CHAPTER V

THE RAJ AS AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIAL REFORM

No sooner did the British take charge of the Doab, than the Deputy Commissioners of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur showed their keenness to abolish the abominable practice of female infanticide. Under the crusading seal of John Lawrence, the British Administration in the Jullundur Doab issued a proclamation that banned the practices of female infanticide and sati. The Administration also proceeded to get a cordial approbation of the Governor-General to this measure calculated to promote a humanitarian cause.

The two Deputy Commissioners had assumed that their intervention would be hailed with satisfaction. They could never entertain the idea that this optimism on their part stemmed from a wrong estimation of the mood of at least one section of the community they were dealing with. This section of the community was that of Khatris who were thought to possess a fairly high position in the social hierarchy of the two districts. None of the various groups and sub-groups that formed this section of the community was in a mood to give up any of its old customs. The British Officers rather failed to realise that at the bottom of the practice ran the feeling of

1. Foreign Deptt. (Secret) NAI, Governor-General, Despatch to Secret Committee No. 54, dated 14th August, 1846.
supposed superiority in certain sections of the Khatri and that the best way of stopping it would be to fight the notions of rank and status among these sections of the Khatri community. They could have exploited the movement already begun by the Bhunjais, one of the two major sections of the Khatris, against the superior claims of the other one, viz., the Sarin Khatris.

Centuries ago the Sarins had decided to keep aloof from their other Khatri brethren and though they would admit of marrying their sons in their families they never gave them their daughters in marriage. That was because Sarins rated themselves higher in rank than the Bhunjais and this attitude of superiority, highly resented by the latter who challenged it on the eve of the British occupation of the Doab. This movement against the Sarins met a great success but the British functionaries in Jullundur and Hoshiarpur completely failed to exploit it to advantage for an immediate stoppage of infanticide. Within four years of the British occupation of the Doab, the Bhunjais forced the Sarins to give and take daughters on equal terms with them. The movement succeeded because the Bhunjais exerted such a great moral pressure that it compelled the Sarins to yield and in the bargain brought all the Khatris together. They set aside their antique ideas of rank, status and social superiority, and they started to inter-marry on equal terms.

The British Officers failed to realise that this movement could be harnessed by them to remove female infanticide too.

Another movement which could be of help in fighting the evil custom of female infanticide was also ignored by the British officials. That was the movement started by some far-sighted individuals to limit expenses on marriages. A representative gathering of the Bedis of Phagwara had unanimously decided on a common scale of expenses to be incurred in marriages and they laid down the following limits for a daughter's marriage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Rs.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash at Khat (leave taking)</td>
<td>101-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household vessels</td>
<td>30-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes etc.</td>
<td>10-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornaments</td>
<td>50-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priest and Barber fees</td>
<td>10-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barah or four days of feasting</td>
<td>50-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>251-0-0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This reform could have been harnessed by the British functionaries to remove female infanticide but they failed to rise to the occasion. The result was that the evil continued unabated as is clear from the report sent in 1852 by Herbert Edwardes, the Deputy Commissioner of Jullundur, to the Judicial Commissioner of the Panjab. Edwardes held the Bedis in particular and the Khatri in general as the principal offenders in practising the custom of female

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3. Ibid., Para-35.
infanticide and for the first time showed a British official's realisation that it was linked up with marriage expenses. He observed that the practice was extremely rare among juts of the Doab. He emphasised that the root of the malady lay in excessive expenditure on weddings. He conceded that the prospects of success lay in attacking this custom by adopting the lines laid down by the Bedis of Phagwara. Edwardes followed up his report by concrete action. He induced the Khatris of Jullundur and Rahon to agree to a scale of marriage expenses on the lines laid down by the meeting of Bedis of Phagwara. He did not lay down one maxim for all the Khatris. He divided them into four classes on the basis of annual income of each class and laid down the maximum to be spent by each member of that particular class, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Maximum Expense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Class</td>
<td>Rs.400/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Class</td>
<td>Rs.200/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Class</td>
<td>Rs.125/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Class</td>
<td>Rs.50/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Herbert Edwardes' suggestion carried conviction with his superiors and was adopted as a policy measure by the Government in the hope that it would go a long way in eradicating the evil of female infanticide. Edwardes was strongly supported by the Financial Commissioner and the Chief Commissioner John Lawrence. The latter while supporting


This was conveyed to the Government of India by the Secretary to Chief Commissioner in his letter No. 458, dated 8th July, 1853.
Edwardes' suggestion wrote to the Government of India.

"To ensure this great result (doing away with the female infanticide) we must effect a radical change in the feelings, the prejudices and the social customs to have a son-in-law, to marry a daughter into any but a class socially above that of her family. But above all the people must be taught to reduce the expenditure hitherto considered necessary by the bride's family. The present influence of British Officers, the knowledge that they take an interest in the matter, a desire by the people to stand well in the eyes of their rulers, and lastly, the fear of punishment, will, doubtlessly, from year to year, operate in diminishing the crime."

Before the new approach started producing any tangible results the extent of the child infanticide was considerable. Its extent can be gauged from the following figures reported in 1853. In that year as many as 23 female children of Bedis in the Jullundur District, and 25 daughters in the pargana of Phagwara of the Ahluwalia Raja had been preserved by their parents whereas, prior to that, during the 1848-1852 span of about five years as many as 300 Bedi fathers of the Jullundur District had preserved only fifty daughters. Luckily for the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur officials, however, the Bedi community by now itself began to feel the necessity of abandoning the senseless practice of female infanticide and was prepared to adopt any measure to achieve that end. They

5. Ibid., Para-3.


fell in line with the suggestion of an authoritative establishment of a scale of dowries for the Bedi daughters and actually began a movement to secure that end.

The allied problem of prevailing upon the Bedis and the rest of the Khatri community to agree to inter-marriages was more difficult and actually put the British masters of the Jullundur Doab in a great dilemma. That measure could reduce female infanticide but the problem was how to lay down acceptable rules for the inter-marriages of the Bedis, Sarins and Bhunjai Khatri. The problem was further complicated on account of the fact that the Bedis were themselves divided into two sections. The smaller but wealthier section of the Bedis desired that the Sarins be permanently chosen as the branch of Khatri with whom Bedi girls be married whereas the majority and the poorer Bedis wisely favoured the Bhunjais for the said purpose.

The differing viewpoints of the two sections of Bedis were easily understandable. The Sarins who regarded themselves as superior Khatri would spend lavishly on the marriages of their daughters and try to outdo one another in the magnificence of their marriage functions. But the Bhunjais as natural consequence of their humbler means had observed since long strict austerities on marriage gifts, dowries and other expenses. The bad example set by Sarins

8. Ibid., Para-17.
had caused numerous heart burnings and earned the contempt of the Bhunjais. The feelings embodied in the following verse reveal a vivid picture of the antipathy of other Khatris towards the Sarins:

"Suk-seynah kayuth boora-Khutra boora Sareen
Dasiee soot Brahmun boora, Puthan boora Tureen."

Among Kajuths the Saxena, among Khatris the Sarin, among Brahmans the son of a slave girl, and among Pathans the Tareen, all are bad.

Under these circumstances, the British administration in the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur Districts was in a fix and did not know what to do. Major Edwardes believed the solution was there but he was not sure whether the Bedis would accept it. He was in favour of the Bedis entering into matrimonial alliances only with the Bhunjais. This is what he wrote in the report on female infanticide.

"If, therefore, the Baydeea decided now for intermarriage with the Sireens, the whole tribe will be for ever, into ruinous rivalry; whereas if they choose the Bhoonjais, the contracting parties will meet on equal terms and be mutually strengthened by the alliance."

The question was of vital importance to Bedis. Luckily for them they were prevailed upon to adopt the solution in a representative meeting held in 1852. Their argument was:

"After murdering our daughters for 300 years we are compelled by our rulers to abandon the custom

11. Ibid., Para-22.
12. Ibid., Para-23.
imposed on us by our prophets. In doing so, let us take steps to make all events successful. Let us not put in the power of our enemies to say, that no good has come out of our deserting the old paths. Under the Sikhs, we were a sacred race; honoured; and wealthy. In the eyes of the English a Seyde and a Bhunje are equal. Our Jageers are lapsing day by day, and no gifts, and offerings are coming in. We shall be poorer and poorer year after year. Why therefore, attempt to tie with Siresens, which only a few of us can afford. Let us sink at once to the level of Bhoonjais which the poorest of us can maintain."

That was a wise decision indeed for matrimonial alliances with Sarins would have involved huge expenses. While the decision was being argued, it was suggested that Baba Nanak himself was a Bhunjei. Of course, this point was disputed by the Sarins who cited the following verse to prove that Baba Nanak not a Bhunjei but a Sarin Khatri.

Verse  "Bhulla booron se hithey kurta kripa jub keen, Suggul chiragh supoot mut Nanak bane-i-Sreen."  

Translation i.e.

Good comes out of evil, when it pleases the creator. The lamp of the world, eldest son of intellect Baba Nanak was born of Sarins.

The Bedis had hitherto practised female infanticide to maintain their social importance. They regarded the practice as a sign of social eminence and felt that if this mark of eminence was abandoned, they would lapse into the great Khatri body once again. It speaks volumes for the organisers of the conference that in spite of all the opposition that was there,

they took the decision to marry their daughters with Bhunjais
and thus gave a big blow to the evil practice of female
infanticide. Some bold gestures by certain individuals
contributed enormously to the Panchayat deciding the way it
did. Thus for instances, while the question of betrothing
the girls of Bedis among the Khatri was being still debated,
Baba Sohan Singh Bedi, a man of influence set an example for
the other Bedis by announcing the betrothal of his daughter
14
to a Bhunjai.

The general spirit of enlightenment that had been
produced among the people of the Doab as a result of British
occupation of the territory had produced a tremendous effect
on the Bedis. It gave a death blow to the female infanticide
among them. The British administration subsequently
contributed its own share to the disappearance of that practice
by making it look a shameful felony and not a proud distinction.

