he ask the Vallabhis to return to his kingdom. Ramsingh paid no heed to his advice.

A little after the departure of the Vallabhis, the gosāi of the Govindadeva temple was, in turn, harassed. He was placed under house arrest and, as a further humiliation, the Holī celebrations which were always held in his temple in the presence of all Vaishnavas, were cancelled that year¹⁸.

It was probably at this point that the inhabitants of Jaipur actually became aware of the impact of the new religious orientation of the Maharaja. But an even more dramatic event than the departure of the Vallabhis from their city was soon to unfold before their eyes. Indeed, from early 1866, Ramsingh ordered the Dharma-sabhā to punish all the Vaishnava Brahmins of the capital. He decreed on the one hand, that those among them who refused to submit to his demands be excommunicated by their respective Caste Councils and, on the other hand, that rites of expiation be organized to erase the blemishes of the others. As a consequence, right from March 1866, hundreds of Vaishnava Brahmins were subjected to serious public humiliations. Under the threat of excommunication, they had to yield and to undergo a ceremony of expiation whose modalities had been laid down by the Dharma-sabhā. We will return to these in the seventh chapter. For the time being, let us only note that the expiation involved, among other things, that the “culprits” be shorn of their hair and that with head shaven, and “purified” they be paraded on elephant back, along the Royal Path, the main avenue of Jaipur. This strategy, which forced the Vaishnava Brahmins to give up their rites and their religious marks and to adopt those prescribed by the Dharma-sabhā amounted to drive them into apostasy. Its neat result was to weaken their sects considerably.

After November 1866, there are fewer letters of the Ramanandis, a proof of their growing discouragement. They wrote to the ruler of Ujjain asking him to use his power to arbitrate in the trial of strength that was pitting them against their own Maharaja. Since 1850, the Ramanandi ascetics were predominant in Ujjain at the large gatherings of ascetics at the Kumbha Melā¹⁹. The Vaishnavas of Jaipur presumably had numerous supporters there. However, Raja Sirdar Singh of Ujjain was probably not too keen to fall out with the Maharaja of Jaipur. In early February 1867, he sent a letter (in Sanskrit) to Hariprasad of Galta in which he assured him of his devotion (I consider you as my *kula-devatā* –family deity–, he wrote) and made vague promises to appease Ramsingh²⁰. A certain Govinddev Sharma also wrote to him from Ujjain to announce the

¹⁸ SH and KDK 8, p.98, both dated Mārṅaśīrṣa sūdi 5 VS 1922.

¹⁹ Pinch 1996b : 155

²⁰ G, dated Mārṅaśīrṣa bādi 12 VS 1923.

despatch of an emissary named Baldev who would tell him personally what required to be done²¹. Ramanujdas of Indore, who was carrying on a regular correspondence with his coreligionist in Galtā since the start of the crisis, also came forward again to convey the greetings of the local *nāgā-akhḍā* (warrior-ascetics training centres), mentioning by name those of the Digambara, Nirvāṇī, Nirmohī, Santoṣī and Kākīvala sections²². In early 1867 again, Rangacharya, the learned Rāmānujī of Vrindavan who, despite the numerous invitations of his fellow disciples (along with promises of financial compensation), never made the journey up to Jaipur, expressed worry at receiving no news and wrote: “tell me if there is something that I can do for you”²³.

In fact, at this time, Hariprasad had probably left Jaipur to go to the Ramanandi place of pilgrimage of Chitrakut (to the south of Allahabad). The custodian of the Gopinatha temple too had fled²⁴. Most of the other Vaishnava monastic abbots and temple custodians had also left the city. Among the main protagonists only two remained in the capital, those of Bālānanda Pīṭha and of Govindadeva temple. In early 1868, Ramsingh ordered the latter to wear the rudrākṣa necklace²⁵. “We are [gauḍīya-vaiṣṇava] Bengalis and our *śāstras* do not order us to wear this necklace during the worship of our Lord”, he replied bravely. Thereupon the palace entrusted the administration of his temple to his son-in-law Nilmani. It confiscated the villages whose income financed the worship of Govindadeva and in order to cover the expenses of the worship drew money from the Treasury²⁶. Nilmani, who, it will be recalled, had received on his marriage with a protégée of the gynaeceum, the temple of Candramanohara and the title of gosāī, had, for his part, accepted to wear the Shaiva marks required by the Maharaja. His temple, in fact, was one of those which already harboured a shrine dedicated to Siva. Moreover he was obviously in the good books of the court since two years earlier he had also been appointed the superintendent of the Mint²⁷.

The two Vaishnava chiefs trapped in Jaipur would have liked to leave. Leave, but not flee. They therefore required the permission of the Maharaja. And he refused to give it! The only way to obtain it was to get themselves invited by some powerful personality who could exert pressure on him. At an unspecified date, the Bālānandī abbot called upon some close patrons [?] with these words:

²¹ G, dated Mārgaśīrṣa bādi 12 VS 1923.

²² G, dated Mārgaśīrṣa sūdi 7 VS 1923.

²³ G, dated Vaiśākha bādi 5 VS 1924.

²⁴ SH, dated Pauṣa bādi 7 VS 1925.

²⁵ This necklace or *mālā* (rosary), which forms a part of the Shaiva emblems along with the horizontal tilaka of ashes, is made up of the kernels of the *Elaeocarpus Ganitrus* berry, called rudrākṣa, “eye of Rudra (Śiva)”.

²⁶ SH, two documents dated Pauṣa bādi 7 VS 1925 and Kartika bādi 5 VS 1926.

²⁷ TDK 7, dated Āṣāḍha bādi 1 VS 1924.

Here the king has completely fallen for the Shaiva dharma and he wants us who are members of the Four Sects, who serve the Vaishnava dharma, to accept the Shaiva dharma. This is going on since four years. We have already had several debates with replies and objections. Our replies are made on the basis of the śāstras but he does not accept this and is pressurizing us. Nor does he give us permission to leave and go away when we ask for it. That is why the members of the sampradāya no longer wish to stay here. They have written to their devotees [disciples] living in other areas and have received invitations from them; some trustworthy people (*bhale admī*) have even come to fetch them. The ācārya of the Nimbarka sect, mahant of Salemabad, was invited by the Raja of Kishangadh and he is there at present. The gosāi of Govindadevaji is thinking of going to Vrindavan. Some trustworthy men of the Raja of Bikaner had come to fetch the gosāis of Candramajī and Madanamohanajī and they also have left. The ācāryajī of Galta has gone towards the east to his house in Chitrakut. You have been devoted to us since all time. Here in Rajasthan, nothing is hidden; it is difficult to leave from here, but if there were to be some means to do so, I would go elsewhere. That is why I am writing in the hope of receiving a letter of invitation from you.²⁸

Did a reply come to this pressing request? It appears that the Bālānandī abbot never left Jaipur. Nor did the custodian of the temple of Govindadeva.

