

1 Introduction: The logic of the fish

Classical Indian texts regularly depict a kingless age as an anathema. A country without a king is cursed with every holocaust from the merely despairing (barbarian invasion, drought, and pestilence) to the insufferable (an insecurity of personal property, a lapse in the teaching of the Vedas, and the inability to give daughters in marriage). Such an unfortunate realm is said to be governed by the ‘logic of the fish’ (Skt. *matsya-nyaya*), or the principle whereby big fish devour little fish.¹ This expression, however, is not a straightforward translation into a diluvian context of the more familiar law of the jungle. For one, in emphasizing the epistemological foundations of domination, as opposed to the more formal laws of command, ‘logic of the fish’ asserts an indigenous theory *avant la lettre* reminiscent of Michel Foucault’s equation of knowledge with power insofar as specific discursive forms have the subtly prejudicial ability to institutionalize and naturalize attendant regimes of authority. Second, the Sanskrit expression also differs from its western counterpart in that some mediæval *sastris* supplemented the preceding reading of *matsya-nyaya* – in which big fish eat little ones – with an even more fearful reading – in which little fish eat big ones!² The unexpected subversion of the natural ‘order of things’ in this reading alerts us to the fact that all structures of domination, no matter how seemingly base or fundamental, are susceptible to reconfiguration.

Heeding these general precepts, this book explores the specific ways in which royal power was manifest, unsettled, and transformed in the Rajasthani kingdom of Kota during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries under late precolonial and early colonial rule. In undertaking this inquiry, this book has two principal aims. The first is to question a

¹ The most well-known usage of the expression occurs in the *Mahabharata*, Santiparva 15.30 and 67.16 in two teachings to King Yudhishtira. The term also appears in the *Kautiliya Arthashastra* I.4.13, and it informs *Manu* VII.20, *Narada* XVIII.15, and *Visnudharmottara upapurana* II.2.1–16.

² I am grateful to McKim Marriott (personal communication: 6 January 1993) for first alerting me to this interpretation.

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pervasive ahistoricism that characterizes most ethnohistorical analyses of precolonial political relations in India. In the laudable attempt to reveal the cultural basis for political relations in 'traditional' India, many of these analyses have unwittingly presented visions of precolonial political culture as internally consistent, thoroughly integrated, and largely consensual. In their close attention to the cultural construction of politics, they have lost sight of the politics of culture. The data and analysis presented here will show that political relations in Kota were riven with tensions, paradoxes, and contradictions that were the grist for political contestation and cultural dynamism which led to significant historical transformations even prior to the substantial dislocations caused by the arrival of British colonial power. In other words, while retaining many of the lessons of ethnohistory, this book seeks to recoup a concern for processes of historical change provided, of course, that change is charted against cultural values and orientations that derive from the society under examination.

This book's second aim is a direct outcome from the first insofar as it explores how these tensions and politics then informed particular features of the early colonial encounter. Ever since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, western scholarship has derived considerable benefits from its attentions to how colonial ways of knowing the 'East' enabled many aspects of European domination over the 'East'.³ Said's central insight – which initially focused on academic and literary representations – has since been expanded by other writers who have explored how colonial ways of 'knowing the country' were also instantiated through apparently benign colonial institutions and administrative structures such as the census, the geographic and archaeological surveys, public health regimes, and colonial architecture and town planning.⁴ This body of research and argumentation has fostered at least one critical analytic distortion, namely a tendency to represent the colonized as largely inconsequential, passive onlookers of the colonial encounter or, when they

³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

⁴ Bernard Cohn, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia', *Folk* 26 (1984): 25–49; Arjun Appadurai, 'Number in the Colonial Imagination', in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, eds Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, pp. 314–339 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1845* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); David Arnold, 'Cholera and Colonialism', *Past and Present* 113 (1986): 118–151, and *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Veena Talwar Oldenberg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1756–1877* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Marriam Dossal, *Imperial Designs and Indian Realities: The Planning of Bombay City, 1845–1875* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).

