In November 1822, Grand Duff, the first British Resident at Satara relinquished his post.  

John Briggs was appointed to that office by the Government and took charge of that post in January 1823.  

The State of Satara was a diplomatic and political myth created by the British government during the Third Anglo-Maratha War. The State of Satara was created as an effective counterpoise to the remaining influence of the former Brahmin Government.  

Elphinstone had looked upon the creation of the state of Satara as an expedient measure. "...(B)y adding a portion of the revenue so sacrificed to that designed for the support of the Rajah, I expected to keep many in our employment, and more in hopes, that would otherwise have remained disaffected and ready to join in every scheme for disturbing the Government or lying waste the country."  

Though it was necessary for political reasons to inform the people that they were now the Raja's subjects, Elphinstone, at the same time, was at pains to inform James Grant that "it will be proper to impress on them as well as on the Raja that it is not intended to revive even in name the Empire of Seevajee."  

The State was to be semi-dependent for the initial period. With respect to the mode of his government, it must long be under the immediate control of a British agent."  

The power was
to be transferred to the Raja on the condition of his behaving properly and showing efficiency in the management of the administration. Capt. Grand Duff, the Political Agent was to control the administration till the time when the Raja would be found capable of administering his kingdom on his own. Capt. Grant was a man of exceptional ability and deep sympathy. He not only managed the administration at Satara, but also effectively trained the young Raja in the art of administration. The Raja was told that the final settlement of his government was to a great measure be regulated by the disposition he evinces during this period of probation. By the beginning of 1820, Grant was convinced that the Raja was shaping well, and that a time for transfer of power to Raja was close at hand. By mid 1820, Grant had virtually transferred the judicial business to the Raja. It was finally decided to transfer the power to Raja on 5th April 1822. William Chaplin, the Commissioner, was present at the ceremony of transfer. A new semi-independent princely state had come into existence. Grant had great hopes for the future of the Raja and the State of Satara. I have very good hopes of the Raja, I think him a very good little fellow. After the transfer of power in April, Grant left Satara in Nov. 1822.

It was to this office, now devoid of administrative botheration and direct control, that Capt. John Briggs succeeded in January 1823. Captain Grand Duff,
before quitting Satara in 1823, had made over the entire management of public affairs to the Rajah, so that I had little else to do but to make myself acquainted with all that took place, to be always ready to give information and advice to His Highness, but to abstain from interference except when I thought the interest or objects of my own Government required action, while I, of course, reported regularly everything of importance that occurred. Briggs knew exactly what was expected of him. He was expected to be masterly inactive, more of a check and control on the administration rather than its guiding genius. Captain Grant also had the same opinion. 'There is at Satara a good deal to watch, little to be done and less to be said.' Briggs adopted a cautious tone towards the Raja and his entourage. Chaplin complained to Elphinstone that Briggs was 'getting rather diplomatic addressing notes "to the Durbar" and receiving written answers - ' instead of ' the confidential sort of intercourse ' which Grant had with the Raja. It must, however, be realized that the easy friendship which the Raja had been able to establish with Grant, was due to a combination of opportune circumstances, not likely to repeat again. The Raja, in 1818, had been a virtual prisoner in the hands of his overmighty subject, the Peshwa, when he was freed from that bondage by the British. There is no doubt that he looked upon the British as his liberators. There is no doubt also about the fact that to him the British were
represented by the persons of people like Grant, Elphinstone or Chaplin. His relations with the British were more personality biased than system oriented. The king had felt that Grant's presence in Satara as a Political Agent was a boom. His relations with Grant were easy and friendly. He looked upon Grant as his teacher and mentor. Grant, on his part, had played the role faithfully. By the end of 1821, Grant had started preparing Pratapsingh for a new Resident. He cautioned him that the Raja should be careful of his dealings with the new officer who would eventually come to replace Grant. He also urged the Raja to observe the treaty faithfully so that the new officer would never catch him on the wrong foot. Under such urgings it was not unnatural that Pratapsingh should view the new Resident with considerable amount of misgivings. Briggs on his part, had left Khandesh with a bitter taste in his mouth, and understandably, did not want his fingers to be burnt again. By nature he was an officious person, sometimes a little vain, and always aware of the importance of the office he was holding. Under the circumstances, an easy, friendly relationship was impossible. Yet Briggs was favourably impressed by the Raja. The little man is, however, take him all in all a very good fellow. In 1827 he spoke highly of the steadiness with which the Raja pursued the system laid down by Grant Duff. Yet, with the passage of time, the Raja had become impatient of restraints. In a
private letter quoted by Ballhatchet, Briggs tells Elphinstone that the Raja frequently regrets rather too publicly that there is a Resident here at all, whenever his wishes are checked. 21