In early August 1868, the Maharaja commemorated his thirty-fifth birthday with celebrations first in the Rājārājeśvara temple and then in the Sītārāma temple, in the presence of the religious dignitaries of the kingdom. But no Vaishnava was invited²⁹. In 1869, the custodian of Govindadeva accepted to wear the tripuṇḍra mark and the rudrākṣa necklace and his possessions were returned to him³⁰. In January 1872, it was Hariprasad of Galta's turn to give in. He was driven to this by the need to get his daughter married, for which the Maharaja was refusing to give permission till he had duly atoned for his "errors". The archives of the palace have kept alive the memory of this episode. They tell us that after having left the city without the permission of the king, Hariprasad had first "gone eastwards" (that is to say to Chitrakut) then, having returned secretly, he had set up his camp in a garden of the Ghat, to the south-east of the capital. On the day of the festivities to celebrate the birthday of his presiding deity Rama (Cait. s. 9), he went in a palanquin to his nearby temple of Galta to take part in the ceremonies. Ramsingh being immediately informed of this was furious and he placed his guru under house arrest in the neighbouring garden of Sisodia! Forced by the necessity of getting his daughter married, the abbot of Galta, under these circumstances, finally accepted to undergo the rite of *prāyaścitta* (atonement) and to wear the rudrākṣa necklace as well as to sport the horizontal mark.

²⁸ B, undated.

²⁹ SH, dated Bhādrapada sūdi 14 VS 1925.

³⁰ SH, dated Kartika bādi 5 VS 1926.

Thereafter, his temples were restored to him and Ramsingh generously gave his daughter a dowry³¹.

The Rāmānandī monastery of Raivasa was subjected to a somewhat harsher treatment. According to its present day mahant, Svāmī Raghavacharya, whom I met in November 1995, eleven of his villages were confiscated. As some of these had been gifted by the raja of the small Shekhavati kingdom of Khandela (made up of 260 villages), the latter filed a suit against the Maharaja of Jaipur, but lost. It is possible that the Crown of Jaipur which had, since long, been eyeing the Shekhavati (which it considered as forming an integral part of its kingdom), took advantage of the religious crisis to annex once for all this tiny piece of territory. Yet other Vaishnavas had no choice but to submit to the orders of the Maharaja. As the mahant of Raivasa was to declare laconically in 1995: “*unhonne peṭ ko tilaka lagā liyā*” (they have put the tilaka on their bellies).

The tilaka quarrel left a bitter taste in the mouth of all those who had submitted to the demands of Ramsingh. For a long time thereafter, accusations and innuendoes embittered the life of some Vaishnava lineages. And this was so not only within the borders of the Kachvaha kingdom. Growse reports that in 1875 the custodian of the Rādhādamodara temple in Vrindavan contested the authority of the custodian of Govindadeva (based in Jaipur) accusing him of having sported the ash marks. He excluded him for this reason from the birthday ceremonies of their founding masters Rupa, Sanatana and Jiva Gosvami and refused to share with him the substantial income from these ceremonies³². Around thirty years later, in his account of the departure of his fellow believers from Jaipur, the Vallabhi Kashinath (of Bikaner) castigated, for the same reasons, those in charge of the Gopinātha and the Govindadeva temples. Even to this day the tilaka quarrel remains a subject of embarrassment in the Vaishnava circles of Jaipur, a most unpleasant episode in their long relations with the Kachvaha dynasty.

In a way, it was the fate of the Vallabhīs and of the Nimbārkīs which was the least enviable. This is explained mainly by the nature of their responsibilities within the religious configuration of the palace. Their deities not being invested with any direct function of protection of the dynasty, their presence was not as crucial to the kings' power as that of the Ramanandis and the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas. While these latter, once they had fallen in line and agreed to abide by the orders of the Maharaja, regained little by little their rank and their role in the court and recuperated the belongings that had been confiscated, the sacrifice of the other two was total. On the other hand, the Vallabhīs and the Nimbārkīs had no difficulty in leaving Jaipur since they owned lands and had patrons elsewhere. This situation sheltered them from the exclusive control

³¹ TDK 34, dated Mārgaśīrṣa sūdi 12 VS 1928; SH, same date.

³² Growse 1883 [1978] : 257.

that Ramsingh had got it into his head to exercise over their religious practices and social conduct of the Vaishnava sects.

The properties that the Vallabhīs had abandoned in Jaipur in July 1865 were annexed once and for all by the State in 1868. That year, Ramsingh got the temple of Gokulacandramā gifted to Mir Kurban Ali, a Muslim jurist who had been introduced to him by his Prime Minister Nawab Faiz Ali Khan. As for the Madanamohana temple, it changed hands several times and finally, years after the crisis, it fell to the share of an illegitimate son of Madhosingh II, the adopted son and successor of Ramsingh.

The properties abandoned by the mahant of Salemabad in 1864 witnessed a comparable fate. Reintegrated within the domain of the Crown as early as in June 1867³³, they were re-distributed to a new protégé of the court. Five years after having gifted the Vallabhī temple to a Muslim, Ramsingh ordered the Royal Council to get the possessions of the Nimbārki mahant transferred to Kamnath Shastri³⁴, a Śākta scholar who formed part of his innermost circle and whom he had, a little earlier, appointed as his rāja-guru.

These are, broadly, the main events in the tilaka quarrel. Till 1880, the year that Ramsingh died, the reforms undertaken since 1863, bore fruit. The practices considered as heretical were rooted out from Jaipur as the Vaishnavas had only two choices: either a humiliating expiation and acceptance of the new creed, or exile. Hence they either submitted to the royal will or left the kingdom.

The remaining four chapters of this book will attempt to understand this crisis by studying its causes and consequences in a more detailed manner. However, the historical context in which it evolved needs first of all to be specified.

Full powers

In more than one way, the year 1864 was a decisive one and a turning point in the life of the Maharaja. His relations with the “paramount power” had never been so harmonious. Ramsingh, in the view of the Political Agent, was a conscientious administrator. This opinion was a source of satisfaction to a man who thought that good relations with the imperial power would win him success inside his kingdom. On 12 March 1864, the British made him a knight of the “Most Exalted Order of the Star of India”. This very recently created title brought the Indian “Princes” within the system of honours bestowed by the British imperial power. Being the first Maharaja of Rajputana to have been thus honoured, Ramsingh was thereafter ranked, for all official ceremonies, before Jodhpur (but still after Udaipur whose prestige among Rajputs the British took care not to lower). Shortly after that, another mark of appreciation was bestowed on

³³ SH, dated Āṣāḍha sūdi 13 VS 1924 and TDK 34, same date.

³⁴ Document in the possession of the descendants of Kamnath Shastri, dated Phālguna sūdi 11 VS 1929.

him. The Political Agent thanked him publicly for his contribution to the International Exposition of 1862 in London³⁵. The same year, he delivered to him, on behalf of the British government, a “*sanad*” of adoption³⁶. This document, which guaranteed his right to adopt a (male) heir in accordance with Rajput custom, was the basic condition for the stability of his rule. But this step revealed a grave anxiety: after twelve years of marriage, the Maharaja still had no child. In the beginning of this same year of 1864, he entered into two further marriages. In January, he went to Jodhpur to marry a daughter and a niece of the Maharaja. It is true that on this count, the British were frankly unhappy. They sharply criticized the grandiose ceremony which depleted the exchequer by some 90,000 rupees³⁷. Nevertheless, Ramsingh was pleased at these alliances which consolidated his bonds with Takhsingh, two of whose sisters and a daughter he had already married eleven years earlier, and moreover he hoped that they would bring him the son he so longed for.