occasionally did take to action, as unwitting imperial praetorians. However, in marginalizing indigenous agendas from the telling of colonialism's history, much 'post-Orientalist' scholarship ironically may come closer to success where colonialism itself tried and failed; that is, in suppressing native agency. This book will show that colonial power did not impose itself monolithically from outside, but arose much more dialogically from within the conditions that were manifest locally, with local agents often able to redirect the potentialities of colonial power to serve agendas at a tangent from, if not diametrically opposite to, the agendas of colonial power. This revelation is in no way meant to offer an apology for European colonialism. There is no excuse for the military conquest and economic exploitation of India during the colonial period. It is hoped, however, that it will stimulate more subtle understandings of the social, political, and epistemological dynamics involved in the colonial encounter.

State-formation in late precolonial India: history and ethnohistory

It has now been four decades since historians began to voice their unease with the application of models of the state deriving from European contexts (especially those associated with the unitary nation-state or one of its western precursors, such as feudalism) to the traditional royal polities of India.⁵ During this time, there has been a concerted attempt to root academic analysis of traditional political relations in India within the constellation of meanings that Indians themselves applied to those relations. In taking this 'anthropological turn', western scholarship has grown increasingly sensitive to the manifold ways that power is culturally constructed and varies across space and time. For India, surely the pioneering, if no less controversial, work in this regard has been Burton Stein's study of the 'segmentary state' as he initially applied the concept to the Chola Empire. Here Stein offered a model of the traditional Indian polity that did not share with the modern unitary state its undivided sovereignty over a bounded territory, nor its centralized government supported by an integrated administrative bureaucracy, nor its monopoly

⁵ Two early pieces that contrasted the decentralized character of precolonial state formations in India with models of the unitary state are Bernard Cohn's 'Political Systems in Eighteenth Century India: The Banares Region', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83 (1962): 312–320, and Robert Eric Frykenberg's 'Traditional Processes of Power in South India: An Historical Analysis of Local Influence', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 1 (1963): 122–142. The best statement outlining the pitfalls in applying notions of European feudalism to the Indian context is Harbans Mukhia's 'Was There Feudalism in Indian History?', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 8 (1981): 273–310.

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over the use of coercive force.⁶ Stein proffered a more open-ended and largely decentralized conception of the state which was composed of a 'pyramidal' agglomeration of functionally autonomous political segments. Central to Stein's thesis was a conceptual distinction between 'political sovereignty', which he saw operating within each autonomous segment ranged around the royal centre, and 'ritual sovereignty', which was exercised by the 'anointed king' at the centre over his peripheral chiefs.

Although Stein's initial inspiration for his model derived from Aidan Southall's study of political organization among the Alur in southern Africa,⁷ Stein was no slavish imitator. He reworked many aspects of Southall's thesis to provide a better fit with south Indian historical experience. For example, Stein identified the *nadus* (territorially based 'chieftainships'), which had no counterpart among the Alur, as the basic segments of the south Indian mediæval polity.⁸ In this way, he did not root his version of the segmentary state in a 'segmentary lineage system' as had Southall and, later, Richard Fox.⁹ He also noted some contradictions in Southall's original formulation (or at least differences with the

⁶ The first full-blown statement of Stein's model appeared in his *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), especially pp. 264–285. Stein also previewed important facets of it in his article, 'The Segmentary State in South Indian History', in *Realm and Region in Traditional India*, ed. R. G. Fox (Durham: Duke University Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia, Monograph and Occasional Paper Series, No. 14, 1977), pp. 3–51. See also his essay, 'The Segmentary State: Interim Reflections', *Purusartha* 13 (1991): 217–238 as well as his application of this model to the Vijayanagar Empire in his *The New Cambridge History of India*, Volume I:2: *Vijayanagara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁷ Aidan Southall, *Alur Society: A Study in Processes and Types of Domination* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1953).