The death knell of female infanticide contributed to
the integration of the Bedis with the rest of the Khatri. In
the year 1852, the Bedis and Khatri started smoking from the
same hooka (smoking pipe) when not long ago under the Sikh
rulers, it was unthinkable for other Khatri smoking from the
hooka of Bedi community. This new practice was as much
indicative of the Bedis' keenness to be one with the other

15. Ibid., Para-28.
khatris as the latter's desire to welcome the Bedis as their equals.

The alignment of the Bedis with Bhunjai khatris came as a bombshell for the Sarin khatris. It became clear to Sarins that in future they were not going to get girls in marriage from Bhunjais. The rank, status and superiority of the Sarin khatris had obviously started crumbling down. The association of the Bedis and the Bhunjais had now made the Bhunjais a formidable force. The Sarins were forced to take note of that fact and agree to have matrimonial alliances with all other khatris. Their fears were that if they did not do that they would be isolated from the overwhelming majority of the khatris. The moral pressure built up by Bhunjais in the khatri community had truly won a great victory and did a lot of good for the khatri community as a whole. The two classes of khatris were once again united on equal terms.

The two, now, agreed to certain rules for giving and receiving daughters and decided to curtail the marriage expenses considerably. H.B. Edwardes' forecast that the regulations drawn by the heads of the khatri community would be more forceful than the British laws in doing away with female infanticide proved correct. The interference of the British Government, he had remarked would be regarded less important than the community's cry from within against female infanticide.

"I do not mean sumptuary laws to be enforced by Government, but sumptuary regulations drawn up by the heads of the people themselves, and made generally known by the Government, with their approval for the support and assistance of all those who are too weak to stand alone. Beyond this, Government should only interfere when its protection was sought."

An important reason which led to the reduction of female infanticide among Khatri of the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur Districts, within a few years of the establishment of British rule in the Doab was the agreement to reduce expenses on the daughter's marriages. Earlier, both among the Sarins and the Bhunjais, though more among the Sarins, the customary expenses at the time of marriages of the daughters were too heavy for the parents to bear, and that situation forced them to kill their daughters soon after their births. With the agreement to reduce these expenses, a big reason for killing the daughters had disappeared and the incidence of female infanticide went down among Khatri.

The incidence of female infanticide had gone down but had not completely disappeared. That made many a British Officers in the Jullundur Doab feel that they must take a more active part in suppressing female infanticide. The pattern set up by Unwin in Mainpuri District of United Provinces was there to be followed and it was readily adopted

17. Ibid., Para-64.
18. Ibid., Para-61.
with some modifications. In mainapuri, the village watchmen would give information of the birth of a female child immediately to the Police Station. A bary-andas would then visit the house for seeing the child and inform the thanedar of the truth of the information given by the watchman. The thanedar on his part would pass on this information of the birth of a girl, duly confirmed to the Magistrate, who would immediately order that the child's health should be reported after the expiry of some specified time. The watchmen were also entrusted with the duty of giving information of any illness that the new born child might suffer after the birth. In case of death of the female child under suspicious circumstances, the body of the child was to be sent to the Civil Surgeon for examination. As adopted in the Jullundur District for the first time in 1852 by H.B. Edwardes, the Unwin pattern was changed a little. Here in Jullundur the thanedar and not the bary-andas would go and see the new born female child. The thanedar was a more responsible person and the Bedis were a very small tribe and not likely to make the thanedar's duty onerous. The modification was perhaps made to prevent wrong information in the very first report of the birth of the female child and also to facilitate in spotting female infanticide later. Edwardes issued orders for the measures to be adopted forthwith in the Jullundur District. On his recommendations, this measure was adopted in the Hoshiarpur District also. It was hoped that with the

19. Ibid., Para-29.
adoption of these measures, the Bedis might entirely give up the habit of destroying their female infants.

Soon after adopting the Unwin pattern, H.B. Edwards adopted still another measure for preserving the daughters born to Bedis. The plan of this measure was suggested by Major Lake but was made acceptable to Edwards after it was amended by Barnes. H.B. Edwards declared that perpetual tenures would be heritable by daughters, and life tenures extensible only to daughters. This declaration added selfish motives, scarcely less urgent than the fear of punishment. It is difficult to say whether this declaration alone would have served the purpose for which it was intended because the two measures adopted as a result of this declaration were soon supplemented by the steps taken by the Board of Administration. The Board arranged a social gathering or Panchayat of Bedis of Jullundur Doab in collaboration with the Bedis of Dera Baba Nanak. The British tried to impress upon the Bedis in the gathering, the need to give fillip to inter-marriages with Bhunjai Khatris and fix such a moderate scale of expenses to be incurred at the times of marriages as would suit even the poorest of Bedis. The Board also declared that a person setting a precedent among the Bedis in preserving a daughter would be honoured. Soon thereafter the Board of Administration conveyed thanks to the Ahluwalia Raja for endeavouring to

preserve twenty-five female Bedi children. Panjab Singh of Mukandpur, a Bedi was honoured with a khilat for preserving and rearing his two daughters even under the Sikh rulers. The intention behind this honour was clear enough. It was to encourage other Bedis of the district, to take pride in preserving their daughters.

The Board of Administration also came out with a strong denunciation of female infanticide which produced a great effect in the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur Districts. Perhaps that was because it was immediately followed by warnings issued by the district officers of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur that female infanticide would not go undetected and punishment would be meted out to those who would commit it. There was a most remarkable and gratifying response among the Bedis of the Jullundur. The preservation of female children soon became almost universal among the Bedis and their example was followed by other Khatriis. The few who endeavoured to adhere to their old norms in this respect, did so with the utmost secrecy, and were strongly criticised by all the respectable members of their communities.

The great success of the British efforts to abolish female infanticide in Jullundur and Hoshiarpur was revealed in

23. Ibid., Paras 36 & 37.

24. Foreign Deptt. (F/3.), NAI, Prodg. No. 186 dated 9th September, 1853. R. Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner for Panjab, to P.S. Melvill, Secretary to Chief Commissioner and Agent to Governor-General, No. 76, dated 16th June, 1853. Minutes, Para-48.
the census of 1852. According to the census conducted by R.C. Temple in 1852 for the Jullundur District the total number of children born of both sexes to Hindus and Muslims were 366 and 559 out of which 189 and 341 were alive respectively. The ratio between the males and females was 25 more in favour of the latter. In the four parganahe of the District of Hoshiarpur, where the census was undertaken by P.S. Melvill, the proportion of the girls and boys was as 26 under:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>77 girls to 100 boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammedans</td>
<td>82 girls to 100 boys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This census was believed to have indicated greater proportion of girls than what it was before the beginning of the British rule in the Doab. The census taken by Major 27 Edwardes of the Bedis in parganah Rahon in 1852 also revealed that the girls slightly out-numbered the boys of the same age 28 group. The Bedi girls were now preserved, reared and brought


26. Foreign Deptt. (POL), NA, Prodg. No. 186, dated 9th September, 1853, J. Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner for Punjab, to P.S. Melvill, Secretary to Chief Commissioner and Agent to Governor-General, No. 76, dated 16th June, 1853, Minutes from Judicial Commissioner. Para-37.

27. Census of Rahon Parganah was taken by Major Edwardes, Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur in 1852. These was 70 births of both sexes. Boys were 38 and girls 32 out of these 33 boys and 16 girls were alive.

28. Ibid., Para-49.
The female infanticide was, in fact, so effectively held in check that its results soon became a source of worry to the Bedis in the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur Districts. Since there were now more Bedi girls to be married, than ever before, the non-Bedi Khatri started insisting on a dowry before agreeing to accept them as brides for their sons. The Bedi parents were much exercised about their daughters. Perhaps their worry would have become perpetual if the Bhunjais, at a three-day long conference held at Jullundur from 4th April, 1853 onwards had not, once again, reiterated their willingness to intermarry with the Bedis. Many resolutions were passed at this conference which, when implemented, created the social climate in which the Bhunjais' willingness resulted in many marriages between Bedis and Bhunjais. It was at this very conference that many denominations of the Hindu and Muhammadans inhabiting the periphery of Navanshahr and Jullundur also unanimously agreed to limit the expenses on the marriages to a fixed scale. The meeting had been sanctified by the attendance of a deputation from Dera Baba Nanak. The Raja of Kapurthala had also attended this meeting and thrown his

29. Ibid., Para-52 and 55.

30. Bhunjai type of Khatri were to whom the Bedis originally belonged and from whom they sprang. They agreed to give and take daughters in marriage. Bhunjais had retained their own customs of marriages and were economical.

31. Ibid., Para-53.
powerful influence in favour of the suppression of the female
infanticide and to lay down a reasonable limit for expenses
on the marriages of daughters.

The Jullundur meeting was followed, within a fortnight,
by a meeting of the Rajput tribes who occupied the lower
ranges in the Hoshiarpur District for discussing matters
concerning marriages of the girls in their community. This
meeting was convened by Major Abbot, Deputy Commissioner of
Hoshiarpur, and took place on 21st April, 1853. Here, apart
from the resolutions intended to regulate expenses on
marriages, many other points having direct or indirect bearing
on the question of infanticide were discussed in great details.
The success achieved by the British in 1853 in Jullundur
and Hoshiarpur created a strong feeling of abhorrence against
this crime throughout the Panjab. In this matter the Bedis
had taken the lead. It was a happy sign of the times that they
gave up their false notions of pride and were, now, keen on
getting favours from the new British masters. Their example
made many other classes also desire the final suppression of
female infanticide. What was so far coming in the way of
their asking for this laudable reform was the superiority-of-
the tribe feeling which made even the enlightened section of
the community feel shy of coming forward to take the initiative
in the matter. But now when even the proud had started giving

32. Ibid., Para-54.
33. Ibid., Paras-56 and 61.
34. Ibid., Para-58.
up female infanticide, they started thinking of doing the same. The rank and file gave it up immediately. At this stage the British officials stepped in. It was on the suggestion of the Judicial Commissioner of the Government for eradicating female infanticide. He wanted:

1. Proclamations to be issued throughout the Panjab, denouncing the crime of female infanticide, and declaring the determination of the Government to treat and punish all those who continued with the practice, as murderers.

2. The copies of the proclamation to be distributed most extensively amongst the classes who practised it.

3. The head of the tribes to be called upon to suppress the crime. The heads (Jumbedars) of the villages in whose village this crime was prevalent to be asked to supply information of the crime. They were to be told that the penalty for not informing the Government would cost them loss of the village management and of the income arising therefrom.

4. Annual census of the male and female births of all villages in which infanticide prevailed to be taken while distinguishing male and female children.