Like Grant before him Briggs also had an unfortunate occasion of checking the wishes of the Raja in financial matters. The Raja had applied to the government for a loan of two lacks of rupees to pay his establishment dues. Briggs sympathized with the Raja. The application was forwarded to Chaplin. Chaplin was fully aware of the Raja's necessity. But he observed a mystical silence. "... (N)either privately nor (in) his public letters does he hint at the risk of his (Raja's) being refused, particularly as the Raja proposed to repay the sum advanced by instalments here for the monthly pay of the troops in two months..." 22 Such an equivocation on the part of Chaplin was bound to effect Raja's relations with Briggs. Besides such instances, the loud whispers about Briggs's departure from Khandesh had already reached Satara. The apprehensive king refers to Briggs whenever his wishes were not met, as a person who, after having ruined Khandesh, has come to ruin Satara. 23 Despite this, Briggs maintained a good opinion of the Raja. Writing years later, Briggs wrote: "... During the time that I remained at Satara, the Rajah, who had been entrusted with full powers strictly abided by Mr. Elphinstone's rules, and would permit no deviations from them .... He was naturally shrewd, free from most of the
ordinary prejudices of his countrymen... He entertained
strict notions of justice and mortality and was incapable
of telling a direct falsehood.....

On the whole, Briggs's tenure at Satara was an unevent-
ful one. Though the climate was good, he had been working
rather too hard for past eight to ten years, and that too
without a break. His old complaint of headache continued
to nag him persistantly. '

... (H)ow long, I have been a
martyr to severe headaches .... ' The pain was becoming
' more frequent ' and ' more obstinate every month.' At
Satara the malady became unbearable. Briggs started seri-
ously considering the advice of his doctor and began to think
of going to sea for his health. ' I should not have defended
this step so long, but for the untoward conditions of my
finances....'  

Briggs had lately incurred expenses of
various kinds. He had sent his family to England and had
to pay heavily for the education of his children in England.
His whole property consisted of £s. 60,000/- invested at 5 %
and the rent of a house in Cheltenham, the mortgage of
which will expire for two years, when I may expect £250 a
year from it while occupied ....'  

Briggs, now a Major
in the army, decided to relinquish his post and take a
break in England. Accordingly, he left Satara in December
1826 to go back to England. Raja Pratapsing gave him a
diamond ring worth £s. 500/- and a sword with his name inlaid
on the back. 'The sword has a steel handle and is quite plain.'
From political point of view, Briggs's tenure at Satara was quite uneventful. Except routine matters, there was nothing that demanded his attention. It was, in a way, an office of leisure, and though there was no difference in the pay of a Collector and the Resident at Satara, Briggs accepted the post as it offered 'a healthier climate and somewhat more of Society to his wife and children, and more leisure to himself ... for study and literary pursuits...'.

From the point of academic and literary work, Briggs's stay at Satara was perhaps the most eventful. At Satara he completed his famous translation of Ferishta's History of the Rise of Mohammedan Power in India. He also prepared a Persian edition of Ferishta after collating various manuscripts. While at Satara, he also translated the Siyar-ul-Mutakahirin or the Review of the Moderns, by Gulam Hussain. He had embarked upon an ambitious project of writing a history of the Land Tax in India, for which he started collecting material while at Satara.

'Great progress was made in this work before Major Briggs left Satara in December 1826.' More urgently, however, he completed the work for which he was commissioned by Elphinstone and published the Letters Addressed to Young Person in India, calculated to Afford Instruction For His Conduct In General And More Especially In His Intercourse with the Natives.
In the absence of any proper knowledge of India and and of the Indian people, there was an increasing tendency among the young arrivals from England into India, to treat the Indians with either contempt or indifference. The older generation of people like Munro, Elphinstone, Malcolm, Briggs, brought up in the romanticist humanistic tradition of the late 18th century and epitomized by Edmund Burke felt that this tendency must not only be checked, but diverted to more humane and sympathetic channels. Elphinstone, probably realizing that of all his subordinates Briggs was the only who was capable of wielding a pen and also of taking a non-personal humanistic view, asked him to write something to this effect. This was a flattering commission. "... In the whole career of my 22 years service, I have hardly ever experienced more pleasure than at the very flattering distinction you have made in my favour to write out the Journal for the young men coming to India..." He was quite at a loss to speculate what shape it would take, and whether it would be possible to include within its scope all which is necessary and only that which is absolutely so, without making it dull and tedious. " He himself thought of giving it a form of letters addressed by an elder brother to a younger one, recently arrived in India. Briggs accepted the assignment as a challenge. " At all events, I feel it a point
of honour to attempt the thing and must rely on my Nuseeb
for the success. "God is Great." 9