⁸ Stein, *Peasant State*, pp. 270–272.

⁹ Stein was not the first South Asianist to look to Southall's segmentary state for inspiration. Several years earlier, Richard Fox had employed the model in his study of Rajput political structures in precolonial Uttar Pradesh. However, whereas Stein's interest in segmentation extended only insofar as it defined a set of structural relations among differentiated political units, Fox 'literalized' Southall's model by seeing a segmentary lineage system as the foundation underlying the segmentary state. This use of Southall's model left Fox open to several criticisms. Southall himself, for example, pointed out that, unlike Alur lineages, Rajput lineages did not ramify the entire length of the social hierarchy but were confined with a relatively small elite, dare I say, segment of society and therefore could not provide the foundation underlying all aspects of political segmentation in these polities. Similarly, Rajput polities were often nested within larger non-Rajput state formations – Mughal, Maratha, or British – with whom kinship links, at least in the conventional sense, did not extend. Moreover, as Muzzaffar Alam noted the territorial spread of the Rajput lineages and their sub-divisions did not always map onto the relevant political units they were supposedly underlying. See Richard G. Fox, *Kin, Clan, Raja, Rule: State-Hinterland Relations in Preindustrial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Aidan Southall, 'The Segmentary State in Africa and Asia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 (1988): 52–82; Muzzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707–1748* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 106–107.

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Alur case), such as regarding his understanding of the distribution of coercive force between central and peripheral foci of power.¹⁰ Most importantly, however (and this is Stein's enduring legacy), he took Southall's notion of 'ritual hegemony' and developed it with reference to the specific meanings attached to political relations in south India through his notion of 'ritually incorporative kingship' as constituted in important south Indian royal rites, such as the *mahabhiseka* or the *asvamedha*. This endeavour thus provided an important cultural basis for evaluating the nature of power in the south Indian polity, at least as exercised within the circumscribed domain of 'ritual sovereignty'.

More recently Stein's interest in the cultural construction of authority has been extended and deepened by Nicholas Dirks through his analysis of royal gift-giving in the south Indian 'little kingdom' of Pudukkottai in which he argued that the ritual, or symbolic, dimensions of authority permeated all political relations within the kingdom and not just those articulated by the 'anointed king' at the centre. Thus while heeding Stein's concerns about how power can be constituted differently in different cultures, Dirks simultaneously questioned the separability of 'political sovereignty' and 'ritual sovereignty' that was such a prominent feature of Stein's model. Instead Dirks aimed to fuse the two. In doing so, Dirks's analysis converged with Clifford Geertz's well-known formulation of the Balinese 'theatre-state' insofar as it reversed most conventional understandings of the relationship between ritual and power by suggesting that 'power served pomp, not pomp power' and 'ceremony was not form but substance'.¹¹

Dirks's principal contribution, however, lay in his identification of a specific idiom – the royal gift – that articulated political hierarchies throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom. Building upon Marshall Sahlins's famous suggestion that chiefly pooling and redistribution of goods establishes a ranked centrality within groups,¹² Dirks argued that royal gift-giving – paradigmatically of honours, titles, and tax-free lands known as *inams* – was an essential royal activity whose performance constituted Hindu kingship and, hence, the polity. This view rested on a cultural logic that affirmed the king's divinity and in which the king's

¹⁰ Stein, *Peasant State*, pp. 269–270.

¹¹ Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre-State in Nineteenth Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 13. Several critiques have noted, however, that at key moments in his analysis of the dynamic tensions animating Balinese politics, Geertz reverts to the Steinian type of separation between 'ritual' and 'political' power discussed above. See, for example, S. J. Tambiah, 'A Reformulation of Geertz's Conception of the Theatre-State', in *Culture, Thought and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 316–338.