5. A general meeting of the heads of all the tribes and classes known to be practising this crime within 100 miles of Amritsar to be called on diwali festival. This meeting was to discuss subject of intermarriages and to draw up rules for further guidance.

6. All the Deputy Commissioners, including Major Abbot of Hoshiarpur and Capt. Farrington of Jullundur, were to be asked to attend the meeting at Amritsar and bring with them the Chief men of the tribes and exert all their pressures on these chiefs.

The Financial Commissioner wanted this meeting to be held at Amritsar on the occasion of the diwali and presided

35. Ibid., Paras 62 & 63.
36. Ibid., Para-67.
over by D.F. Mcleod, Raiks and Barnes, the Commissioners of Jullundur, Lahore and Cis-Sutlej Divisions respectively on each of the three days of the meeting. He was confident that in this meeting D.F. Mcleod would play an enthusiastic part. After all he had succeeded in suppressing the ignominious practice in the Jullundur Doab.

The idea behind holding this meeting in the sacred city of Amritsar so as to synchronise with the *devali* festival, was to enable the Government to popularise the movement against female infanticide among the masses. No better place and occasion could be imagined. On *devali* large numbers of people used to assemble then — as happens even now — at Amritsar. A successful meeting at Amritsar on this occasion was expected to give a serious blow to the practice of this heinous crime, more so when this meeting was to be followed by meetings in *narganahs* all over the Panjab. It was decided that the same line of action be followed as had been done at the Rahon and Jullundur *narganah* meetings in the Jullundur Doab.

The meetings held at Rahon and Jullundur had produced one consequence of great importance in that they succeeded in persuading the citizens of the entire Jullundur District to make voluntary propositions for self restraint in marriage expenses in future. At Jullundur and Rahon both, the broad

outlines of proposals recommended were identical though the
two meetings slightly differed on limits for expenses on
marriages. The limits proposed at Jullundur were only
slightly higher than the ones proposed at Bahen. The proposals
made at Jullundur found a ready acceptance all over the
district.

Before we proceed to examine the full implications of
these voluntary proposals, we may pause to get an idea of the
various customs connected with marriages and the expenses
involved in it. The most important of them were:-

a) **Shagun**: A token of the commitment for
matrimonial alliance decided the rate of all other
expenses. The bride's father sent it generally 7/3
in cash and 2/3 in kind (household articles,
camels, etc.).

b) **Milni**: It was the money presented or **purtary**;
made by the bride's father when the bridegroom's
procession arrived at the house and the two fathers
embraced each other. Its extent was determined by
the money spent on Shagun and it was half of the
shagun. If Rs.100/- were spent on Shagun the milni
expenses were Rs.50/-. 

c) **Vedi**: It was a fee to the priest for reading
**shastras** for the young couple under a canopy of
plantain boughs. This was generally 25 per cent
to 50 per cent more than milni.

d) **Meetha Bhatt**: (feast): It lasted for three days
and consisted of all sorts of sweets and fruits
mixed up together. They were set before the
assembly invited to the function. All the
neighbours of the same caste came and took part in
the feast. The left-overs which were quite
considerable were the prerequisite of the barber,
who sold them to the confectioner, the latter

September, 1893, H.B. Edwards, Deputy Commissioner,
Jullundur, to D.F. McLeod, Commissioner and Superintendent,
Trans-Sutlej States, No. 134, dated 30th June, 1892.
Paras-79 to 81.
retailed them to anybody of any caste. It was often found that *meetha bhatt* caused much heart-burning. The real guests were deprived of the feast.

e) *Khat*: as the *Dabhi* was called in the Panjab, was \[\frac{4}{4}\] or \[\frac{1}{5}\] more than the *sharrun*. It consists of all household requisites from vessels for storing water down to a knitting-needle.

The voluntary proposals made in the meeting at Jullundur suggested cuts in the *sharrun*, the *milni*, the *vedi*, the *meetha bhatt* and *khat* and were at least some time adhered to. However, some local cuts soon made their appearance and that prompted the Deputy Commissioner of Jullundur, H.B. Edwardes, to suggest that the problem of cutting down the 40 marriage expenses be tackled at the Provincial level:

"I have for the present compromised myself to recognising and appraising these self-made laws, and promising the citizens every support in their maintenance and protection from insult. But it seems to me that this matter be dealt with largely by the Board of Administration and not by District Officers, who will only produce a mass of local laws. The same castes prevail the country, sprang from the same sect, pursue the same traditions and have fallen in the same absurdities, communication is rapid throughout all the districts, matters such as these affecting class interests are quickly spread and commented on; comparisons will be drawn between this district and that of the district of the bride and the district of bridegroom, and the variety of rules will end in all being optional and non-binding. It would be far better for the Board to digest information furnished from the districts, and in consultation with a grand panchayat to which deputies from all districts should be invited, issue an authoritative scale of marriage fees for every class. It is the heart's desire of the people to have such sumptuary laws; and all that is wanting is to help them with aid of Government in meeting and legislating for them such laws."

Herbert Edwardes' suggestion was welcomed by the Judicial Commissioner and the Chief Commissioner of the Panjab. The Chief Commissioner recommended it to the Governor-General-in-Council who further thought of declaring that all the families who received a pension from the Government would hold it only on this condition that they pledged themselves to the abandonment of female infanticide. The Governor-General, therefore, directed the Panjab Government that the pensions of all those who were known to practice female infanticide be stopped. He further indicated that he would like to bestow rewards, or honours or khilats as recommended by the Chief Commissioner upon those who were ready to abandon the inhuman practice which their fore-fathers had started and practised. The Governor-General in Council further welcomed the idea of synchronising the proposed meeting at Amritsar with the diwali festival.

The meeting was held at Amritsar from 29th October, 1853, to 31st October, 1853. It discussed the ways and means for suppressing female infanticide all over the Panjab and also laid down the sumptuary and other rules for regulating

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41. Foreign Deptt. (POL), NAI, Prodg. No. 186, dated 9th September, 1853, Offg. Secretary to Governor-General, to J. Lawrence, Chief Commissioner, Panjab, No. 3894, dated 7th September, 1853, Para-7.

42. Ibid., Para-8.
the expenses on marriage ceremonies. The meeting was a complete success, possibly because a proper atmosphere for its success had already been created by a proclamation issued throughout the Panjab, denouncing female infanticide, and threatening all who were proved guilty of it, with the same punishment as was awarded for murder. The proclamation issued when translated into English, read as follows:-

"Whereas it has been brought to the notice of the most Noble Governor-General in Council, that the practice for destroying female children, either at the time of birth or subsequently is prevalent amongst certain classes of people in the Panjab, the following orders or direction of the most Noble Governor-General are hereby notified to the public for their information and guidance, with a view to the suppression of this horrid practice which is sinful in the eye of God and hateful to the authorities."

1. "Any person committing the crime of infanticide, in defiance of God and authorities will incur the penalty for murder.

2. "The crime was most prevalent among the Bedee community but some of the members have lately abstained from it; this fact has afforded satisfaction to the most Noble the Governor-General, and it is hoped that all the Bedees, without exception, will give up the evil practice and follow the right path; otherwise, those families who continue to perpetuate the crime, shall, besides, incurring the above penalty (i.e., for murder) forfeit all their jagirs and other pensionary allowances assigned by Government.

43. Foreign Deptt. (POL), NAI, Prodg. No. 243, dated 28th April, 1854, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Panjab, to Offg. Under Secretary to Government of India, No. 1026, dated 31 December, 1853. Para-1.

44. Foreign Deptt. (POL), NAI, Prodg. No. 244, dated 28th April, R. Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner, Panjab, to P.S. Melvill, Secretary to Chief Commissioner and Agent to Governor-General, Memo. by Judicial and Financial Commissioner No. 208, dated 9th December, 1853. Para-3.

3. "Any person, who conscientiously fearing God and authorities, uses his endeavours towards suppressing the crime of the female infanticide, in compliance with the wishes of the Government will be held deserving of reward, honour and title from the most Noble Governor-General of India.

4. "Be it known that a general meeting of high British functionaries attached to the Panjab, and of Rajahs, Chiefs and other native gentry, will be held at Amritsar in the month of Katak (October) during the Devaloe festival, with a view to devise measures for the suppression of female infanticide....all persons serious of attending the meeting are hereby invited to do so at the time and place indicated."

The great interest taken by the Government of India in eradicating female infanticide encouraged the officers in the Panjab to participate in the campaign with enthusiasm. The Judicial Commissioner transmitted the copies of letters and all other correspondence which had been exchanged between the Government of India and the Panjab Government for the information of several Commissioners of the Divisions, with the request that these be circulated among the District Officers. The Commissioners of the Cis-Sutlej and Trans-Sutlej States, and Lahore Division were requested to attend the meeting along with the District Officers. All the Chiefs and leading men of the tribes who practised female infanticide were invited. Besides this, numerous invitations were sent to the Rajas, Sardars and other Panjabi gentlemen of rank and position to attend the meeting. Among the large number of Panjabis, who assembled in that meeting were the heads of all

the leading families among the Sikhs, the Chieftains of the Kangra hills, the Bedis of Dera Baba Nanak, and the ceremonial heads of every city of note within 200 miles of Amritsar. Besides these celebrities, there were delegates from every district, representing the agricultural and trading interests.

From the Trans-Sutlej States, D.F. Meleod, Commissioner and Superintendent, attended the meeting along with Captain Farrington and Major Abbot, the then Deputy Commissioners of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur respectively. The meetings were presided over by R. Montgomery and Edmonstone, the Judicial and Financial Commissioners of the Panjab, respectively.

The proceedings of the first day (29th October, 1853) began with the formation of a committee comprising of the officers attending the meeting and a selected number of Panjabis who were expected to assist in the deliberation of the meeting because of their position and local influence. They were requested to attend the daily darbar in the camp. Among the Panjabis who were asked to serve on the Committee were Ahluwalia Raja, Raja Dina Nath, Raja Sahib Dyal, Raja Tej Singh, Navab Sheikh Imam-ud-din and Pandit Maksudan. The meeting then heard the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur delegates who had taken the lead a year earlier in restricting female infanticide and in reducing the expenses on marriages. The

47. Ibid., Para-6.
48. Ibid., Para-5.
49. Ibid., Para-7.
agreements which the local committees of these districts had executed were then read out and made the basis for further discussion in the meeting. The agreement finally approved by this Provincial meeting for execution all over the Panjab, bore striking similarity with the earlier agreement reached at Jullundur.