Briggs planned the book carefully. The letters supposedly
covered a period of time. The first few letters covered
the more obvious difficulties faced by a young cadet arriving
in India. As the period of the cadets' stay in India
increases, the letters 'assume a graver tone'. (T)opics
of a more important nature are treated of, in which legisla-
tion and policy are discussed, and opinions founded on prac-
tical experience are freely compared with theory'. 34 In
the writing of the book, he repeatedly consulted Elphinstone,
to whom the whole book was sent for remarks, chapter by
chapter. Mr. Dunlop of the Bombay Services was also consulted,
and Briggs was 'glad to find one so well informed and
observant in these matters differ so little from himself. 35
The book, in its final form, was published in 1828 at London
by John Murray of Albemarle Street.

The entire book was 'calculated for the improvement
of the minds of the youths entering the Indian service, dis-
posing them to be kind towards the natives, and enabling
them to estimate the character of the Indian population and
to comprehend the nature of our rule in that interesting
country'. 36 Briggs was fully conscious of the great gulf
that lay between the rulers and the ruled in British India.
This gulf, he believed, was not only unnecessary but wholly
dangerous. It had to be bridged. The veil that exists between us and the native, can only be removed by mutual and kind intercourse. The liberal humanistic spirit of Briggs's convictions breaths fire when he refers to the treatment of the Indians by the English. I can less easily excuse you ... for abusing the natives as a whole, whom designate by the absurd appellation of 'black fellows'. Is it because nature has dyed the skin of the people of tropical regions with a darker hue than those situated more remotely from the equator that it should be matter of reproach to them? Though Briggs was anti-racist, he was pragmatic enough to realize that there were certain differences between the Indians and the English, which were rather fundamental, but certainly not unsurmountable. You must bring your mind to view the inhabitants of this country merely as strangers, differing indeed from us in almost all their habits, in their manners, in their language and in their religion, but not deficient in many excellent qualities nor in talent. He cautions his audience that the Indian community is by no means in that low state of barbarism in which you have been induced to think it. He gives minute details of the manners and social behavioral pattern of the Indians, and urges the English young men to understand and follow them. He even urges them to remove their shoes while entering an Indian house or a place of worship. He considers natives to be cleaner, more loyal
and less arrogant than the Europeans. He urges the young Europeans to respect the Indian women who though uneducated and more secluded than the European ladies, were persons of different mettle altogether. The strength of mind and high nations of family pride which prevail among the Indian females may well excite our wonder and admiration. Briggs undoubtedly condemns practices like sati and infanticide, but urges that force should not be used to stop these practices. In a typically non-utilitarian manner, he says: Our empire has been denominated one of opinion, an opinion not ill founded of our national faith and integrity, and of our disposition to govern people by their own laws. The romantic and liberal bend of his mind, was definitely buttressed by Elphinstone's no innovation policy.

Like Sir Thomas Munro, Briggs also believed in the incorporation of natives on the administration. He points out the exploitative nature of the British rule in India. One and all lament the degradation of the better classes and depurate that levelling system which would reduce the whole population to the condition of mere serfs of the soil; a system supposed by some to be calculated to secure our dominion if successfully and generally adopted, but one alike derogatory and impolitic. Derogatory as abandoning every principle of justice and liberality; impolitic as tending to
create universal dislike to (sic) our rule, and gradually to diminish the resources of India, by rendering the people a nation of paupers equally incapable of raising articles for exportation as of purchasing the imports of Europe. The only way by which this could be avoided, was association of Indians with the process of administration and political decision making. He hoped that ... the enlightened rulers of that vast empire will every day more and more see the justice, the policy and I may add the absolute necessity of permitting the native community to participate more largely in the administration of the government.