¹² Marshall Sahlins, 'On the Sociology of Primitive Exchange', in *Stone Age Economics* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1972 [1965]), pp. 185–275.

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gift to his political clients represented the sharing of a portion of his munificent, celestial persona. In return, clients who accepted the royal gift established their graded incorporation into the whole polity embodied by the king at its centre. For Dirks:

The substance of the gift – the land rights, the titles, emblems, honors, and privilege of service, usufruct and command – was the partial sovereign substance of the king. All those who were given (and who accepted) gifts became part of the whole king, and by implication the king's realm, the kingdom. Participation in the whole was not, however, unranked, for the differential nature and contingent character of all these entitlements provided the basis for the creation of a political hierarchy... Ultimately, entitlements by their very nature constituted hierarchy through a logic of variable proximity to the king, to sovereignty itself.¹³

According to Dirks, then, the alienation of land from the king to military clients was not a manifestation of royal weakness (an inability to maintain control over valuable material resources) but became, somewhat ironically, the basis of an alternative form of hierarchy and the very foundation of royal power. Indian kings were powerful insofar as they unstintingly gave honours, titles, and land to their clients. In this way, Dirks fashioned a conception of the precolonial polity that was not calibrated against its success or, more usually, its failure to live up to Eurocentric criteria of state-formation. Instead Dirks established a more sympathetic understanding of the Indian polity from coordinates established within the cultural tradition itself.

The problem with Dirks's analysis is that not all precolonial sources spoke with one voice on matters such as gift-giving, especially in tax-free land.¹⁴ Thus consider, for instance, the admonitions of the early eighteenth-century *Ajnapatra*, or Royal Edict, composed for the Maratha king Shambaji of Kolhapur (r. 1712–60) by one of his ministers. This edict enjoined the king to raise and maintain a large salaried, standing army in preference to levies provided by estate-holders whose loyalties were regarded with circumspection.¹⁵ Concerning these estate-holders, the minister warned:

¹³ Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 129.

¹⁴ In this regard, it is significant to note that Dirks relied on an extremely narrow range of texts, almost exclusively *vamcavalis*, in his analysis of the 'discourse on kingship'. Even within the Mackenzie Collection, which itself is a selective distillation of genres, *vamcavalis* comprise only a small proportion of the total range of available texts.

¹⁵ Ramachandrapat Amatiya, 'The Ajnapatra or Royal Edict Relating to the Principles of Maratha State Policy', trans. S. V. Puntambekar, in *Journal of Indian History* 8 (1929): 83–105, 207–233.

They are not inclined to live on whatever watan [hereditary landed estate] they possess, or to always act loyally to the king... All the time they want to acquire new possessions bit by bit, and to become strong; and after becoming strong their ambition is to seize forcibly from some, and to create enmities and depredations against others... When a foreign invasion comes they make peace with the invader with a desire for gaining or protecting a watan, meet personally with the enemy, [and then] allow the enemy to enter the kingdom... For this reason the control of these people has to be very cleverly devised.¹⁶

Although the edict urged the king not to confiscate *pre-existing* landed estates from their hereditary holders, it warned the king of the dangers of granting *new* lands to his servants:

[It] is a great injustice to give lands as *inams* to servants or vritti-holders [hereditary office-holders] for the purpose of achieving a task. A king, if he be an enemy of his kingdom, should be generous in granting lands. A king is called the protector of the land for the sake of preserving the land, but if the land be given away, over what would he rule? whose protector will he be?... [A] king who wishes to rule a kingdom, to increase it and to acquire fame as one who is skilled in politics should not at all get infatuated and grant land to the extent of even a barley corn. To say that servants who have done service which is useful from generation to generation should be given something which would continue with them hereditarily is not proper.¹⁷

André Wink has called our attention precisely to the agonistic political environment underlying the *Ajnapatra*'s stern counsel with his discussion of *fitna* – the drawing away of allegiance or sedition – that quickened many eighteenth-century, north Indian polities. In characterizing the Indian state as ‘a form of institutionalized dissidence’,¹⁸ Wink showed that sovereignty in India was shared with both subordinates *and* rivals in unbounded, overlapping domains. Attempts to woo the clients and local supporters of one's rival, to get them to switch allegiances (as well as attempts to prevent the foregoing), were crucial activities of Indian statecraft. As a result, political hierarchies of patrons and clients always remained open to contestation and negotiation, especially as they inflected the interests of rival, third parties.