The numerous chiefs of the Panjab and the hill Rajas were finally summoned to an open darbar and exhorted to lend their assistance and support to suppress female infanticide and to reduce the expenses on marriages. The agreement drawn up by the Committee was read out to them and they were asked to give the purport of the Committee's documents their serious attention and also to make suggestions or modifications which their feelings, on the particular custom of their clan dictated.

Next day, in the early hours of the morning, the representatives of the Rajputs, the Bedis, the Khatries, and the agricultural and commercial classes, and the residents of the plains assembled in different groups in the different enclosures arranged for purpose in Ram Bagh where the conference was being held. They spent the entire day of 30th October, 1853 in deliberating on the important issues for which they had gathered. District Officers were present in the meetings only to preserve order and to give their

50. Ibid., Para-9.
51. Ibid., Para-10.
countenance to the conference of the assembled delegates.

The deliberations of the Brahmins and Khatri communities were presided over by two extremely able councillors, Raja Dina Nath and Raja Sahib Dyal respectively. Sardar Shamsher Singh Sindhiwalla, Sardar Mehtab Singh Majithia, Sardar Kirpal Singh Malwai, Sardar Hardit Singh and Sardar Jodh Singh guided the deliberations of the meeting of the Jat Sikh representatives. Their contribution was great. Their advice and countenance, led to a satisfactory culmination of the proceedings of the meeting of this section of assembled gathering. The Muhammadan sub-committee was presided over by Navab Sheikh Imam-ud-din Khan who took great interest in furthering the object of the meeting. The deliberations of the hill Rajputs were attended by the Rajas of Gulher, Suket, Sambagram, Chamba, and Nurpur in person. The Raja of Mandi was represented by two members of his regency, Vasir Goshian and Mian Bhag Singh. The Rajas of Nadaun and Kotler who were absent due to illness were represented by their eldest son and nephew respectively. The Rajput tribes of Jammu were accompanied by Dewan Hari Chand, the confidential adviser to Maharaja Gulab Singh, who played an active part on the occasion.

After four to five hours' close and earnest consultations, the committees handed over their agreements in writing to the

52. Ibid., Paras-12 and 13.
53. Ibid., Para-14.
top British Officials. These documents laid down balanced scale for expenditures on marriages for the different castes and communities. In majority of them, three or four grades of expenses were laid down of which the maximum as well as the minimum was fixed along with all the details of charges. The fees to Brahmans, barbers and others, and the other incidental expenses of the marriage feast and procession were laid down at length. The Amritsar meeting was a success. The Rajput hill Rajas and Chiefs had extended their full cooperation. For once they set aside their jealousies and feuds, and bound themselves to the eradication of female infanticide and the lowering of the marriage expenses prevalent both among them and their subjects. They bound themselves to exercise their authority within the limits of their respective territories accomplish the dual purpose of doing away with the practice of female infanticide and enforcing the ceilings on expenditure at the marriage celebrations in accordance with the agreements executed for each class of their subjects. The Sikh Sardars as also the Muhammadans, in fact representatives of all groups, extended their co-operation in the Amritsar meeting.

Translation of an agreement entered into at this meeting by the Chiefs of the Jullundur Deob, individually exercising judicial and fiscal powers in their estates was as

54. Ibid., Paras-15 & 16.
under:-

"A meeting having been assembled at Uaritsar by order of the most Noble the Governor-General in Council with a view to devise measure for the complete suppression of infanticide, and to limit the outlay incurred upon marriage in which meeting I have by invitees of the British officers, taken part, I hereby engage, that the rules agreed to at that meeting be put in force in the estates over which I exercise authority, that I will use my best endeavour entirely to suppress and put an end to the dreadful crime of infanticide, that I will enforce the scale determined upon as the maximum of expenditure to be incurred on occasion of marriage of different classes over whom I exercise control, and that I will not allow Masals, Kasas, Beggars or any other class of persons to exercise impetuosity of weddings or in any way to harass these who may be engaged in them.

"That if it shall, at any time, appear, that any person has attempted to make the observance of the rules now laid down subject of reproachment I will have him brought to punishment, and that I will exert myself generally in all respects, and with hearty good will, to promote the highly laudable object which the British Government have in view."56

On the last day of the meeting, 31st October, 1853, a general darbar was held in which about 3,000 persons participated. In this darbar, the delegates from the different districts and representatives of the various tribes publicly declared their determination to suppress female infanticide.

55. Ibid., Para-18.

56. Documents to the above effect were separately drawn out in persian and signed by the following chiefs. The Raja of Ahluwalia, The Raja of Chamba, Mian Bhag Singh and with certain modifications also to Raja of Guler as he was not the pressing power in his estate.

57. Foreign Deptt. (POL), NAL, Prodg. No. 244, dated 28th April, 1854, R. Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner for Panjab to F. S. Melvill, Secretary to Chief Commissioner and Agent to Governor-General, No. 200, dated 9th December, 1853, Para-22 and 23.
The meeting on that-day began with the Financial Commissioner, Edmonstone, making a few preliminary remarks and then reading out a translation of the letter of the Governor-General conveying his sanction to and his approval of the objects of the meeting, his determination to punish all those who might be hereafter convicted of female infanticide and his readiness to confer every distinction on those who might cordially co-operate with the officers of the Government in extirpating the inhuman practice.

Edmonstone then passed on to express the anxiety with which all the Government officers had come to the meeting, watched the deliberations of the several classes on the preceding day and noted with satisfaction the welcome decisions arrived at by them. At the end he praised the agreements reached on the marriage expenses by each class. The fact that these agreements were signed in the presence of the Government representatives showed the determination of the people to 58 honour them. The conference ended with the assembled persons entering into a common agreement which was duly signed by all the invitees to the conference. The ikramnamah, as this agreement was called, read as follows:

"Ikramnamah, or agreement on the part of all the chiefs and people residing in the Punjab, and the Trans-Jutlej States respecting the prevention of Infanticide, and the making of arrangements in regard to marriage expenses signed at Umritsar on the 31st October, 1855."

"In the territories of the Panjab the inhuman crime of Infanticide has not yet been completely suppressed

58. Ibid., Para-25.
notwithstanding the existing prohibition issued against it by the authorities. We have, therefore, in accordance with the orders of the most Noble the Governor-General of India, met together with a view to devise measures for the prevention of the crime; and we hereby make the following engagements, certifying that we shall abide by them.

First. The crime of infanticide being so hateful to God, and execrable in the eyes of Government, and of all pious and good men, we will, at once, cause the apprehension of any person of our tribe who may perpetuate the crime in our villages or hillowns, and bring the same to the notice of the authorities; and we will expel from our tribes any person who may refuse or show reluctance to join the endeavours to accomplish the above object.

Secondly. One of the chief causes of infanticide being, the expenditure of enormous sums of money on occasion of marriage, in providing for dowries and for the large number of people who attend at weddings, we shall, with a view to reduce these expenses, adopt in our several castes and tribes all the arrangements connected with marriage charges which are in force in the Hoshiarpur, Jullundur and Hoshiarpur districts, or any other similar arrangements which may be made by punchayats in the presence of the several district officers who preside over it.

Thirdly. Another evil besides that of the expenditure above alluded to, is the gathering of 
Maota, Basses, Bhands, Miragasses and Beggars on the occasions of marriages, who threaten and harass the parties concerned in them, and inflicting injuries on their persons with knives and stones, demand charity.

"If any such party, in future, is found to conduct himself in such an outrageous and harassing measure, it will be apprehended and handed over to the police, and we will never allow him admittance to wedding or give him anything in charity; and will apply to the District Officer for aid in the matter."

After the darbar came to a close, the Commissioners of the Divisions felt sure that this three-day long demonstration at Amritsar would impress all those who had witnessed the interesting spectacle and produce a great effect. An impassioned appeal had been made to the innate sense of decency
of the people, their fears had been aroused and their sense of self-interest tickled. It was possible that some would still cling to the notions which had been fostered on their minds since childhood, and pride themselves on their superior birth, and continue the practice of female infanticide. But, it was felt, even they would now do it in secret not only for fear of detection but also for the shame of exposure and the inevitable consequences that would follow that exposure. The three Commissioners' confident anticipation was that by the time the then contemporary generation died out, the practice of female infanticide would cease even among those who had been most addicted to it.

The optimism of the three Commissioners was well founded. The agreements signed by the different communities of Panjab had made it clear that a radical change in social customs of betrothal and marriage was in the offing. There was every likelihood of reduction in expenses on marriage ceremonies in future and increasingly larger number of marriages between castes which had been so far segregated because of the considerations of pride, rank and status.

The Hoshiarpur District too could not remain unaffected by the blissful wave of reforms produced by the Amritsar meeting. An agreement was soon signed by the numerous choudhriees and ranchees of the district on the scale of expenditure to be incurred on the occasions of betrothal and

60. Ibid., Para-31.
marriage by the parents of the brides and bridegrooms. They belonged to the numerous towns in the district such as Hoshiarpur, Bajwa, Dassuya, Mukerian, Garhshankar and Haryana. They had agreed to a Rs.25-Rs.400 scale for the expenditure on the marriage of a daughter. Khatriis and


Expenditure to be insurred by the bride's parents.

1. Shagun: on the occasion of shagun presents, to be sent through the prohib (family priest) or hajiam (Barbar), were to consist of

Cash Rs.1
Dried dates 7 in number.

2. Saha : Present which were to be sent with the saha Chitthi chitthi, or letter fixing a day to solemnise the wedding were to range from:

Cash Rs. 1 to Rs.5
Mishri (Sugar Candy) 5 seers.

3. Lagnun: Presents sent with saha chitthi or a short time after it,

In cash Rs. 11 to 51
Trevar (Clothes) 3 pieces of female attire i.e., petticoat covering sheet, etc.

Ornaments:

According to the circumstances of Brides parents.

Cheunk: (A gold ornament to be worn on the head)

4. Wedding: On the occasion of wedding: The marriage party was to consist of 'Bur Brahmin' i.e., family priest the Bridegroom and 9 others vis. the Barbhala (a relative of the Bridegroom who accompanied him on the occasion) a confidential agent and seven lages (such as Brahmins, Nains) - 20 to 30 persons besides were to form the procession. Presents to be sent on the approach of the marriage party to the neighbourhood of the station (village or town) in which the bride's family resided.