Right since his arrival in India, Briggs had been a keen student of the Persian language. He had started the study of the language while a cadet at Madras and continued it even when he reached Hyderabad. He was fully convinced that a detailed study of the history of India, particularly of the Mohammedan period which preceded the British authority in India except the Maratha territories was absolutely necessary for a better understanding of the Indians and their administrative and social systems. He believed that even for the understanding of the Maratha system, a thorough knowledge of the Mohammedan history was necessary, since the administrative system, particularly the revenue administration, of the Marathas was principally based upon the Muslim system. This conviction, born quite early in his
career, led Briggs in search of reliable and complete account of the Muslim rule in India. While still at Hyderabad, he acquired a copy of an account of the Muslim rule in India by one Mohammad Hussain Astrabadi, popularly known as Ferishta. It was his wish to translate the whole work into English. However, it was not till he reached Satara, that Briggs was destined to have the necessary leisure to undertake and complete the translation.49

Ferishta:

Through, the translation of Ferishta was not an original work, the labour put into its translation and preparing a reliable text from amongst the various texts available, was a formidable task. The work of collating various texts of Ferishta had been undertaken by Briggs while still at Hyderabad, and when he came to Poona as Elphinstone's assistant, he brought all the documents to Poona. In 1817, Briggs was appointed as an assistant to Sir John Malcolm. Before proceeding to the field in 1817, I had fortunately sent part of my translation to my friend Mr. William Erskine at Bombay, and another portion to Mr. (afterwards Sir) Richard Jenkins, then Resident at Nagpore.50 The remaining papers which he had left with his wife in Poona, were burnt and destroyed during the raid on Sangam by the Peshwa forces on 5th November 1817.51 Briggs later on received two
valuable manuscripts, purchased by an Indian friend from the plunder. 52

Prior to Briggs's translation of Ferishta, parts of Ferishta's works had been translated into English by Dow and also by Col. Jonathan Scott. However, Briggs found that these translations were extremely inaccurate, both of them having translated from a Hindustani version. On a careful scrutiny he realized that they were merely narratives founded on Ferishta. The proper names of men and places were fearfully distorted, and often rendered unintelligible. 53 He took advantage of the comparative leisure he enjoyed at Satara, to return to his task of editing Ferishta and finishing the translation. 54 He had collected several copies of the Ferishta text written in various parts of India. By a careful sifting and comparison of these various copies he was able to collate a more complete and correct edition of this valuable work than had ever before existed .... 55

Publication of the corrected edition was not much of a problem. The book was submitted to the Bombay authorities who caused a large edition, in two volumes folio, to be lithographed from the beautiful Persian text prepared under my supervision, and granted me the sum of 5000 rupees for my expenses.... 56
Publishing the translation, however, was a different matter. In 1828, we find him lamenting the fact that "... from the small interest excited by oriental literature among all persons but those resident in India, I fear the translator will be unable to publish the result of his undertaking." 57 The book was published at London in 1829. My share of the profits after presenting many copies to my friends and to public institutions amounted to forty pounds. 58

In the translator's preface to the first volume of Ferishta, Briggs says "... I resolved to examine the translation made by Dr. Jonathan Scott of the History of the Kings of Koolburga (Sic), Beejapooh, and Ahmudnugur. This ... soon convinced me how much that accomplished Orientalist had surpassed all former translators; and I found little to alter, with the exception of a few proper names." 59 In the same polite vein Briggs claims that his attempt at translation of Ferishta would have been unnecessary, if Dr. Scott's translation had not been "occasionally defective." 59 In his autobiographical notes, which he wrote fairly late in his life and when his reputation as an oriental scholar was established beyond doubt, he is more forthright, claiming that Dr. Scott's translation was not based on an authentic version of Ferishta, but on an Indian version thereof. 60 As for the other translator of Ferishta, Col. Alexander Dow, after the polite praise typical
of the writers of the early nineteenth century, Briggs accuses him of 'instead of confining himself ... to mere translation, he has filled his work with his own observations ....' In fact, therefore, Briggs seem to have had no doubt in his mind that a new and authentic translation of Ferishta was absolutely necessary. Briggs's confidence in himself was well rewarded. Dr. Elliot has called his translation as being by far the most accurate and historically acceptable.

Briggs set about his work with great 'ardour'. He collected as many copies of Ferishta as he could get, corroborate the narrative with other data that he could muster. All this was done with a view to writing an original history of India. 'My researches had enabled me to fill eleven folio volumes of manuscript, partly (sic) translations and partly notes, for my general history ....' Collation of various versions had become necessary since, 'it could not be expected that in the absence of the art of printing such a work should be correctly transmitted for any length of time.' Contemporary to the great Prussian historian Rauke, yet without any contact with him, Briggs arrives independently to the same methodological fineness as Ranke. He would not accept any document merely because it happened to be old. He was fully aware of the scribe's propensity to commit hawlers. 'The mere copyist is a person whose principal duty is to write a fair hand; to acquire which forms the whole business of his life. The method precision
that are necessary in this occupation are for the most part obtained by sedentary habits. The transcriber despairs of becoming a scholar and his avocation prevents his being a traveller ....... 65 The collation, Briggs believed, could not be achieved only by collecting various versions of the same text. It was necessary to have corroborative evidence. Briggs sent his faithful and learned native assistant, Meer Kheirat Ally Khan, commonly called Mooshtak, throughout the Deccan and made copies of every Persian inscription on stone to be found in all the towns of note in that country. 66 These findings were useful in determining the chronology of the narrative. 67