In directing our attention to the discordant voice of sedition, it is not my intention to suggest, however, that the counterpoint to the incorporative dimensions of Dirks's ‘redistributive polity’ emerged out of some hard-nosed, extra-symbolic realpolitik. Dirks's mantra that the ‘political’ and the ‘ritual’ cannot be pried apart remains undiminished. What is no

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 214–215. ¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 217–218.

¹⁸ André Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India: Agrarian Society and Politics under the Eighteenth-Century Maratha Svarajya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 386.

longer tenable, on the other hand, is Dirks's assertion that in the pre-colonial polity 'the political world [was] a morally cohesive system'.¹⁹ Rather we must recognize that there were various tensions and disjunctions in the meanings associated with political relations.²⁰ Moreover, each of these often overlapping, but not necessarily congruent, symbolic orientations had their own pragmatic entailments. We shall see that eighteenth-century north Indian society was dynamic and open to significant structural change as some of these faultlines became sites for linear, non-recurring socio-political transformations.²¹

One of the important outcomes of mapping these changes will be a deepening of the analytic potentialities of the discipline known as 'ethno-history'. For many years now, it has been a commonplace statement to suggest that no society receives the past in a transparent, universal, and objective way. Rather each society has its own manner of fashioning the past and the analyst must always be careful to assess exactly in what sense history exists for those who speak of it. This concern has led us to explore how different styles of historical reckoning instantiate different regimes of authority as well as the specific varieties of social and political action that may be built upon perceptions of the past. As Marshall Sahlins put it, 'different cultural orders have their own modes of historical action, consciousness, and determination – their own historical practice'.²² However, what we have been less successful at showing is how these different ways of acting upon the past constituted different processes of

¹⁹ Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, p. 134.

²⁰ Despite Wink's marvellously 'thick' descriptions of many variant manifestations of *fitna*, the principal shortcoming of his book lies precisely in his failure to identify any of the conceptual paradoxes that ultimately motivated seditious behavior.

²¹ It is in this interest in historical process that I part company with Stein's structural-functionalism. Even Dirks, who so carefully charted important transformations with the shift from Vedic sacrifice to the 'great gift' in early south Indian history, presented a largely static picture of the immediate precolonial era. Perhaps the most important attempt to break out of the structuralist straight-jacket of ethnohistory has been Tambiah's formulation of the 'galactic polity' in which he interprets the fluid and pulsating design of traditional Buddhist kingdoms of Southeast Asia against destabilizing contradictions and paradoxes within the over-all 'totality'. However, even the 'galactic polity' is a model of state-formation caught within a dynamic steady-state rather than a fully historicized one. See S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) and S. J. Tambiah, 'The Galactic Polity in Southeast Asia', in *Culture, Thought and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective*, pp. 252–286 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985 [1977]).

²² Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 34. Among the important precursors of this position are Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination of Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Shelly Errington, 'Some Comments on Style in the Meaning of the Past', *Journal of Asian Studies* 38: 231–244; S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, and James T. Siegal, *Shadow and Sound: The Historical Thought of a Sumatran People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

social change. It is no longer enough to suggest that different societies establish different coordinates of value in their constructions of the past. We must also consider the different processes of social and political transformation that are built upon those pasts.