Cash Rs. 1 to 5
Brahmans of Amritsar and Lahore had also entered into an

5. Dakhilah: or the distribution of alms to beggars by the bridegroom's parents, on the arrival of the marriage party at the resident of the bride family, was to be discontinued.

6. Pattri: Or provisions (atta dal sugar price, etc., supplied to the marriage party on reaching the residence of the bride family. The panchas of the place were supposed to accompany Butrees presents, on this customs 5 to 21 maunds kucha or puqa weight was to be given.

7. Hilni: a meeting of the Bride's and Bridegroom's relations on the night following the arrival of the marriage party;

8. Yedi: where wedding ceremony was performed.

9. Khurli: or feasting of the marriage party on the evenings of the second and third days after their arrival at brides residence. Presents from 20 seers to 2 maunds puqa weight or from 1 maund 10 seer to 5 maunds kucha weight.

10. Ruksatanah: Presents at the time of the departure of marriage party on the fourth day.

11. Kharooh Khat: or dowry, consisted of ornaments, apparel, household utensils, bedstead and stood, according to the circumstances of the brides parents. These were to be regulated by the advice of the panchas and the orders of the Government.

Cash: Rs. 21 to Rs. 125

Expenditure to be incurred by the bridegrooms parents.

1. Ruksat Shagun: or presents in lieu of shagun. Cash to bearer 1-8-0; feasting with food of best description for three days.

Charity to Brahmans and members of the Family.

2. Ruksatanah on the occasion of saha chitthi the bearer was Saha to get Rs.2-8-0, dried fruits 5 to 10 seers, Chitthi cloth (linen manufactured at Rahon, a town in and Lagun: Jullundur distt.) and a cash from Rs. 1 to 4 or instead:-

Cash Rs. 4

Kiesee 5 seers
agreement for curtailing the expenses on marriages. And so was done by the Bedis of Dera Baba Nanak (the seat of Bedi Tribe) in the Gurdaspur District. They signed the following agreement:

"We agree to the following scale of expenditure to be incurred on marriages exclusive of the ornaments for the bride and the number and value of which will depend on the circumstances."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Class</td>
<td>500 rupees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Class</td>
<td>400 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Class</td>
<td>250 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Class</td>
<td>125 -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A separate agreement was signed by the Rajas of the Kangra and other hill districts:

"A grand meeting has been held at Amritsar for suppressing female infanticide in the Punjab, and

3. Vara: This was a distribution of alms to beggars by the bridegroom's parents, at the time of departure from the residence of the bride's parents. This custom was discontinued.

4. Hajjaat: Presents to naiq (Barbars) whose used to come to demand charity on the above occasion. To be discontinued. Only the dhians of the caste were to get 4 annas each.

5. Presents to dhians or girls of village or town. To be discontinued.

6. Khurah (village expenses) To be regularised by the advice of the panches from 1-4-0 to Rs.7-0-0.


64. Foreign Deptt. (PO.) NAI, Prodg. No. 244, dated 28th April, 1854, Memo by Judicial and Financial Commissioners, Panjab, (Appendix D of the Memo by Judicial and Financial Commissioners of Panjab).
making arrangements for limiting the outlay to be incurred on marriages; we therefore, hereby resolve to make the following agreements with regard to expenditure on such occasions:

1) Raja will spend Rs.5,000/-
2) Mian being brothers of Raja Rs.2,500/-
3) Mian being other distant relatives Rs.1,000/-
4) Other Rajputs zamindars, lumberdars Rs. 200/-
5) Beggars, coolies, and other persons of low castes Rs. 20/-

"We bring ourselves to abide always by the above scale we (the Rajahs) will insist on our subjects doing the same."

This agreement was signed by Raja Partap Chand Katosh, Shamsher Singh Golheria, Sri Singh Chambawala, Uggar Sain Suket Wala, Bijai Chand of Mandi, Narainpal Kotleria, Jodhbir Chand Nadaunwala and Raja Jaswant Singh Nurpuria.

The active interest that the British Government had taken in doing away with the great social evil of female infanticide bore quick result. This was obviously because the people though ready to give up the old customs imposed by the unjust social norms or caste-taboos did not feel strong enough to do away with these customs, unless helped by the Government. Now that the Government had come out openly for the reform they were most willing to co-operate.

The Amritsar meeting had a tremendous effect on the Bedis and Khatris of the Jullundur Doab. Earlier in 1846 they had reacted very adversely to John Lawrence's denunciation of female infanticide but now in 1853, far from showing any anger, they were quite willing to abolish female infanticide and reduce expenses on marriages. Perhaps they now thought that their depressed condition was the result of
the divine anger brought upon them because of their practice of female infanticide.

So far the British rulers of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur believed that female infanticide was confined only to the high caste Khatris. But in 1853 they suddenly discovered that it was prevalent also among the Muhammadans. It was obvious from the figures they collected of the females and male children among the Muhammadans of the Jullundur Doab. In 1853 the unequal ratio between the male and female children in Jullundur was reflected by the fact that there were 38,303 female and 52,538 male children which meant that the number of boys was about 37 per cent more than that of girls. Such a disproportion could not have come into existence if they too had not practised female infanticide.

The discovery surprised the British for they felt that Muslims as a community did not have some of the social evils that their Hindu brethren practised. Little did the British officials realise that the Muhammadans were as extravagant as Hindus in their marriages, and that drove them too to female infanticide. The difficulties that the Muhammadan parents faced in finding suitable bridegrooms for their daughters were reflected in the fact that the daughters of even the best Muhammadan families remained unmarried up to the age of 30. The daughters of Sheikhs and Sayuds were usually fairly


66. Ibid., Para-71.
grown up before they entered the wedlock. Among the Pathans nearly half the girls were married in childhood and the other half not before maturity. The daughters of many Muhammadan Rajputs in the Jullundur District, could seldom be married at the appropriate age. Jullundur Muslims who were Rajput Hindus before becoming Muslims came under the influence of mirasie whom they regarded as their naers. The mirasie exploited their position as paehettes and so arranged the matrimonial alliances that the girls parents could not cut the expenditures on marriages. The result was, that a Muslim girl belonging to the family of Rajput converts in this district, was seldom married till she was 30. The discovery should have prompted the Jullundur Administration to immediately propel into action and to eradicate this evil with the same enthusiasm from among the Muslims as they had earlier done among the Hindu Khatris. But far from doing that they took no notice of it. Possibly that was because they believed the female infanticide among the Muslims was on account of their following ways of the high caste Hindus and now that the latter had started giving it up, the Muslims would follow suit and desist from it. Or perhaps they read too much in the daughter's marriage posing no problem to the Raees, a large group of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur Muslims. The Raees married their daughters as early as the Hindus. They were, in fact, custom bound to marry their daughters before they were ten years old and one had only to walk into a Rain village to see 67 that daughters were no burden to them.

67. Ibid., Para-72.
In the confident belief that the evil of female infanticide had been finally uprooted after the Amritsar conference, the British administrators in the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur ceased bothering about it till another discovery snooked them. Some time in late 1860's they found out that the female infanticide had made its appearance now among the Hindu jute of the Doab. The evil was perhaps completely absent among these unpretending and industrious people of the Jullundur during the Sikh regime but they, interestingly, took to it when the Khatri had committed themselves to do away with it. It was not practised during the Sikh period, perhaps because every female was looked upon as a farm labourer by the jute of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur. Moreover, if the parents were poor, they did not have to pay any dowry. On the other hand they expected payments from the bridegrooms. Unlike sutlej jute female infanticide was not common among the superior jute of Jullundur Doab but it was not completely absent either. They took to female infanticide after the British Administration of more than a decade had brought them prosperity. Now they felt like copying the Majha jute who had practised female infanticide even during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. That is borne out by the fact that when Ranjit Singh conquered Sarhali, he made an accidental discovery of a gold crock under the floor of a jut house and caused all the houses to be dug up in search of hidden treasures but instead found buried bones of female children.
It was in 1863 that the British discovered that the Juts too had caught the contagion and had begun practising female infanticide. The discovery surprised the British Administrators of the Jullundur Doab a great deal. The extent to which it was practised even pained them.

In 1868 the Deputy Commissioner of Jullundur reported that in seven Phillor villages and in another small estate of Chak Andian of the same Tehsil, there were 3,051 boys and 1,225 girls among the Juts. These figures convinced the Doab administration as also the Panjab Government of the serious nature of female infanticide among the Juts of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur and forced the Government to act. It collected their leaders and following the pattern laid down in the Amritsar conference prevailed upon them to agree to four scales of expenses to be made on their daughters' marriages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Rs. 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Rs. 61 to 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Rs. 41 to 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Rs. 21 to 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This method of limiting the expenses on the marriages of

68. Ibid., Paras 67 and 68.

Among the other classes of bhunees, chamar, muggales and ranerehta, we find them even in the returns of census rejoicing as many girls as boys. Poor as they were, they could afford to let their daughters live.

the daughters had succeeded with the Bedis, and Rajputs and was expected to succeed with the juts. But this expectation, based as it was on the misunderstanding of the peculiar mental make up of the juts and the change in circumstance between early fifties and the late sixties, did not materialise. A more drastic action was called for and this was adopted in 1870, when the Government passed the female infanticide Act of 1870. Much to the surprise of the British Officials in the Jullundur Doab even this Act was not quite successful. Now the authorities were forced to institute an enquiry to find facts in these particular villages in the Jullundur Doab in which female infanticide was still being practised. This enquiry was conducted by Lewis Gordon, an Extra Assistant Commissioner of the district. He took a census of the villages of Samra, Jandiala, Bundala, Bilga, Rurka Kalan, Barapind, and Dosanj, while his superiors had quartered police officials all over the district to check female infanticide.

In the decade that followed stringent action of the Jullundur Doab administration continued but a total eradication of the crime still could not be achieved. This was because the British administrators in the Jullundur Doab had failed to trace the underlying causes that made the jut community of Jullundur District practise female infanticide. All that their measures had done was to drive the crime.

70. Ibid., Para-6.
underground. In fact when in 1883 some zamindars of Jullundur District wrote an anonymous petition by their community in the district, the Jullundur Doab administration realized that all their efforts were going waste.