Briggs wanted to give Ferishta to the public in the very words he would probably have used, had he as a native of the East, written in English. 68 Yet he was not a mere translator. He looked upon Ferishta work, not as a literary piece, but as a historical work. He made no alterations in the text, yet gave copious explanatory notes, to determine the historicity or otherwise of the original. He prepared genealogical tables and affixed them to the relevant chapters. 69 In spite of the humility with which the Preface is written one can easily see that Briggs looked upon himself as something more than a translator, somebody in the same line as Ferishta himself. Ferishta laments that he was unable to procure any history of the kings of Golconda or Hyderabad; but begs
if such a work should ever appear, that it may be included in his. This deficiency I have been able to supply, and it is added as an appendix in the body of the third volume. \(^{70}\)

Translating Ferishta had a purpose. In fact, to Briggs, study of history was never without a purpose. To him, the purpose of history was not only to know the truth about the physical facts, but also about the moral character of a people. In his letters to a Young Person, he alludes to this fact by urging the young officers coming to India to read and understand the history of the Indian people so as to understand them better. \(^{71}\) As for Ferishta, he claims that \(\text{the perusal of this history cannot be otherwise than instructive, if it be merely to show the certain effects of good and bad government among a people whom our ignorance disposes us to consider as devoid of moral energy and who are full prone to submit without resistance to the greatest oppression.}\) \(^{72}\)

\(\text{'LAND-TAX IN INDIA':}\)

Throughout his tenure in civil office, Briggs had been endeavouring to prepare a systematic study of the Indian administration. He had realized from his experience as a revenue officer, that the Indian revenue structure was closely connected with her social ethos. The social and cultural life of the Indians could be understood better not only by a perusal of the political history of India, but also the economic history of Indian people. He proceeded to undertake such a study which resulted in his publishing his \textit{magnum opus}
The Present Land Tax in India. The work was mostly done in India, and published in England by Longman, Rees, et al., in the year 1830. The work is divided into three parts, the first dealing with the Land Tax of the Ancients in Greece and other parts of Europe, and with the Land Tax of India in Hindu and Mohamadan times. The second part deals with the changes introduced by English rule and administration, while the third deals with the effects of these changes on the condition of the people and the country, as a whole. The book is written throughout in a style studiously calm and dispassionate.

The motivation behind the Land Tax is almost the same one as behind the Ferishta. The British rule in India must respect the traditions of the Indians if it was not to be a despotic rule. Briggs believed that the British rule in India had not done the basic needful to avoid a despotic character. Comparing the land tax in England with that in India, Briggs showed that India was far more heavily taxed. In England, the land which, by Indian revenue standards should have yielded about half a million in revenue, yielded, in practice, only seven thousand pounds. He declared that a land tax like that which now exists in India, professing to absorb the whole of the landlord's rent, was never known under any govt in Europe or Asia. Briggs was fully convinced that the British economic policies in India were ruinous to the Indians. He gave a benefit of doubt to the British
rulers by saying that '... we have erred not from intention, but out of ignorance ....' 76 The aim of his work was to remove this ignorance. He pointed out that there was no dearth of information about India. 'But nobody reads. Information regarding India is, of all topics, the most nauseating in English Society ....' 77 And yet he wrote his massive work in the hope that people would read it.