Orientalism's legacy

This attention to historical process during the precolonial era should have profound implications for how we understand the operations, scope, and history of colonial power in India. While the Saidian tide has had a generally salutatory effect on the academy insofar as it called attention to the ways in which western academic practice must necessarily be included as part of the study of colonialism, it has not been without its own critical distortions and lacunæ. Detractors and followers alike have noted several shortcomings in Said's analysis.²³ At this point, let me mention three closely interrelated problems. The first pertains to the way in which Said baldly dichotomized Europe and the Orient into two radically opposed blocks each of which was internally homogeneous and fundamentally unified. In doing so, he did not give adequate consideration to how social difference established through colonial discourse inflected other sorts of social difference rooted in gender, religion, social class, or political faction. Said's unnuanced treatment of this matter blinded him from exploring how the interplay among these cross-cutting regimes of difference was refracted within the history of Orientalism itself. A second difficulty with Said's analysis is its treatment of Orientalism as a single discourse, undifferentiated across geographic space and over time. As such, Said represented colonial discourse as being internally consistent in its assumptions, propositions, and effects, with the result that it seamlessly reproduces itself in homeostatic fashion. This picture of consistency and stability entails a third problematic supposition, one which remains more implied than explicitly theorized in Said's analysis, but one that nonetheless exerts a powerful presence: namely that the colonized peoples whose lives came to be governed by these discourses were largely inconsequential to its formation and unfolding.

²³ Among the most trenchantly acerbic critiques of *Orientalism* are Sadik Jalal al-‘Azm, ‘Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse’, *Khamsin: Journal of Revolutionary Socialists of the Middle East* 8 (1981): 5–26, and Aijaz Ahmad, ‘Between Orientalism and Historicism: Anthropological Knowledge of India’, *Studies in History* 7 (1991): 135–163. Equally important are two volumes of ‘critical appreciations’ of Said: Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, eds, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) and Gyan Prakash, ed., *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

While the first two problems have received close attention in recent writings,²⁴ analyses of colonial power still routinely efface the presence of local peoples. Two principal lines of reasoning for this avowal can be discerned. The first, and arguably the weaker, is best represented by Gauri Vishwanathan in her well-known study of colonial policy on English education in India where she unequivocally states that:

it is entirely possible to study the ideology of British education quite independently of an account of how Indians actually received, reacted to, imbibed, manipulated, reinterpreted, or resisted the ideological content of British literary education... If the colonial subject is a construct emanating from the colonizer's head, and therefore removed from history, the history to which the British responds, the impending 'event' to which his measures are so crucially attached, is real only to the extent that it provides the rationale for his actions. How the native *actually* responds is so removed from the colonizer's representational system, his understanding of the meaning of events, that it enters into the realm of another history of which the latter has no comprehension or even awareness.²⁵

This proposition raises a troubling problematic for Vishwanathan, however, insofar as it establishes a profound – and surely unintended – ontological difference between colonizers and the colonized in terms of their ability to enter into and understand representational systems from outside their own cultural milieus. Although Vishwanathan denies the capacity of cultural translation to the colonizers, this capacity (or susceptibility) among the colonized is fundamental to how she understands their condition of subordination. Following Gramsci's suggestion that 'the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership"', Vishwanathan argues that colonial mastery was achieved in large measure through 'moral and intellectual suasion' that promoted 'voluntary cultural assimilation' among, at least, certain key Indian groups.²⁶ Indian commitment to British 'ways of being' could only have developed if Indians had some comprehension of the representational system of the colonizers, however partial that understanding may have been. If this were the case, then Vishwanathan must explain why it is the colonized were able to enter the British 'worldview' but not vice versa. If this were not the case and there were no comprehension on the part of Indians, then it is hard to imagine on what grounds the Indian commitment rested. Brute force? While this is certainly a

²⁴ Notable examples are Gauri Vishwanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990 [1989]); Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Thomas Metcalf, *The New Cambridge History of India*, Volume III.4: *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

²⁵ Vishwanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, pp. 11–12.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 1–2.