An enquiry was conducted by the Deputy Commissioner of Jullundur in April, 1883 and he came to the conclusion that female infanticide was almost uniformly practised in certain villages in the Jullundur District. His enquiry revealed that these just villages were ten in number of which eight were situated in Phillor Tehsil. He ordered a careful watch over this tehsil and prevailed upon his superior, the Commissioner and Superintendent of the Jullundur Doab, to take up the matter on the higher level too.

The Commissioner and Superintendent of the Jullundur Division, perhaps failed to realize the true nature of the crime. He proposed the extension of the provisions of Act VIII of 1870 to all those just villages of Jullundur District

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72. Home Deptt. (General) NAI, Prodg. No. 28, dated May, 1884, F.D.O. Bullock, Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur, to The Commissioner and Superintendent, Jullundur Division, No. 198, dated 4th April, 1883.

Statement of births and deaths among children in villages suspected of practising female infanticide from January, 1882 to 28th February, 1883.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tehsil</th>
<th>No. of villages</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jullundur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillor</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>225</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nawanshahar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

73. Home Deptt. (General) NAI, Prodg. No. 28, dated May 1884, Col.
in which infanticide prevailed, and the application of Section 2 of that Act in particular in those situations in the Phillor Tehsil.

The Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur, welcomed the first part of his superiors' suggestion but opposed recourse to clause 2 in the villages of Phillor, at least not till he had prepared a set of draft rules after consulting the persons likely to be affected by these rules and ordered his staff to make a list of the villages, classes, families or persons to whom these rules could justifiably be applied. His plan was to take some deterring action and before taking any step he wanted justification for it by collecting statistics of the births and deaths of infants of both sexes of the preceding five years in these villages.

The enquiry now conducted by the Deputy Commissioner confirmed the widespread female infanticide in all the ten villages earlier suspected of it. In fact, that was admitted by the people themselves. This enquiry further revealed that

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W.G. Waterfield, Commissioner & Superintendent, Jullundur Division, to The Secretary to Government of Panjab, No. 788, dated 7th April, 1883.


76. Home Deptt. (General), NAI, Prodg. No. 28, dated May, 1884, Lt. Col. G.G. Young, Commissioner and Superintendent, Jullundur Division, to The Under Secretary to Government of Panjab, No. 1284, dated 14th June, 1883.
the main reason for the horrible practice turned out to be the same as had earlier made the Khatri and Bedis take to it all over the Doab viz. the large expenses incurred on the marriages of daughters.

It was discovered that the female infanticide was being practised by Juts of the eight villages in the Phillor Tehsil irrespective of the sub-caste to which they belonged. In fact, as the list below shows, all the sub-castes of the Juts living in these villages practised it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Sub-castes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jansher</td>
<td>Gill, Mans, Bijaars and Sekhons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jandiala</td>
<td>Jauhals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanra</td>
<td>Saaras.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilga</td>
<td>Sangrahs, Dahals, Bains, Gill, Dhalivals, Mallis, Sahotabas, Dhatvals, Jauhals and Sindhus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurka</td>
<td>Sindhus, Dingris, Sangrahs, Gill, Dhalivals, Kallars, Mallis, Bhullars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundals</td>
<td>Bassis, Dhalivals, Kallars, Chokars, Khorans, Desans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulath Chak</td>
<td>Sahotabas, Sindhus, Dhalivals, Chokars, Thamans, Bhuts, Komans, Munderals, Mallis, Jhaja, Dhnus, and Kukers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andian</td>
<td>Desans and Sangrahs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phratala</td>
<td>Atnals and Sahotabas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thus the nine villages where the rules framed under Section I Act VIII of 1870 were intended to apply had in all thirty-one sub-castes of jut-Sikhs. Juts who admitted the practice of female infanticide comprised of nearly all the jut inhabitants of these villages. The provisions of section 2 of Act VIII of 1870 were intended to prevent the murders of female children. The Commissioner and Superintendent Jullundur Division wanted the extension of these rules to cover all the jut inhabitants.

It was further felt that restriction on the expenditure on marriages in ten villages of the Jullundur District alone might increase, rather than decrease the incidence of female infanticide. There would be difficulty in marrying girls of this District if similar rules were not imposed in the villages of Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Amritsar and Kapurthala for the juts of these districts and the juts of Jullundur intermarried.

It was obvious that rules framed for a few villages, or for that matter for one or two particular districts, would not work. That made it necessary to have a uniform frame of

79. Home Deptt. (General), NAI, Prodg. No. 30, dated May, 1884, Proposed draft notification declaring where and to whom the act was to apply.


81. Ibid., Para-5.
rules for the entire Panjab.

In December, 1884 the Lt. Governor of the Panjab ordered that the Act VIII of 1870 for the prevention of female infanticide would apply to just residents of nine villages of Jullundur District. Government of India approved this order.

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82. Home Deptt. (General), NAI, Prodg. No. 29, dated May, 1884, P.D.O. Bullock, Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur, to The Commissioner and Superintendent, Jullundur Division, No. 47, dated 2nd February 1884, Schedule-A.

List of villages in which inter-marriages occurred among the classes of Juts.

- **Hoostiarpur:** Mahilpur, Chhabawal, Fatho Hausa, Budhi Pind, Girdhi Walia.
- **Ludhiana:** Raipur, Gujjarwal, Narangwal.
- **Ferozepur:** Chanun Nangal, Kangrah, Lohara, Salayatpur.
- **Amritsar:** Sathiala, Batala, Jandiala Guru, Bundala, Bukanah, Battoo.
- **Patiala Raj:** Charg, Damodi, Chunarthal, Bawani, Rampur.
- **Kapurthala Raj:** Phagwara, Kala Sanghu.


84. Home Deptt. (Police), NAI, Prodg. No. 21, dated 1885, Notification No. 3151, dated 8th December, 1884.

The Act was to be applied to all just residents in the following villages:

**Police Station**
- Jullundur
- Nur Mahal
- -do-
- -do-
- Phillar
- Nur Mahal
- Pillor
- -do-
- Banga

**Village**
- Jasmehar
- Jandiala
- Samra
- Hilga
- Burka
- Bundala
- Kulaita
- Dosanj Kalan
- Pharala
The Punjab Government further utilised the powers vested in it by the Act of 1870 to lay down the following rules for the whole of the province:

1. A nominal register of all the proclaimed tribes and families to be drawn up by the Police under the order of the Magistrate of the District. In this register all recognized heads of families or masters of separate households were to be entered as the heads of families, and every member of the family habitually resident in the village was to be entered by name. All persons under the age of 12 were to be entered as children except the married female children living with their husbands, who for the purposes of these rules were to be deemed as adult females.

2. Another special register was to be maintained. It was to record information of all births and marriages of females, and of all deaths of unmarried and married females under the age of 12 who were not living with their husbands by Officer-in-Charge of the Police Station in whose jurisdiction such a village was situated.

3. Persons registered as the heads of proclaimed families were to report immediately to the sheykidar of the village every birth, marriage, illness and death of any female child. Further, all the children of the family were to be produced when required for the inspection of a Police Officer, not below the rank of a Deputy Inspector, visiting the village.

4. Every midwife residing in the village was to report at once to the sheykidar of the village about the birth and illness of a new born female child in the proclaimed family of the village.

5. The sheykidar of the village was to report immediately of a birth, whether male or female in a proclaimed family, the marriage and the death of an unmarried or married female under the age of 12 and not living with her husband.

6. The lamberdara were to be held responsible for the due performance by the shawkidara of their respective villages of the duties imposed upon them. The lamberdara had to help the Police in drawing up Register 'A' and in obtaining information of all births, marriages and deaths occurring or about to occur in proclaimed families.

7. A scale of expenses to be incurred on the marriage of a daughter was to be laid down by the Government for the benefit of the juta of the villages in Jullundur District, placed under this act. Any person giving a daughter in marriage, or anyone on his behalf was not to exceed these limits upon any ceremony or custom connected with the marriage. Similarly, no person receiving a female into his family in marriage was to incur on account of the marriage, or any ceremony or custom connected therewith more than the specific amount.

8. The father or the head of the family celebrating the marriage was to produce before the Deputy Commissioner, or an Officer deputed by him, on demand by the same, immediately after the marriage, an account showing the actual expenses incurred. He was also to prove the correctness of the accounts.

9. All expenses incurred in carrying out these rules into effect in any village were to be recovered as arrears of land revenue.

10. No proclaimed village or family was exempted from the operations of the rules except by the orders of the Local Government or by virtue of authority to that effect vested by Government in any Officer. A village or family so exempted was then to be struck out of the Register 'A'. The erasure was to be initiated by the Magistrate of the district or by the District Superintendent of Police.

### Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milni</td>
<td>1-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamin Lag</td>
<td>2-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag on occasion of Phera</td>
<td>2-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage feast</td>
<td>23-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Khat'</td>
<td>31-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vessels</td>
<td>10-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornaments</td>
<td>18-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth and clothes</td>
<td>8-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses of Lagis on the occasion of 'Khat'</td>
<td>12-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total:</strong> 125-0-0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) On account of Muklava:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159-0-0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Much was expected of the application of these rules but the optimism to that effect soon disappeared when the enforcement of the above rules started proving ineffective. Under clause 4 of the Act, a breach of the rules was punishable with imprisonment for six months or with a fine not exceeding Rs. 1,000/- or with both, but none of these penalties were ever imposed. On a few and quite rare occasions when cases of violation of rules pertaining to expenses on marriages were taken up, the punishments awarded on conviction were only nominal — say ranging from Re.1 to Rs.15. The police investigation made on the death of female child was extremely burdensome to the villagers who seldom reported infringements to the police. More often than not the investigation destroyed the privacy of family life of respectable villagers for which reason they usually conspired to keep away from investigations.

Still another reason for the failure of rules was that there was no classification of the offences committed. All the cases were registered simply as falling under Rule VII of section 2 of Act VIII of 1870.

Moreover, the people knew that Government's disapproval of female infanticide had a deterrent effect on the more prominent zamindars who had something to lose. For the general run of people in the countryside that displeasure did not mean much. The result was that the rules mentioned above proved

87. Home (Sanitary) M.A.I, Prodg. No. 18-45, dated, September, 1896, A Note on female infanticide by J.M. Douie, Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur, dated 20th August, 1895, Fane-17. One case was instituted in 1886 but failed for want of evidence. Nine cases were taken up in 1889 (or which five
quite ineffective to bring the offenders of female infanticide to task. The female children were killed in infancy in a way which the criminal law was powerless to punish.