On 13 June 1864, Pandit Shivdin passed away. His death occurred a few months after the arrival of a new Political Agent (end March). In such circumstances the 32 year old Ramsingh was able to take the reins of power firmly into his own hands. During the twelve years or so that followed, he continued the reforms undertaken by J. Ludlow and Pandit Shivdin, the two men under whose apprenticeship he had honed his royal skills. These years correspond to the most fruitful period of his rule. They were also those during which the tilaka quarrel took place. Thanks to Pandit Shivdin, the finances of the kingdom had stabilized. Two years after his death the annual income had risen to 45 lakh rupees³⁸. Jaipur had never been so wealthy. Law and order prevailed, revenues were collected and the levies due to the British were paid regularly. The traders, the traditional patrons of the Vaishnavas (and of the Jains), participated in the upswing experienced by the kingdom. They were appreciative of the fact that the capital had once again become the paradise for commercial and banking activities that it used to be before the troubles. The British also were pleased at this. In 1869, the Political Agent portrayed Jaipur with pride as a kind of “Lombard Street” of Rajputana³⁹. Ramsingh was brimming with energy. He launched various large projects enabling the city to be connected by road right to the limits of the kingdom. He started a railway line (between the capital and Agra), and also postal and telegraphic services. The Maharaja endowed Jaipur with sewerage systems, lighting with oil (replaced by gas from 1874) and running water. He modernized the main thoroughfares by getting them paved. In 1870, he laid the foundation stone of the famous Mayo Hospital. Continuing the educational policy of J. Ludlow (the founder in 1844 of the Maharaja College, facing the Hava Mahal, and in 1845 of the

³⁵ R. 1866-R. 1867.

³⁶ Mehta 1896 : 211.

³⁷ R. 1866-R. 1867.

³⁸ R. 1866-R. 1867.

³⁹ Roy 1978 : VIII.

Sanskrit College, some few metres further along the same highway), he opened a crafts institute (in one of the houses of Pandit Shivdin), a medical college and a school for girls. These institutions remain important landmarks in contemporary Jaipur. Through all these measures Ramsingh modernized the capital in the manner desired by the British. The latter were satisfied. They felt that it was “one of the most beautiful modern Indian cities”⁴⁰.

Simultaneously, Ramsingh wanted to make his capital a big regional centre of literary and artistic culture. Out of personal inclination and also because patronage was yet another way of displaying the signs of power, he granted protection to various artists. Painters, poets, musicians (*kalāvatī*, *kalānaut*)—mostly Muslims⁴¹—flocked to his court. A lover of music, Ramsingh himself played the *vīṇā* under the guidance of the famous Behram Khan Dagar⁴². This musician, who came to Jaipur in 1857, remained in his service till the end and followed him by a short duration in death, so attached was he to him. A great lover of dance and drama, Ramsingh was a patron of numerous artists, dancers, actors and actresses. At the end of his reign, he founded the Ramprakash Theatre, the first theatre in Jaipur. The patronage granted to Brahmanical learning formed a part of this cultural policy. Like his memorable ancestor Jaisingh II, the Maharaja gave a boost to Sanskrit studies to which he was clearly very attached, as a tribute perhaps to the memory of his first teacher, Sakharam Bhatt. He could moreover read some Sanskrit texts in the original. It is however difficult to say how much of his taste for patronage of the arts and literature was due to the local tradition and how much of it reflected the strictly British influence, which also was decisive. Indeed, it was around the Sanskrit College (founded by Ludlow) that Ramsingh organized the scholarly circles in his capital. And when in 1871, he founded the Municipal Library in Chaura Rasta, it was from Great Britain that he sent for some 2,000 volumes⁴³. Like his ancestors however, he also collected valuable books, miniatures and manuscripts and enriched the collection of the Royal Library (*pothi-khānā*)⁴⁴.

The most notable work of these prosperous years was accomplished in the administrative sphere. The Maharaja continued the policy of the British by adapting the administrative structures of the kingdom to the requirements of the empire. Now, it was precisely during the years of the religious crisis that Ramsingh adapted his ways the most to those of the colonial regime by modernising the State machinery. He created veritable ministries. At the request of the Government of India, he adopted English in place of the vernacular as the language of communication with the British and with the other “princely States”⁴⁵. He also divided his kingdom

⁴⁰ Hunter 1886 : 59.

⁴¹ Erdman 1978 : 361.

⁴² Erdman 1978 : 350.

⁴³ R. 1866-R. 1867.

⁴⁴ Bahura 1976 : 87-88.

⁴⁵ R. 1866-R. 1867 : § 91

into districts (*nizāmts*), endowed with separate administrative and judicial powers, thus taking away from the powerful Rajput landowners their prerogatives. Finally, he reorganized the police. When in early 1865, the Government of India, desiring to conduct its fight against banditry on a systematic basis, decided to set up in each of the princely States an apparatus for the suppression of highway robbers, and it put the Political Agent in charge of it, Ramsingh took the necessary steps to facilitate this reorganization⁴⁶. Many jagirdars revolted against this measure since they used to draw large profits from some of the operations organized by the dacoits on their lands, with their complicity.

Ramsingh the man

Few accounts are available on the personality of the Maharaja during the years when he carried out his reforms. The two most important of these are from Westerners, these being Captain Beynon, the Political Agent posted in Jaipur from March 1864, and the young Louis Rousselet who was staying there from April till October 1866. The latter talks of the Maharaja as seeming to be around 45 years old while he was actually eleven years younger! In fact, of very short stature and puny, Ramsingh, with an emaciated face and a worried look, was early in life a sick man. The cataract he suffered from depressed him. He was reserved, even cold, or just shy perhaps. Yet he did show warmth at times, as our French traveller saw, for instance, when he went to bid him good-bye⁴⁷. Beynon, for his part notes that his “habits and tastes are very simple and [that] he does not indulge in that display of dress and jewellery which is generally the case with the native Princes”. Louis Rousselet, who met him twice, saw him “richly dressed with a negligence that is perhaps feigned”. While, for the Political Agent, the Maharaja has a tendency “to be parsimonious as regards his own personal expenditure [...], he is most liberal when it concerns any work of public benefit”⁴⁸. Now, the British were very sensitive to the generosity of the “Princes”. When, a few years later, Ramsingh helped his subjects on his own initiative during the terrible famine of 1868-1869 (as a result of the drought which affected the whole of Rajputana during those years), the Government of India thanked him by honouring him with a 19 gun salute instead of the 17 granted earlier⁴⁹, an honour highly prized by the Maharaja (as by his peers).

Ramsingh had progressive views. He wanted to modernize his State, as we have seen. His western education had developed in him a taste for technology. His craze for photography, which had just made its appearance in the West –the very first photograph had been taken by N. Niepce in 1826– testifies to this. Ramsingh possessed his own studio right from the early 1850s⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ R. 1866-R. 1867.

⁴⁷ See annex II, p.293.

⁴⁸ R. 1866-R. 1867 : § 132.

⁴⁹ R. 1868-R. 1867 : § 22.

⁵⁰ Sahai 1996.