The major target of Briggs's attack was the then prevalent utilitarian notion that '... all the land in the East belongs to the crown.' 78 He believed that 'the time for maintaining such doctrines is now at an end, though there still exists a general notion that the Sovereign in India is, and always was, not only in name but in reality, the proprietor of the soil.' 79 This notion, he proves to be wrong. Quoting extensively from ancient Indian works, notably Mance, on the subject of the sale of land, Briggs pointed out the six formalities which had to be observed at the time of the sale of land. These were, (i) the assent of the townsmen, (ii) the assent of the kindered, (iii) the assent of the neighbours, (iv) the assent of heirs, (v) delivery of gold and (vi) the delivery of water. 'The assent of townsmen and kindered (was) to give the transaction publicity; the assent of neighbours for the sake of preventing future disputes about boundaries; and the assent of heirs and kinsmen, to show the right of the individual to sell ...' Briggs asserted that this
and similar practices proved sufficiently ... the perfect existence of private property in land among the Hindus of India. These rights to private property were preserved over centuries by a unique system of local government. Each village in India contains within itself the seeds of an entire republic or government. It consists of an agricultural corporation owning all the land, at the head of whom is a chief elected by the corporation. It has also at least one individual of all crafts necessary to agriculture and essential to the comforts of rural life. These village communities were the backbone of the Indian Social and politico-economis system. According to Briggs, this system existed everywhere in India, and though the Mohomedan conquest and rule was subversive of the Hindu governments and in a great measure of its institutions the village system continued in some form or other down to the British days. After proving that the land tax under the Hindus was light, Briggs argues that with the enhancement of land tax under the Muslims, the private proprietor could no longer afford slaves and servants and had to take to ploughing himself. Such is the fact that the oppressive exactions of the Mahomedans had the effect of abolishing predial slavery throughout their dominions. He proves that the land tax under the Hindus was light, and fixed. It was not regulated by the superfices cultivated, but by the quantity of the produce ... it varied not with the Metallic Value of the grain, nor was it affected by any other circumstance. The
proportion was ever the same. Briggs claims that in the Vijayanagar empire, the demand of the State did not exceed one sixth of the produce. It does not appear the Hindoos ever departed from the principle that revenue was a fixed portion of produce and not a fixed rent.

Under the Muslim rule, this position changed to a considerable extent. Yet, in one notable respect, the Muslims made no changes whatever, that was the village community itself. The Mahomedans early saw the policy of not disturbing an institution so complete, and they availed themselves of the local influence of these officers (village servants) to reconcile their subjects to their rule. Briggs believed that the Mahtewar settlement was first introduced in India by the Muslims under the pressure of wars of conquest. They assessed whole districts at a certain sum, and required the Des-Adikars, whom they subsequently entitled Zamindars, to levy the amount from the respective villages or towns under their charge. He claims that the incidence of taxation on land was heavier under the Muslims. Under Allauddin Khilji, the land tax was equal to the value of half the produce. But this was a rare case. Under Sher Shah Sur the assessment was fixed at one fourth of the produce. Both Akbar and his ministers, like the economists of France, adopted the maxim that as all the wealth arises originally out of the produce...
of the soil, so the land ought to yield the principal portion of public revenue ..... 90 Akbar undertook a complete survey of the land, classified the land and fixed a different tax on each. Briggs commended Akbar's reduction of all other levies which were 'unprofitable to the State and vexatious to the people .....' 91 However, Akbar soon realized the difficulties in survey and assessment, and he was reduced to the necessity of assessing whole villages and leaving it to the people themselves to distribute the portion payable by the individuals. 92 Aurangzeb tried to deviate from the practice established by Akbar. '...Aurangzeb may be considered at last of the Moguls who ruled in absolute indepedence, and who disregarded almost all laws which limited the power of the sovereign over his subjects; yet we find him still respecting the proprietary right of the landholder .....' 93 Further down Briggs quotes Gulam Hussain Khan, the author of Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin as saying that 'the emperor is proprietor of the revenue but he is not proprietor of the soil...'. 94 Briggs claims that the Muslim revenue assessment was harsher than the Hindu one, the assessment having being raised from one sixth to one fourth or one half at times. 95 Briggs also claims that the zamindars, who were also the government, revenue collectors, were for the first time created by the Muslims. 96 The danger in this system was obvious. 'That the government always limited its demand to its due share, or that the zaminder did not exceed it in raise the revenue from the landholders, seems very unlikely.' 97
The government of India passed at this juncture into the hands of the British. The development of the British revenue policy forms the subject of the second part of Briggs's Land Tax. The English, who gradually became its masters, were ignorant of the language, the history, the institutions, and the manners of the inhabitants. The new governors long remained in ignorance of the resources of the country and the privileges of their subjects ....

Briggs commends the efforts of Warren Hastings, the main object of which was fixing of deeds by which the ryots hold their lands and pay their rents, and limiting certain bounds and defences against the authority of the zamindar ....