It was subsequently felt that the Government could have succeeded in stamping out female infanticide, by appealing to men's hopes and fears by more efficacious methods than this vague and too lenient application of the Act VIII of 1870. Instead of dealing with the offenders with severity, the Government had put more reliance on exploiting the hope of reward for good conduct on the part of leading men in villages.

The census of 1891, proved, once again and beyond all doubts, the Government's failure to fight the evil of female infanticide.

Given below are the district-wise comparative figures of female children per 100 male children among the three major communities inhabiting the region:

District-wise No. of females, under five years of age, per 100 males.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Sikh</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lahore</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujranwala</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>90.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amritsar</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>91.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jullundur</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferozepur</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>94.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludhiana</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>93.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Panjab</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>94.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

were in one group) and fine was inflicted up to Rs. ten. In 1891 there were three cases which were tried in 1892, but were dismissed.

88. Ibid., Para-18.
89. Ibid., Para-9.
That alone explained the comparatively lower percentage of female population of 85.5 in the Jullundur Doab, as against the Provincial ratio of 92.6. The unfavourable ratio between the females and the males was rightly believed to be because of the widespread female infanticide among the Sikh Jut of Jullundur.

The Sikh Jut of nine estates to which the act was applied certainly deserved a closer watch. These estates had a total population of nearly 43,000 of whom 17,166 were juts.

An examination of the statistics prepared by a British Official of the suspected villages revealed that the Jut Sikhs of these villages had been practising female infanticide on a staggering scale. The table given below is sufficiently revealing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Females Under one year</th>
<th>Under five year</th>
<th>Sikhs of suspected villages</th>
<th>Females Under one year</th>
<th>Under five year</th>
<th>Hindus of suspected villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Jandiala</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Jandiala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Samra</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Banda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dusaj</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Dusaj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kalan</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Kalan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jandiala</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Jandiala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Samra</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Banda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dusaj</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Dusaj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kalan</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Kalan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table gives the comparative figures of the deaths of Jut Sikh male and female infants in these villages. Higher mortality of female infants could be

90. Ibid., Para-10.
explained in terms of female infanticide only:

Deaths of male and female children under five years of age in suspected villages from 1885-86

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jandiala</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samra</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandala</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desanj Kalan</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phurkra</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jansher</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilga</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulea</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purk Kalan</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was evident that, despite all its efforts in the seventies and eighties of the 19th century to suppress female infanticide in these villages of the Jullundur District, the administration failed to achieve the desired results. The Government itself felt convinced of its failure when Meredith, Deputy Commissioner Jullundur, submitted his returns regarding the death of the male and female infants in Jullundur District for the years 1885 to 86. All that was once again confirmed when the Superintendent of Police of the district submitted his statistics of births and deaths of male and female children for the years 1890 to 1895. Any doubt that might have lingered was removed when J.M. Douie,


the new Deputy Commissioner of the Jullundur posed the
following questions and then himself proceeded to supply the
answers to the Panjab Government:—

1. Whether the prevalence of female infanticide in
Jullundur was proved especially as regards the
proclaimed villages?
2. If it was proved, what were the causes which led to it?
3. What measures had been taken to check it?
4. How far had these measures succeeded?
5. What new measures could be adopted to remove it?

As regards the first point, his findings were that
female infanticide still prevailed though respectable persons
of the district though he insisted, it was less rife than
what it had been during the Sikh rule or even twenty years
earlier. But why so? Douie’s conclusions were that it was
due to the same cause as had given rise to it, viz. heavy
expenditure on the marriage of a daughter. Douie’s conclusions
were that the female infanticide had by no means been confined
to the suspected villages alone:—

"One zamindar of some position told me he had married
his daughter to a Sikh jagirdar not belonging to one
of the suspected villages. According to custom the
young wife returned for her first confinement to her
parents’ house, and had the misfortune to become the
mother of a daughter. The grand-mother received no
less than three messages from the father’s house urging
her to kill the child. The mother and her infant eight
or nine months old went back to the husband’s house

94. Home Deptt. (Sanitary), NAI, Prodg. No. 18-45, dated
September, 1895. A note on female infanticide by J.H. Douie,
Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur, dated 20th August, 1895.
Para-7.

95. Ibid., Para-8.
and the child soon after died. My informant said he could not say whether death was due to natural
causes. A second daughter was born also in the
house of the wife's parents, and my informant told
me he was afraid to let his daughter return to her
husband lest the child should die and the mother
be accused of murder."

What had changed was not the incidence of female
infanticide but the modes of killing the female infants.
Under the British rule, they were much less frequently killed
by strangulation or poisoning as was done in former days.
Now their parents brought about their deaths by neglect or
by some other subtle means undertaken deliberately. One very
clever way was to give no milk for two or three days to the
infant and then to overfeed her. That would lead to a fatal
attack of diarrhoea. The female infants were sometimes
exposed to the cold, which resulted in fatal chest diseases.
In most cases the deaths of female infants were brought about
by sheer neglect. That was a popular method because it
helped the parents to satisfy their conscience. The parents
would satisfy themselves by entertaining the belief that a
girl was stronger than a boy and did not need the same amount
of care.

The new forms of killing female children had made it
impossible for the authorities to get anyone convicted of the
crime of female infanticide with the result that it was still
rife inspite of all the British attempts to wipe it out in the

96. Loc. cit.
Inquiries made in the nineteenth century on the subject further proved that the evil was practised not only in the proclaimed villages but was equally rife in other villages such as Shankar, Sharin and Khan Khana. In these villages it was not only due to the wasteful marriage customs and the extravagant expenditure on the wedding but also because of the pride in being darbaris. As darbari Jats they looked upon themselves as superior to other Jats and were averse to marrying daughters into any but darbari families.

The origin of darbaris was connected with the marriage of Emperor Akbar with the daughter of Mahar Mitha of Dhulah Kangar in Patiala. The popular tradition of how that happened is as follows:

"A daughter of Mahar Mitha, a Dharival Zaminder of the village Kangar..... was married to Emperor Akbar. It is related that the Emperor first saw her at a well in her native village. She had two pitchers of water on her head. At the same time she caught a young buffalo which had escaped from its owner, putting her feet on the rope attached to its head and thus held the head-strong animal without losing her balance off until he (owner) came up to claim it. The Emperor was so much delighted with this feat of strength and courage that he made her his wife in the hope that she would be the mother of children no less courageous than herself. Father's consent was won by the creation of a 'Darbari Panchayat' of which Dhaula Kangar was the head."

It is difficult to say whether that is the correct

explanation of how darbarias came into existence but there is no doubt Akbar and his successors gave them a status higher than that of other juts. According to Col. Montgomery, darbarias were descendents of 36 juts and 36 Rajputs who had agreed to the above, and many other similar marriages by sending representatives to Delhi. In the Jullundur District, the Mussalsan Rajputs of Rahon, Phillor, Talwan and Kot Badalkhan considered themselves as darbarias. The darbari juts were of various gots.

There were said to be 36 makanas or headquarters of darbari juts. Enquiries made about the existence of female infanticide among the darbari juts revealed that such a practice was widely prevalent among them, as an inevitable consequence of the belief of the darbari juts that their daughters alone maintained their social status. In this context it was discovered that darbari juts of the nine proclaimed villages were particularly keen on entering into matrimonial alliances with the Grewals of Ludhiana, Rajpur and Gujarwal. This was because:

"The Grewals are admitted by the other gots to be at the top of the social scale, and are called sahu log i.e., superior. Their girls are sought in marriage by the best families of sardars, and even by Rajas. The Grewal families of Rajpur, Gujarwal and Karangwal had a sort of local authority at the close of the last century, and are called by pre-eminence 'sahu log.'"
It was discovered that the primary cause of female infanticide among the Jat community was the sense of tribal honour and hypersensibility regarding their rank, status and position. To some of them the betrothal of a daughter to a boy of a tribe or a family of a lower status was as great a social disgrace as the failure to marry her at all. Almost all of them also believed that it was absolutely necessary for them to spend large sums of money on the marriages of their daughters to maintain their position in society.

Nothing could be more galling to the pride of the Jat in the proclaimed villages than that village menials could, and in some cases actually did, spend more on weddings than they were themselves permitted to do. The siledar of village Kulaita complained that a blacksmith was spending £500 on his daughter's marriage and had hired a band to add to the pomp of the nuptial procession when he (the siledar) was not allowed to do so. Like him many other Jats must have felt humiliated on similar occasions and experiences. So an easy way to escape from both the expenses and the dishonour was to kill the daughters in their infancy.


In order to persuade them to stop this mad practice
the Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur was in favour of calling a
meeting of all the makans of darbari. His idea was to prevail
upon them to adopt a common set of rules to regulate the
marriages of their daughters. He proposed:—

a) that a meeting of representative men from the
Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana and Ferosepur villages with
which the proclaimed estates of the Jullundur
Districts practising female infanticide intermarried
be held at Jullundur to lay down, in consultation
with representatives of the proclaimed and suspected
villages in Jullundur, a common scale of marriage
expenditure. He thought that it was likely that
the scale embodied in the rules was not in all
respects suitable but the fact that marriage
expenditure rules had been adopted by the juts of
the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur Districts would make
it easier for the darbari villages to come to a
common agreement.

b) Untill the proposed meeting was held, he wanted the
Deputy Commissioners of Ludhiana, Ferosepur and
Hoshiarpur to be instructed to enquire regarding
the existence of female infanticide in the estates
or their districts referred to under (a) while he
himself would hold a similar enquiry regarding the
villages in the Jullundur District with which the
proclaimed estates intermarried. He wanted an
analysis of Census Register to be made for all
these villages. He further wanted a rule
restricting marriage expenditure to be enforced
under the Act in every village in which it was
proved that the murder of female infants was common.

c) When a village was put under the Act he wanted the
rules restricting marriage expenditure to apply to
all the residents. If the wording of section 1 of
the Act stood in the way, the sooner the Act was
amended, the better.

103. *makans* meant the headquarters of darbari.