We also know that in 1869 he was a life member of the Bengal Photographic Society⁵¹, but his membership probably dated back to an even earlier time. Moreover, Ramsingh was very talented in the art of photography. He took some particularly amazing portraits of the members of his court, among these being Rajputs, scholars and the women of his gynaeceum. He also immortalized a number of dancers and actresses, musicians and artists and other people on the fringes of society, family and caste. One of the rare photographs in which he is seen half-smiling shows him seated in an unassuming fashion in the midst of dancers and musicians. Even more unusual are his own portraits taken by himself or by his assistants. He struck different poses, wearing different types of clothing, as if he was seeking to fix firmly all the facets of his personality. There was Ramsingh the Maharaja, flaunting all his insignia, seated on his throne, posing before a painting of the sun, the emblem of the Kachvahas. Then there was Ramsingh, modestly dressed in a cotton shawl, barefoot, with a penitent look, his dog Tatty lying down before him; Ramsingh the Rajput, gun on shoulder, wearing boots, ready for the hunt; Ramsingh the devotee of Śiva, seated before the prescribed items of worship, his forehead, chest and arms bearing the three lines of ash (*tripuṇḍra*), with the string of rudrākṣa beads around his neck⁵². In most of his portraits, he sports the Shaiva emblems.

The photographs of the Maharaja's collection testify to the fact that he mixed a great deal with the British who were to be found in large numbers in the capital. Louis Rousselet tells us that an entire British community had settled down at the time in the vicinity of the Agency. Indeed, apart from the Political Agent and his assistants, there lived also in Jaipur along with their families, various British to whom the Maharaja had entrusted the administration of the hospital, the meteorological institute, the public works department, etc. Most of them had got vast houses built with gardens. Ramsingh took their photographs individually, in groups, in couples, and with their children.

In fact, during the years of the religious crisis, Ramsingh had come much closer than before to these Westerners. He welcomed them to his palace. He began to sit with them at table, in their company, instead of simply joining them after dinner. It should not be assumed that he ate with them. But even being present during the meal was already an infringement of the rules of purity in force in his palace. His future Prime minister (from 1871), Fatehsingh Champavat, has written in his Memoirs that it was his minister, the Muslim Nawab Faiz Ali Khan, who encouraged him to consolidate his personal connections with the British administrators⁵³. The Political Agent took note of this and expressed his appreciation over these efforts at socialization. He compared this attitude favourably with the one, full of "prejudices", adopted by the entourage of the

⁵¹ *Journal of the Bengal Photographic Society*, 1869 : 45.

⁵² Some of these portraits have been published by Sahai 1996.

⁵³ Champavat 1899 : 190-191.

Maharaja which, he noted, tried to thwart his demonstrations of friendship⁵⁴. At the great durbar of Agra in November 1866, Ramsingh, to the astonishment of Louis Rousselet, even went to the extent of dancing the quadrille on the arm of a European lady! At this time, again under the advice of his Muslim minister, reports Fatehsingh Champavat (who was a keen observer of the conduct of the person whom he was to replace in the government), Ramsingh began to go regularly to Simla and Calcutta⁵⁵. He brought back undoubtedly from his sojourns amidst British society numerous ideas to embellish and enliven his palace and his capital. The lack of understanding could not but be great between this Maharaja who socialized with British and Muslims, and the Vaishnavas, so faithful to their ancestral ways and customs, so convinced of their ritual and spiritual superiority. The accusation of heteropraxy and the threats of excommunication which he hurled at them while behaving as he did, were incomprehensible to them.

A policy of « bureaucratic centralization »

The big Rajput landlords of the kingdom were the first victims of the plan for the relocation of power that the Maharaja of Jaipur set out to effect by implementing the policy of the British. The eviction of the Nathavats, which was simply the first act of the drama, was symbolic of this collusion of interests which had come into place from the time of the arrival of Ludlow in 1845. Fortified by the success that he had just encountered at Jodhpur from where he had driven away the Nātha ascetics, to whom Mansingh I (1803-1843) had entrusted the management of his kingdom, the Political agent had indeed boasted as soon as he was appointed to Jaipur that he would deal with the Nathavat (Rajputs) with the same firmness that he had used with the Nātha (ascetics) of Jodhpur⁵⁶.

A little after the final departure of the Nathavats (after the Mutiny), other Rajputs were subjected to a fate comparable to theirs when Ramsingh removed them from the management of state affairs. By entrusting responsibility to a man like Pandit Shivdin right from the start of his rule and by subsequently promoting his rapid rise, the British had initiated the advent of a new bureaucratic elite in Jaipur. Ramsingh came round to their point of view only gradually. Greatly distressed at the death of his mentor, he appointed as his successor the Muslim Faiz Ali Khan assisted by Vishvambhardin, whose only merit lay in his being the son of Shivdin⁵⁷, which goes to prove that he still judged people by the yardstick of the prestige of their lineage. But Vishvambhardin did not have the qualities of his father and after having dismissed him (and even

⁵⁴ R. 1866-R 1867 : 134.

⁵⁵ Champavat 1899 : 190.

⁵⁶ Brooke 1868 : 52.

⁵⁷ KDK 16, p.109, dated Jyeshtha sūdi 10 VS 1920.

imprisoned him for a while), Ramsingh gave increased powers to Faiz Ali Khan. It is not impossible that this disappointment had contributed towards convincing him that it was necessary to professionalize the bureaucracy as the British were encouraging him to do. At any rate, the Political Agent made no secret of the fact that he favoured Faiz Ali Khan who, after having for a long time assisted the former tutor, appeared to him to be the only competent person in the government. What he meant thereby was that he judged him capable of bringing about the rationalization of the administrative machinery that the British government was seeking to promote in the whole of Rajputana. A large landowner from the Northern Provinces, connected to the Muslim reformer from Aligarh, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Nawab Faiz Ali Khan had also the merit of being an outsider⁵⁸. Some Rajputs remained in the government, such as the Thakur of Achrol, related to Ramsingh and who had assisted Faiz Ali Khan during the Mutiny, but their influence in political and administrative matters was limited. This policy, which distanced them from power, filled them with indignation⁵⁹ since, from their point of view, “outsiders” had no legitimacy. For the British, on the contrary, these new functionaries were all the more worthy as neither they nor their families had taken part in the intrigues of the palace⁶⁰. They were appreciative of their mastery over English, their administrative skills and the ease with which they moved in their own circles.

Some measures in the way of economic pressure also contributed to this strategy of rejection of the Rajputs. The British reported that Ramsingh struck off from the list of those receiving grants, those among the Rajputs whom he considered as being parasites of the kingdom⁶¹. So much so that during those years, the Political Agent had to devote a large part of his time to listening to and giving advice to the Maharaja, and to appeasing the Rajputs who, through the intermediary of their representatives (*vakil*), thronged the Agency to complain about the injustices they felt were being meted out to them⁶². This was the situation that was summed up by the French traveller Louis Rousselet who wrote:

Causing them a thousand annoyances, [the Maharaja] has succeeded in banishing his large feudatories from his court, then he finds reasons to quarrel with them and deprives them daily of some privilege, some prerogative⁶³.

After the Rajputs, it was the turn of the Vaishnavas. Their situation was reminiscent of that of the Rajputs in the sense that their relationship with the palace of Jaipur was both one of

⁵⁸ Rudolph and Rudolph 1984 : 15.

⁵⁹ R. 1866-R. 1867.

⁶⁰ Rudolph and Rudolph 1984 : 158.

⁶¹ R. 1866-R.1867 : § 20.