Briggs criticized the Bengal government for introducing an annual settlement in cash, instead of a fixed ratio to the produce, and calls it a 'highly expedient' measure injurious to the ryot. He ridicules Mr. Grant, the head Shirestedar of Bengal for holding such ignorant views, as 'with respect to the natives of Hindostan, it would be most dangerous innovation to admit, either in theory or practice, the doctrine of private individual landed property by inheritance, free or feudal tenures extending beyond the period of a single life ....' Briggs maintains that it is dangerous to accept opinions of people like Grant, however, intelligent and highly placed they might be, 'without well examining their tendency.'
Briggs condemns the Permanent settlement with a vehement
born out of disgust. Briggs has no hesitation in calling
Cornwallis as 'perhaps the least informed of all those whose
sentiments were of importance.' He charges the Bengal
Government with nepotism and favouring the interests of revenue
farmers, while condemning the actual cultivator to the position
of a mere servile. He also charges that the Cornwallis settle­
ment increased the burden on the farmer claiming for the
government and its agents as much as 60 %, of the produce. This
heavy exactions reduced the saleable value of the land and
binding the peasant more pitiably to the land. In his
opinion, the detestable system was chiefly due to the unbending
mind of the then Governor-General who 'seems to have made up
his mind that the existing system of administration ( in India)
was practically defective and required to be modified on that
of Europe.' The chaos created by such a prejudged attitude
was dangerous. 'These facts only tend to show that the nec­
essity of Indian legislators being educated in their profession,
and that at all events, they should have some knowledge of the
history, and manners of the people whom they govern.' Only
if Cornwallis had been better informed, he 'would have known
that the integrity of private property was recognized in every
village in India, and that the demand of the crown has ever
had its defined limits. ' Briggs believed that the Permanent
Settlement was a great mistake because it proved oppressive to
the real holder of the land and disturbed the social balance.
Commenting on the zamindary system created by the Permanent Settlement, Briggs observes: 'To escape from the trouble of enquiry and to avoid the determination of rights absolutely lost, we granted to zamindars the exclusive privilege of what? Not of collecting according to any fixed principle, but according to that usage which had brought the country to the brink of ruin. We confirmed to them the right of the usual extraordinary system, and compelled the cultivators by law to submit to it. ... We were not warranted in raising up to a race of revenue contractors to feed on the harvest of the industrious landholder, and to render him a landlord who was only a taxman. 

Briggs analyzes the revenue system adopted and practiced in Madras, and popularly known as the Ryotwar. The ryotwar system was a settlement made annually, not with the whole village, which formerly assessed itself, but with every cultivator through a government officer. It was a system that on the first blush bears a semblance of such even-handed justice, by firing the amount payable by each cultivator, and which produced a great increase of revenue from what appeared to be concealed land... The assessment was calculated at 45% of the gross produce, which, according to Briggs, was very high. Besides this high rate, Briggs objects to the basic presumption in Col. Munro's settlement. Munro believed that all land is supposed to revert to government at the end of every year to be distributed as it may think proper. This according to Briggs, was a wrong
presumption. He also did not like the destruction of the village community. As the assessment was fixed at the high rate of 45% of the produce, there never was any expectation of realising the whole amount imposed. *Remission, therefore, was necessary everywhere, but the amount to be remitted was left to the discretion of the collector and his native servants.*

This led to an unstable and unfriendly relationship between the cultivator and the government. *The struggle was incessant between the opposite parties: the collector to realize as large a revenue as possible, the cultivator to obtain as large a remission as possible.*

The advantages of the ryotwar system, as enumerated by Briggs were: *(i) It professes to grant to every individual a spot of land in perpetuity, (ii) It professes to limit the demand for ever on that land, (iii) It tries to decrease the burden of assessment, (iv) It pretends to guard the cultivator from over taxation by village officers for parish rates, and (v) It defines rights.*

The skepticism of Briggs about the ryotwar system becomes evident through his use of such terms as *professes*, *tries* *pretends* etc.

His objections to the ryotwar system can be summed up as follows: *(i) In many instances it conferred the property of landholders on tenants, (ii) The demand of even 30 or 40 per cent of the gross produce absorbed the whole profit, and brought ruin on the cultivator, (iii) Remissions became necessary, (iv) The annual assessment was open to great abuse, and placed the cultivator and the government officer in a state of opposition to each*
other producing thereby chicane on the one hand and corruption on the other, (v) It subverted the established order of society by reducing all classes to the same level, (vi) It required an enormous civil establishment with talent, zeal and integrity; and (vii) It was a novel invasion of the ancient usages and institutions of the people.