104. 232 (a) Home Deptt.,(Sanitary), NAI, Prod. No. 18-45,
dated September 1895. A Note on female infanticide by
J.M. Douie, Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur, dated 20th
d) After a due warning to the villagers, the court be asked to punish the offenders for the breaches of the rules restricting marriage expenditure, by imprisonment and not by fine. That, of course, would not prevent the levy of fines under the informal panchayat system where more criminal proceedings were considered undesirable and such fines even though exemplary in amount to be paid if the offender understand that the alternative was his being called upon to answer a criminal charge. The necessity of appearing before the district panchayat was very unpalatable apart from any penalty which the panchayat might inflict.

Further, J.M. Douie was in favour of replacing the police by the medical agency for suppressing female infanticide. This type of scheme had been instituted by Leslie Saunders in the year 1871 in the village of Pharala, where he had stationed a compounder, at a monthly pay of Rs.10/-, to look after the new born infants. This step was good but it was not properly supervised. Douie was for giving the same scheme a trial in more than one village and hoped to succeed by appointing a good medical officer on a better salary than one given to the medical man kept at Pharala. This proposal was to be immediately applied to Jandiala, Samra, and Bundala as these three estates were most notorious for female infanticide. It was expected that large estates consisting of the three villages of Jandiala, Samra and Bundala could easily defray the expenses of the Hospital Assistant.

Douie's proposal was executed immediately with the Hospital Assistant stationed at Jandiala but on the clear understanding that his expenses were to be defrayed by all the

three villages of Jandiala, Samra and Bundala. This Hospital Assistant was to maintain a small dispensary for providing medical relief to the residents of the three villages. The cost of providing a building and medicines was to be charged from the district fund. A provision was made for one dai (midwife) in each of the three villages. Her main duty was to report cases of female infanticide to the Hospital Assistant either directly or through the village sheikdar.

It was specifically laid down that now the sheikdar was to report the cases of female infanticide to the Hospital Assistant and not to Station House Officer of the Police thana. Hereafter the Hospital Assistant, and not the mubarrar at thana was to maintain the Register dealing with the deaths of female children on prescribed form. In future, the thanedar or the mubarrar was not to make the preliminary enquiries in the village when a female child died. That work was now to be done by the Hospital Assistant. It was the Hospital Assistant who was now to report to the thanedar of the occurrence of any suspicious deaths of female child before the latter was to start his police investigations of the case under section 174 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

The Hospital Assistant was required not only to treat all the female children at their residence who were reported ill to him but also to perform post-mortem of the dead female children. Monthly statements of births and deaths of female infants were to be submitted by him to the Deputy Commissioner.

106. I.e. cit.
through the Civil Surgeon, who was to supervise his work in the village Hospital for the suppression of female infanticide.

His work in checking female infanticide was to be supplemented by safedposha and saildary, both of whom were to use their influence to ensure that the orders of the Government on female infanticide were well complied with. They were told that if they failed to get that done, they would be deprived of their emoluments. Soon after a brief experience of the working of the Hospital Assistant, a slight change was thought necessary in the appointment of Medical Officer. A new practice of appointing temporary Medical Officer in place with larger incidence of female infanticide was introduced. It was hoped that a reliable Medical Officer, temporarily appointed, would show greater zeal in looking after the children. The fact that his expenses were to be met from the village resources was also likely to act as a deterrent to the villagers and goad them to give up female infanticide.

A little while later, it was realized that the undesirable practice of extravagant expenses on marriages, which were the root cause of female infanticide, could be curbed only to a very small extent by limiting the expenses under the Infanticide Act. That was because the Act was limited in its

107. Ibid., Para-22.
application to only certain villages in the district. To overcome this handicap, the Lt. Governor extended the jurisdiction of the Act to include the whole of the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur Districts. This step of the Government was a calculated risk. It had linked the marriage expenses with an unpopular Penal Law and could provoke a movement against the Government. That extension of the jurisdiction of the Act also smacked of the Government's determination to attack the problem courageously, but that surmise, if any, did not prove correct. The whole show failed and female infanticide continued as before.

The failure to check female infanticide may be attributed to another cause too. In the beginning the idea of having Medical Assistant was tried on an experimental basis and was confined to a narrow area which included Jandiala, Samra, Bundala and Kurka Kalan and before it could be tried elsewhere as was originally intended, the scheme was given up a failure, at least in its original form.

Feeling that, perhaps, a better medical establishment would ensure success, the Panjab Government asked the Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur to think of ways and means to establish a Medical Agency rather than a Medical Officer in a group of villages. The Agency was to consist of a Hospital Assistant of some standing, one compounder or dresser and one trained dal

(midwife). The services of the sweeper and hirshti could also be obtained if that was required by the needs of the women and children to be attended to. The salary of the establishment was to be recovered from the jute of the area to be covered by the particular establishment. Part of the expenses in the form of medicines, the pay of sweeper and hirshti, and the rent of a suitable house was to be met by the District Board.

The Hospital Assistants were to be thoroughly reliable men of experience. The duty expected of the Hospital Assistant was of an extremely unpleasant nature for which reason a somewhat liberal, extra monthly allowance of Rs. 10/- was sanctioned to them. The dai under the Medical Officer was likewise liberally paid and the hospitals had adequate provisions of equipment and furniture. The three centres which were chosen in the Jullundur District to see how far a Medical Agency was an improvement on a Medical Officer were:

First Centre: Jandiala, Samra and Bundala (the headquarters of the Hospital Assistant was to be at Jandiala).
Second Centre: Kurka Kalan.
Third Centre: Bilga.

It was expected that since the three centres were very close to one another and located in a small area, they would be attended with great success. In fact, they were opened in

110. Loc. cit.

those particular places where female infanticide had the
widest prevalence. Charges for setting up Medical Agency
were placed upon the Jut landowners of the villages. As the
following figures indicate, the establishment costs were
fairly high:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Cost (Rs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Centre</td>
<td>1,764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Centre</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Centre</td>
<td>1,524</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total population and number of Juts in the villages
to be looked after by the three Medical Agencies were as
follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>No. of Jut Landowners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jandiala</td>
<td>1,764</td>
<td>6,931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundala</td>
<td>3,249</td>
<td>5,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samra</td>
<td>1,524</td>
<td>2,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurka Kalan</td>
<td>6,310</td>
<td>1,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jandiala</td>
<td>3,280</td>
<td>3,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundala</td>
<td>2,410</td>
<td>2,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samra</td>
<td>2,267</td>
<td>2,267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The funds at Jandiala and Bilga were controlled by the

112. Home Deptt. (Police), HAI, Prod. No. 40, dated June,
1900 Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur, to The Commissioner
& Superintendent, Jullundur Division, No. 169, dated 26th
August, 1896. Paras 2 and 3.

113. Home Deptt. (Police), HAI, Prod. No. 40, dated June,
1900 Lt. Col. C.P. Massy, Commissioner and Superintendent
Jullundur Division, to The Junior Secretary to Government

114. Loc. cit.
Deputy Commissioner and the work of all Hospital Assistants in connection with suppression of female infanticide was supervised by the Civil Surgeon. Monthly statements of births and deaths were submitted to the Civil Surgeon by the Hospital Assistants.

The experiment with the Hospital Agency was not yet over when it was realized that it was devoid of any legal basis. It was pointed out by C.F. Massey that it could not really be sanctioned by Rule C under Act VII of 1870 under which it was set. This lacuna was, however, soon removed. A notification to legalise the system already introduced was issued and the copies in vernacular of the rules framed under Section 2 of the Act were affixed at least at five conspicuous places in each of the villages to which the Act was applied and fifty copies were given to the Juts of these villages for distribution among the persons concerned.

The Government was hardly over with all these formalities when a new problem cropped up. The Jullundur


Administration framed new rules to replace the old ones for the eradication of female infanticide. The problem was how to publish these fresh rules under section 2 of the Act VIII of 1870 so as to prevent female infanticide, which they had failed to eradicate under the old rules. The new rules were to be applied in nine villages of Jullundur District while the Lt. Governor was for enforcing them to five selected villages of Jullundur District on experimental basis. The Lt. Governor requested for the sanction of the Government of India to the issue of Notification under section I of Act VIII of 1870 cancelling Panjab Government Notification No. 3151 dated 8th December, 1884 and declaring the Act to be in force in the five villages of Jullundur District, namely, Jandiala, Samra, Bundala, Burka Kalan and Bilga. The old rules which had received the confirmation of the Government of India vide its Notification No. 232 dated the 10th July, 1885, provided for the suppression of female infanticide by Police Agency. The important changes made under the new rules were that the Inspecting Officer before whom the head of a suspected family was to produce the children, was to be henceforth a Medical Officer not below the rank of a Hospital Assistant appointed by the District Magistrate. Similarly the officer to whom the reports regarding births of children were to be made was to be the Medical Officer, and not the Officer Incharge of Police Station. In short Police Agency was to be superseded by Medical Agency. The Lt. Governor accepted the new rules as

originally framed by Col. C.F. Massey, but for the sake of convenient reference to the old rules that they had supplanted the two sets of rules were printed side by side in two columns. The Lt. Governor wrote to the Government of India that before these rules were enforced it was necessary under section 3 of the Act VIII of 1870 that they first received the confirmation of the Governor General in Council and requested for such a sanction. The Government of India did not feel convinced that the substitution of the old rules by the new ones would really eradicate the female infanticide and so requested the Lt. Governor to submit his views upon the entire question and if possible to propound a more adequate scheme. The desirability was also pointed out of ascertaining the extent to which the female infanticide had diminished under the British rule, in those parts of the Panjab where it was practised. It was suggested that careful comparisons be made, for decennial or other convenient intervals of time, of the proportionate number of boys and girls under five years of age in the suspected families of various castes with the numbers in unsuspected families or classes of the same caste or tribe in the same tehsils or other territorial sub-divisions.

119. Ibid., Para-4.

of a district.

The Lieutenant Governor while agreeing to abide by the direction of the Government of India, still sought the permission to experiment with his own plan in regard to one instance which to him seemed most palpable of all, namely, to deal with the five villages of Jullundur in order to gain experience as to the working of his plan. The Government of India reluctantly gave him the green signal and thus the experiment of eradicating female infanticide continued on the five villages of Jandiala, Samrala, Bilga, Kurka Kalan, and Bundala of the Jullundur District.


123. Home Deptt. (Police), Prodg. No. 111 dated January, 1901, Judicial and General Secretary to Government of India, to The Judicial & General Secretary to Government of Panjab No. 6585 dated 9th October, 1900.