⁶² R. 1868-R. 1869 : § 125,

⁶³ Rousselet 1877 : 272.

subordination as of independence. The Vaishnava sects were dependent on the palace. They had received from it most of the landed properties that enabled them to maintain their temples. Their heads also drew benefits from them for their own subsistence. They managed their estates and could hand them down to their successors in accordance with rules laid down in agreement with the Maharaja and his administration. These arrangements were going to prove to be powerful means of control in the hands of Ramsingh. But despite their bonds of subordination, the Vaishnava authorities availed of a genuine independence of action over their lands. They enjoyed a right of granting shelter (*śaraṇa*) which rendered their estates inaccessible to the royal police with the result that they could shield from the arms of the law any person of their choice⁶⁴. Some of them also controlled sections of warrior-ascetics. Finally, and above all, the Vaishnava heads had at their disposal immense financial resources which they could use as they chose.

For Louis Rousselet who was living in Jaipur when hundreds of Vaishnava Brahmans were being forced to undergo purification rites and were then paraded on elephant back along the main thoroughfare of the city, it was very clear that the Maharaja was having it out both on the “nobles” as well as on the “clergy”. He wrote:

[The Maharaja] has undertaken a crusade against the nobility and the clergy who are dictating orders to him at every moment and occupying the best of his lands. Against the clergy he has taken recourse to a bold method. He has declared himself the founder of a new sect whose aim is to restore the worship of Isvara [sic] in all its purity. Armed with this new status, he has put a stop to donations to the gods he does not recognize, and the priests who are losing their income from this have had to emigrate towards more hospitable climes⁶⁵.

At this time, the palace had already subjected the Vaishnavas to various economic pressures (confiscations of temples and lands, stoppage of donations). In the view of the Frenchman, these measures were a clever means for the Maharaja to replenish the coffers of the State. These, according to him, were the reasons which guided his conduct towards the Vaishnavas. Indeed, by driving away some Vaishnavas towards “more hospitable climes”, the bullying tactics of the court brought back into the royal domain (*khālsā*) the landed properties which the Maharaja personally administered. This meant the procurement of that much more direct income. One point certainly made by Louis Rousselet can be accepted. The administrative and other changes implemented by Ramsingh involved beyond doubt great expense and it is probable that some of the money confiscated from the Vaishnavas came in handy. It would however be incorrect to conclude from this that he undertook the religious transformations that we are dealing with, solely with the objective of bringing into the coffers of the State the fortunes that

⁶⁴ Ghasiram 1933 : 103.

⁶⁵ Rousselet 1877 : 272-273.

his predecessors had gifted to the Vaishnavas. For on one hand a part of the confiscated goods was in fact redistributed to new protégés. But also, and more importantly, because it would be erroneous to reduce his policy down to the economic plane when a deep social reform was also at stake.

The option chosen by the British

At the time when Rousselet gathered the information which enabled him later to leave an account of the Jaipur crisis, the distant capital of British India was becoming aware of the harassment to the Vaishnavas and the reprisals being taken against them in great details. On 8 October 1866, the *Hindoo Patriot* of Calcutta published the following letter (dated end August) from a reader:

To the Editor of the *Hindoo Patriot*

Dear Sir,

You will I believe be glad to have an account of the doings of the most exalted Knight of Jeypore. I have culled the following, hoping you will kindly give it a place in your correspondence columns.

The Maharajah of Jeypore has always been represented as a very intelligent and liberal prince, with what show of reason let the readers of the *Hindoo Patriot* judge for themselves. The impression in my mind is just the contrary. For who would believe that a Hindoo Chief is capable of imitating to a certain extent in the nineteenth century the Spanish Inquisition of the Middle Ages. No tolerance is allowed for other sects. The Chief himself being a bigoted Shivite will not see a Vishnuvite until he throws off his own symbols and adopts that of the other. The matter does not end there. Several priests with their gods have been driven out and their property confiscated only to satisfy his animosity. The perpetrator does not consider the misery and destitution these persons are thrown into. Such an abuse of power in a Chief is incomprehensible. How will he himself like it if the paramount power will take into its head of Christianizing him or driving him out on being refused. Weak and without any substantial education except a little Hindee as far as Toolsee Das' Ramayan it is next to impossible for him to entertain liberal views on the most difficult of matters – religion. This little despot has got the inclination though happily not the power to demolish all other sects except his own. He is a (miniature) Mahomet without his ability and genius. Gokool Chunder Manjee and the Priest Rung Ramayan Dassjee have been driven out with their followers about 3000 in number, and their property confiscated, others are going to share the same fate, specially the Gulta wallas and Ballanundjee wallas. While the State affairs remain unimproved, the country in debt, and every sort of exaction and oppression mark the administration, it is high time that the Maharajah should condescend to look a little more into his own affairs. Thousands of suits are pending and require his hearing, but still he finds no time to pay any attention to them. In this age of white washing when Nero is considered to be a good monarch with constitutional principles and an inordinate taste for music no wonder that Ram Singh will get a K.S.I.

Real and sterling merit is allowed like many a wild flower to die and blush unseen, while a little loosening of the purse-string of a despot or the time-serving policy of an intriguing court will ring the whole Peninsula with praise. Government cannot now remain ignorant that since the death of Pundit Sheodeen the whole state of Jaipur is retrograding inasmuch as prices have been fixed for every post according to its emolument and that he that offers the largest sum is the one to succeed. Qualifications in such case are not to be looked for and the natural effect of this cannot but be palpable to every one. It is the strangest of all things that the Chief does not take into his consideration that the man who offers this lure money for his appointment has a strong inclination to get it back either by cheating the Raj or crushing its subjects. Honesty is not the best policy here. What with persecution of the different sects, tyranny and exaction on the several fiefs, intriguing with the malcontent Lakhjee of the Ulwar State, and helping him with money and men for bringing destruction on a very flourishing State in spite of the Supreme Government, idleness for any work and company of worthless buffoons in the Court Jeypore can never hope to rise. It is much to be regretted that our Indian Princes are not forced to have a good education. India is doomed and she will never have a Jurashindhu or Vikramadytaya. Amongst the whole range of her Princes and Princelings (besides a few honourable exceptions) hardly there is one who has got even general education.

Superstition the greatest enemy of civilization rules high in the land, hence India's regeneration will take some centuries.

Yours faithfully

H.A.E.

The same newspaper returned once again to this theme by publishing on 29 October 1866 the letter of another reader (dated 12 October):

To the editor of the *Hindoo Patriot*

Sir

The Maharajahs of Jeypore have always been sincere Vishnuvites, and their capital has been a distinguished seat of Vishnuvism. But the times are now altered. A Shaiva sunyesi has lately appeared at the court of Jeypore, and made the Maharajah a convert of his creed. With characteristic bigotry of an apostate the Rajah would not see a Vishnuvite until he throws off his own symbols and adopts those of a Shivite. Nor is this all. The Vishnuvites are oppressed in every way. Their properties are confiscated, and their houses and temples demolished. Again numbers of them are forced to put on the symbols of a Shaiva and then carried round the city on an elephant's back. Several priests have been compelled to leave the dominions of Jeypore and find shelter in the territories of the Maharajah of Bikaner. The descendants of Adwaita and Nityanunda in Bengal would I believe take measures to remove their Govindajee and Gopinauthjee from Jeypore. The learned Boistom Charan Dass Babajee has already proceeded to Jeypore to enter into a religious discussion with the Sunasi. And Pundits Joggodanundo Goshwami and Seeram Goshami, two eminent Sanskrit Scholars, have been invited by the son of Kakajee to defeat the Sunyasi by force

of arguments drawn from the Purans and Shastras. But the Knight of Jeypore is averse to theological discussions, so the poor Vishnuvites must suffer.

Yours truly

Kissori Mohun Surma

Undoubtedly, these two readers of the *Hindoo Patriot* who, incidentally, had a perfect command of English, were well acquainted with the events that had unfolded in Jaipur. They probably had first hand knowledge of them. It is possible that they were themselves Vaishnavas. The first one wrote from Jhunjhunu in Shekhavati, a region which contested its subordination to the kingdom of Jaipur. He was more concerned over the fate of the Rāmānandīs and the Bālānandīs while the second (a Brahman writing from Calcutta) was worried over that of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas. The latter laid stress also on the detrimental influence of a sannyāsī on the Maharaja. Who did he have in mind? It was precisely during this month of October 1866 that Dayanand Sarasvati, a sannyāsī of the Shankara order, who was later to acquire much fame, was residing in Jaipur. He had already stayed in the capital for several months the preceding year (from October 1865 till March 1866) but if, as we shall see, he had not gone unnoticed, at that time he had not succeeded in meeting Ramsingh.

For the writer of the first letter however, it was without doubt the Maharaja himself who was the main culprit. He denounced his despotism in indignant terms, condemning in the same breath the intimidations to which the Maharaja was subjecting the Rajputs and the Vaishnavas. He also accused the palace of thriving on corruption and of conducting a detrimental policy of interventionism, mentioning, while passing, the rumours about the assistance to one of the Rajput rebels of the neighbouring State of Alwar. He was probably aware of the fact that at that very time this matter was causing great annoyance to the British⁶⁶. In short, while the second writer was content with making ironical remarks over the title of Knight bestowed on the Maharaja of Jaipur, the first one was appealing directly to those who protected such a Prince, that is to say to the Government of India authorities.

This is interesting because the Vaishnavas of Jaipur reacted precisely in the same way as soon as they took note of the danger of their position. In early July 1866, a year after having been deprived of his properties, the abbot of Galta decided to take legal action by appealing to the "English civil courts". To do this, he entered into an alliance with Gosāi Shyamsundar of the Govindadeva temple. At this time the latter was himself in great difficulty since Ramsingh had entrusted his properties to his son-in-law Nilmani and was having him watched. Through a letter dated early July 1866⁶⁷, bearing the seals of the temples of Sītārāma and Govindadeva, the Rāmānandī and the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava, in a rare demonstration of solidarity between the

⁶⁶ R. 1866-R. 1867 : § 56-66.

⁶⁷ G, dated Āṣāḍha bādī 2 VS 1923.

custodians of the two presiding deities of Jaipur, entrusted to an advocate (*vakīl*), Lala Mevaram, the task of defending the “Vaishnavas against the Shaivas” in the English civil courts (*angrezī sīrastā*). They offered him 1,000 rupees as fees over and above his travelling and incidental expenses.

The details of the judicial proceedings initiated are not known. Nor is it known whether the process led to any outcome. But it shows that the bureaucratic transformation of the kingdom had rapidly generated new models of behaviour since the institutional procedures in question had been introduced in 1840 by the Political Agent Thoresby during Ramsingh’s minority⁶⁸. And even more importantly it testifies that the Vaishnavas of Jaipur had decided to override the authority of the State by directly alerting the “paramount power”.

This was also what some of their coreligionists living outside Jaipur were advising them to do. Thus the heads of the seven sections of Ramanandī warrior-ascetics, based in the territories of Holkar in South Rajputana, did no less than dictate to Hariprasad of Galta, the very terms of a petition that they advised him to send to the Political Agent in Indore. They wrote as follows:

Sri Jānakī Vallabho jayati

Rāma

To Śrīmad Hariprasādācārya, founder-ācārya of the glorious Vedic path (*śrīmad-veda-mārga-pratiṣṭhāpanācārya*), abbot of the monastery of Galta (*Galvāśramādhīśa*)

From :

Śrīmad Rāmacandra, Śrīmad Hariguru, Śrīmad Viṣṇubhakti, Rāmānujadāsa, Jivanadāsa, Hīrādāsa, Viṣṇudāsa, and the heads of the seven akhādās, Raghunāthadāsa (Digambara), Lāladāsa (Nirvāṇi), Maṅgaladāsa (Nirmohī), Sītārāmadāsa (Santoṣī), Balarāmadāsa (Khākhī), etc.

Your letter has arrived. We were happy to have news of you. What you have written about your problems has saddened us and we will do what you tell us to do for you have the right to ask us. This place belongs to you. You have asked us to convey this news to all the Vaishnavas wherever they may be and we are in agreement with you. We feel, like you, that this news should be communicated everywhere and we will do what you have asked of us.

And you on your part must write to the Political Agent (*ajanṭ sāhab*) of Indore. Tell him that Galta is the main centre (*mukhya sthāna*) of all the Vaishnavas and that over there the Maharaja of Jaipur has made our disciples and those of the Four Sects perform harsh expiation (*prāyaścitta*) and that he continues to do so ; that he is harassing us so much that we are communicating this to you ; that first of all the Maharaja had told us in front of thousands of people, and had also written to us, that there would be ten pandits on their side and ten from our side and five pandits as mediators to hold a disputation ; that when we consulted our pandits and decided to have a disputation at Prayag and

⁶⁸ Sarkar 1984 : 354; Brooke 1868 : 40.

that we wrote to him to tell him so, he was not in agreement and refused ; that he told us that he did not wish to have a discussion (*vāg-vivāda*) but that our pandits should expound to him the books of our sampradāya to clear his doubts ; that when we sent for ten pandits and asked him to listen to them, he refused that also ; that we are ready to do whatever he will tell us but that we do not know how to do so since he [himself] does not do what he says ; that we are informing you so that you may organize a disputation in order that a decision be taken in accordance with justice ; that till now he was saying that he wanted us to do atonement (*prāyaścitta*) through pressure (*sāma-dāma*) but henceforth he will do it in accordance with the royal manner (*rāja-nīti*) ; that we will remain quiet for as long as we can tolerate that the name of the Four Sects be tarnished [lost] ; and that you must therefore take some action as you are the universal ruler (*cakravartī*, and that if you do not take the [necessary] measures, who will do it ; that if you hesitate to act, the disciples and sādhus of the Four Sects, who are very large in number in the country, will get together and will come to Jaipur and that there will be riots (*darigā*) ; that you will then be obliged to act ; that I am sending you this petition so that you may already do something.

And you have your devoted trader disciples (*mahājanas*) to whom you must also send the same petition. And similarly to the kings who are Vaishnava devotees (*vaiṣṇava sevaka*). And write also wherever our Vaishnavas are residing and to the other [Political] Agents and to other English gentlemen also. A petition should be sent to all of them. You have the right to take these steps and we hope you will do it.

Keep us informed and we also will write to you on our part if there is something to say. We have learnt that the Maharaja of Jaipur is setting out for Agra on the 13th of the bright fortnight of Aśvina [āśvina] and that other rajas also are going there. They will all meet there the Lord Sahib [the Viceroy Lord Lawrence]. In the event that the [Political] Agent [of Indore] writes to Lockett Sahib [the Governor of the North Western Provinces of which Agra was the capital], he should have your petition with him before he [Lockett or Lord Lawrence?] meets the rajas. Let there be no delay. Do not tarry [do not be lazy]. And tell us if there is anything we can do.

Devotedly⁶⁹.

The intention was clear. It was to force the Political Agent of Indore to exert pressure on the Jaipur Crown so that it would organise the disputation and make it possible for a decision to be finally taken in accordance with law. The means also were clear. These were threats. The message that had to be got across was that if the British did not come to the rescue, the ascetics in Jaipur would launch a rebellion! This petition, added the authors, had to be sent immediately so that it reached the Political Agent of Indore within the next few days. Time was running out. The warrior-ascetics of the region of Indore were not unaware of the fact that their Political Agent was going to Agra for the 19 and 20 November (1866) darbār. They knew also that he would be meeting numerous rulers there, among these being Ramsingh, and, more importantly, the Viceroy of India. This was just the right opportunity to reach out to the highest possible level.

⁶⁹ G, dated Āśvina bādi 8 VS 1923 (end September 1866).

The letter that the abbot of Galta sent three days later to Maharaja Ishvariprasad Narayan Singh of Benares indicates that he had decided to abide by this advice. He informed him that the Vaishnavas would be appealing to the "Lord Sahab" in Agra.

Did they do so? There are no documents available as conclusive evidence, but judging by the report of the Political Agent Beynon, it seems obvious that the British clearly chose "to cover" Ramsingh.

Beynon's report is the only account by a representative of Queen Victoria's government of the religious reforms undertaken by Ramsingh. No other British source makes mention of them. By the time he wrote, the crisis was over; the matter needed to be closed. The few paragraphs he devoted to it entered into the normal framework of his activity as a Political Agent. In his report, the first that he drew up since being appointed three years earlier at the Jaipur Agency (in March 1864), Beynon made a comprehensive presentation of the political and economic situation of the kingdom. It was in this context that he described the crisis of the years 1865-1866. In his presentation of events, he made no mention of the conversion of the Maharaja, the religious influence of his entourage or the existence of the Dharma-sabha and its activities. Not only that, he denied all rumours of persecutions including those which, at that time, were being carried by the press up to Calcutta. If one were to judge by what Beynon wrote, Ramsingh had organised discussions in the palace as he felt that the Vaishnava worship was "opposed to the ordinances laid down in the Shastras", but he had exerted no pressure on the Vaishnavas. The accusations that may have spread here or there were totally unfounded. The Political Agent declared that he was convinced of this. The Maharaja himself, and those close to him, had assured him that nothing of the sort had happened. In short, the Vaishnavas who had left "have deserted their city of their own will and are free to return whenever they wish". The report contains 137 numbered paragraphs. The section that concerns the events, entitled "Religious discussions in Jaipur" covers the paragraphs 125 to 129 and goes as follows:

125. During the past year His Highness has had several public discussions in his palace, on which occasions all the priests of several temples in the city of Jeypore have assembled together. The subject discussed was with reference to the present form of Vaishnava worship, which, His Highness maintains, is opposed to the ordinances laid down in the Shastras. Many of the leading priests in the principal temples of Jeypore held opposite views, and their minds, as well as those of the people who frequent the temples of the Vaishnava sect, were much disturbed and alarmed, as rumours got abroad that the Maharajah intended to expel all those from the city who entertained views opposed to those of His Highness. The Maharajah took every favourable opportunity, however, to impress on the priests and people that such was not his intention, and that, although he held his own views of what he considered the true Hindoo religion, they were at liberty to follow their won doctrines.

126. In spite, however, of these assurances of toleration the alarm increased, when in the month of July last the priest of the temple of Gokuljee marched out of the city, taking the idol with him, and was followed by

thousands of the inhabitants crying and giving vent to their feelings by loud and frequent expressions of grief and sorrow at the great calamity which had befallen the city of Jeypore.

127. The priest remained encamped for about a week within two miles of the city, where he was visited daily by all of the Vaishnava sect, imploring him to return, and it is said that he would have returned had the Maharajah given him any encouragement to do so. His Highness's reply on the question being put to him is said to be: "he has left of his own accord, and he is quite at liberty to return in the same manner without being interfered with".

Several other priests belonging to the temples of Jeypore of the Vaishnava sect have also gone away quietly from fear of persecution.

128. It is not necessary perhaps for me to enter into particulars as to the part the Maharajah has played in the late religious discussion, as he has himself explained these in a pamphlet which was forwarded in a letter from this Office, No. 163-101, dated 24th November 1866.

129. The subject of the differences has also been discussed by Pundits at Benares, Muttra, &c., and in some of the public prints in India, and rumours have got abroad that His Highness's conduct towards the Vaishnava party has been harsh, and that the priests who left this [sic] were expelled or obliged to leave from the persecution they received; such, however, I am enabled to state from His Highness's own assurances, as well as from what others have told me who are in a position to know the real state of matters, is not the case.

The Maharajah has been most tolerant in all his proceedings, and though it is said prayers were offered for the Maharajah's death, and incantations and charms employed, nevertheless the villages given in grant to these temples and other privileges enjoyed by the priests are still continued to them, no pressure was brought to bear on the priests or their servants who left the city, they deserted on their own free-will, and are at liberty to return whenever they feel inclined.⁷⁰

These seven paragraphs follow a long account of the various administrative reforms which had been undertaken in the kingdom under the leadership of the Maharaja. Beynon accompanied his presentation of the political and economic situation in Jaipur by flattering remarks on Ramsingh's constant keenness to collaborate in every way with the British authorities to improve the living conditions of his people. The reader of the report therefore has a very favourable impression by the time he reaches paragraph 125. And as he goes on reading, he soon has no doubt about the "obscurantist" nature of the Vaishnavas who are presented as opponents of this "enlightened" Maharaja. The last section of the report (paragraphs 130-135), only confirms his impression with its appreciations of the personality of the Maharaja, of his likeable qualities, both as a man ("he is amiable and does not take offence easily") and as a political chief ("he is sensitive to the welfare of his country and his people").

One is struck by the great contrast between this account of the facts and that of Louis Rousselet. The latter had indeed grasped during his sojourn in Jaipur (from April to October

⁷⁰ R. 1865-R.1867. Roy (1978 : 176-179) mentions this text but omits paragraph 128 and the beginning of 129.

1866) the authoritarian nature of the measures taken by the Maharaja and he discerned equally clearly that they had been undertaken in the framework of a religious reform. As Louis Rousselet was not an experienced administrator, but a young Frenchman (he was twenty-two years old) who was travelling in India for his pleasure, his account very probably reflects the opinion of British circles, those particularly of the Agency. In fact, as he recalls in his account of his journey, foreigners like him could not visit Jaipur without consulting the British authorities, without asking for the prior authorisation of the “English Agent who has the perfect right to refuse it to him”⁷¹. Moreover, it was in Captain Beynon’s company that Louis Rousselet went to meet Ramsingh. The Political Agent accompanied him yet again when he went to bid farewell to the Maharaja. And it is to be expected that between these two meetings, it was from the same Beynon (and eventually other British in Jaipur) that the Frenchman received his main information on the local situation.

The Political Agent therefore probably knew much more than he admitted about the nature of the measures taken against the Vaishnavas. In all likelihood, he knew that some among the latter had contacted the British authorities in Agra just before the ceremonial gathering of 20 November 1866. It is even possible that Ramsingh’s personal report on the religious discussions, which Beynon mentions in paragraph 128, was an outcome of this Vaishnava action since it was communicated on 24 November to the AGG of Ajmer. The British, compelled by the Vaishnavas living in the regions falling under their direct jurisdiction to react to the events in Jaipur, may have asked Ramsingh for explanations. Unfortunately, the document mentioned by Beynon is untraceable⁷².

The sugar-coated and conciliatory presentation by Beynon is nothing but a façade. It reflects not only the official reserve that the British adopted in matters of religion since the famous proclamation on tolerance by Queen Victoria in 1858, following the transfer of the administration of India from the East India Company to the British Crown. It reveals above all their policy of near-unconditional support to Jaipur. This being so, some information was of a kind that could not figure in a tri-annual report. It was important only on the level of the day to day administration of the kingdom but did not concern that of the machinery of the empire of which Jaipur was only one tiny cog. Beynon’s remarks indicate the concern of the British for safeguarding the relationship based on reciprocal service which they had established with Ramsingh II from the very start of his rule, as well as the close collaboration between their colonial administration and his government.

⁷¹ Rousselet 1877 : 269.

⁷² On that date, Ramsingh gave an account also to Shambhusingh of Udaipur by sending him a book (*pustaka*) containing a “report (*ahavā*) on the judgement (*nirṇaya*) concerning the [Vaishnava] sampradaya” (UB, file 130, letter dated Kartika bādi 1 VS 1923 [end October 1866]. Shambhusingh, it may be recalled, was troubled over the turn that events had taken at Jaipur after the departure of the Vallabhīs. It has not been possible to trace this book or manuscript in the different collections of archives visited in Udaipur.

For by consolidating his hold over the components of his kingdom, Ramsingh had become a conveyor belt between the Government of India and its smallest sub-division. This relationship established with the British is well brought out by R.W. Stern when he says that: “the British served the interests of the empire in Jaipur by supporting a strong darbar, the Maharaja strengthened his darbar by supporting the British empire”⁷³.

While in October 1866, the Vaishnavas pinned all their hopes on the justice of the government of the “universal ruler” (*cakravartī*), there was no question of its representatives openly embarrassing the Maharaja of Jaipur. Officially, Ramsingh was a friend of the British, for his interests coincided with theirs. Thus, at this darbar of Agra in November 1866, during which the Vaishnavas were decided to appeal to the “Lord Sahab”, the Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence without batting an eyelid asserted in the presence of the Maharaja of Jaipur: “The chief who keeps his people happiest will be the best friend of the British government” (and not the one who is rich, powerful or the descendant of a great family)⁷⁴. There was no further mention of Ramsingh’s religious reforms in the reports of Captain Beynon till his departure from Jaipur in 1871. Meanwhile, Ramsingh had confiscated the possessions of the Nimbārkiś and the Vallabhīs, which fact did not stand in the way of his becoming a member of the Legislative Council of India (1869).

Conclusion (abstract)

In Jaipur, between 1863 and 1872, the Vaishnava sects settled in the Kacchvaha kingdom were discredited by the Maharaja who had become a devotee of Siva. Their practices were contested. Their members, considered heretical, were harassed while the meaning of what constituted Hindu orthodoxy was redefined at the summit of the State. Organized by the political authority in a Dharma-sabhā, the prosecutors of the Vaishnava sects found an arsenal of arguments in religious law. These arguments allowed them to identify the Vaishnavas’ errors and to confound them, giving thereby legitimacy to the royal action. By order of the Maharaja, the Vaishnava sects were deprived of their social control over their followers. But that was not all: they were rendered incapable of defending themselves and received no support, no protection from their Rajput and Merchant disciples. The incapacity of the latter to come to their rescue highlights the social divisions and the authoritarian nature of the regime.

Ramsingh’s way of dealing with the deviations from what he considered the social and religious norms leaves no doubt as to the extension of the religious prerogatives held by the ruler

⁷³ R.W. Stern 1988 : 17, see also 114.

⁷⁴ Sarkar 1984 : 360.

in a Hindu monarchy. Before Ramsingh already his ancestor Jaisingh II (r. 1699-1743) had tried to put some order into the religious components of his kingdom. Before him he had perceived that the advantage of the Smārta religion lay in its federative character. He too had interfered with the affairs of the powerful Vaishnava sectarian traditions; he too had maintained they were opposed to Brahmanical social norms and had regulated their conduct. He had also checked their divisions and their natural tendency to quarrel among themselves. But on the whole, Jaisingh's policy of unification had met with limited success. In a certain way, by replacing his kingship in the order of dharma, by reasserting the supra-sectarian character of dharma, by limiting the power of the sects and by entrusting social control to caste organs, the Shaiva Ramsingh put the finishing touch on what his Vaishnava ancestor had done. His intention, however, was not only to reform Vaishnavism: he meant to eradicate it as a heresy. By doing so, he permanently transformed the relationship between the kingdom of Jaipur and the Vaishnava sects.

From a certain angle, the quarrel of the tilaka can be perceived as the cost of the process of modernization generated by the British colonial rule. From another angle, it appears as the continuation of old religious rivalries between Smartas and Vaishnavas, which had been fuelled by the search for royal favour and protection. It must also be stressed that the crisis coincided with one of the most critical period in the modern history of Vaishnavism in North-west India. For in the 1860s, the Vaishnava sects were contested both by the reformists and by the Smārtas, that is to say by two groups of people who were otherwise busy criticizing each other. The quarrel of the tilaka gives therefore ample evidence that the traditional or non-reformist milieu was itself deeply divided in the 1860s, despite the fact that the Smārtas and the Vaishnavas though rival had more in common with each other than either of them had with the reformists. Indian society would have to undergo many transformations before the descendants of the protagonists of the tilaka quarrel realize their community of interests, before they manifest together and not one against another their attachment to the "eternal dharma". The events narrated in this book testify to a period before this recomposition of Hinduism had taken place, to a time when it was still relevant for the non-reformists to stress their numerous differences.

Things were quite different in July 1950 when the chief of Danta welcomed the young abbot of Salemabad in Jaipur. The Rajput landlord, disciple of Svāmī Karapatri (1901-1982), supported the Ram Rajya Parishad (a political party strongly opposed to the secular Congress Party of Nehru) that the sannyāsī of Benares had founded soon after independence in order to protect the "eternal dharma". To different times belong different debates. As the young Nimbārki abbot entered Jaipur his entourage whispered that the subjects (*prajā*) had called back the very one whom the king (*rājā*) had expelled. The formula was pretty indeed: had not the monarchy just given way to a democratic government? Yet, if one looks at the situation more closely, one wonders whether among those who made it possible for an abbot of Salemabad to return to Jaipur were not to be found the spiritual descendants of those who had chased out his

predecessor 86 years before. But who bothered seriously then about the numerous disagreements, still remaining, between the Vaishnavas and the Smārta devotees of Siva? Who would have made them into a state affair? And today who would remember that at one time in the past the Shaivas were erasing the tilaka of the Vaishnavas in the streets of Jaipur, were it not for the exciting serial of N.K. Parikh in the *Rājasthāna Patrikā*?

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KDK - Khātā Dastūr Kaumvar (qaumvar), Rajasthan State Archives.

SH - Syāhā Huzūr, Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.

SDV - Sarvarak Daftar Vāqayā, Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.

TDK - Tojī Dastūr Kaumvar (qaumvar), Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.

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