Briggs was not in favour of both the Cornwallis system of Permanent Settlement and the Munro system of Ryotwari Settlement. However, his attack on Cornwallis is in a spirit of righteous indignation. He is therefore, more blunt and at times a little crude. By the time Briggs wrote his land tax, the Permanent Settlement had no champions. It was universally admitted to be a failure, and even the Linlithgow had forbidden its extension. With Sir Thomas Munro and his ryotwari system the case was entirely different. It was, when Briggs wrote his work, the most popular and celebrated revenue system in British India. Apart from Sir Thomas Munro it had powerful and influential advocates. It also seems to have had the backing of the utilitarians, particularly persons like Mackenzie Holt. Briggs's criticism of Sir Thomas Munro, particularly of the minute recorded by him at the end of 1824, was far more subtle and logical. 'If it would be leaving my task unfinished, were I restrained, from my veneration for the individual, to suffer his opinions to stand on record and unrefuted, when perhaps the welfare of many millions of people may be at stake in their
adoption. 116 Maintaining that India was always a wealthy
country whose riches and prosperity were described in glowing
terms even by the European travellers, Col. Briggs asks why
Indian prosperity vanished under the British government, though
the British claim that they are but following the ancient
practices in land revenue assessments. He believes that the
British have departed from the policy and principles of their
predecessors, and introduced a system that was far more exact­
ing and rigorous than the one that existed even under the worst
of the regular native governments. He contests Munro's conten­
tion that the assessment under the native princes was very heavy.
With a historian's studied precision he shows that the land
assessment under the native rulers was never higher than 25% of
the gross produce. To Sir Thomas's rather rhetorical ques­
tion that if the assessment was light under the natives, why
was there an expensive machinery wanted, Briggs counters by
claiming that no such machinery, most certainly not the expensive
kind, ever existed under the natives. To Munro's assertion
that it was because the assessment was not moderate that assess­
ments in kind were introduced or continued, Briggs counters
by saying: 'a revenue levied according to produce ... is no
proof that the tax must necessarily be heavy,' 117 and proceeds
to give example from ancient Greece and Rome, contemporary
China, Venice etc., where the assessment did not exceed 10% of
the gross produce, and the assessment was levied in kind. 118
He very subtly connects Sir Thomas to Auranzeb who had raised
the assessment to 50%. He also takes Sir Thomas to task for un­historical statements, when Sir Thomas, without any authority, claims that Akbar claimed far more than 1/3rd or 1/4th of the produce, though the records assert to the contrary. 119 Throughout the polemical chapter, Briggs shows a clear historical bias and a remarkable understanding of the problem. He had been a revenue officer himself, creating a system where none existed to the liking of the British. Even in those days, he was of the opinion that the British revenue system was not proceeding on right lines. 'There is evidently some radical fault in our system of finance ......' 120 This opinion, as the years went by, became a confirmed conviction with Briggs. 'I conscientiously believe that under no government whatever, either Hindoo or Mohomedan, professing to be actuated by law, was any system so subversive of the prosperity of the people at large as that which has marked our administration.' 121

The entire 'Land Tax' is a heavy indictment of the British revenue policy in India. Briggs's argument can be summed up as follows. The native Indian rulers were content to levy the state demand by a simple process which had super­ficially what may be called a barbarous appearance, but which had adjusted itself with nicety to the social and climatic conditions of the country out of which it had grown. The British, on the other hand, grasped at too much in every sense of the word, and in all directions. 'We aimed at an impossible perfecti
of record and mastery of detail by our officials and realized our conception so imperfectly that we achieved nothing but the general ruin of the people. 122 (Bell, op.cit. p.130).

The introduction of British Rule in India coincided with a period of profound philosophical and ideological changes through which rugland was going. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, the British administration in India was subjected to heavy and serious criticism by the intellectuals and philosophers alike. This criticism seems to have stemmed from two principal factors: (i) the philosophical outlook and (ii) the fiscal considerations. It would, of course, be wrong to consider these two factors as mutually exclusive. In more than one respect, in fact, these two were essentially two sides of the same coin. It is necessary to bear in mind that the eighteenth century, which has been called as the age of Reason, was also a century which saw the rise of middle class in the political and economic life of England. The political ideas of the philosophers of the eighteenth century were based upon an excessive worship of reason. Human ideas were justified and human institutions accepted, only if they were based upon Reason. The major and minor premises for the Aristotelian syllogistic logic of the age of Reason were supplied by the European and Christian ethics as well as by the information about India supplied by the European officers. Any basic philosophical and political policy towards India, consequently,
was based on the late eighteenth century Englishmen's ability to comprehend the needs of a totally alien society as reported to them by Europeans in India whose own powers of comprehension were inevitably defective.... The critics of India, led by the romanticist humanist Edmund Burke were moved more by the monopolies of the East India Company rather than by the poverty and real misgovernment in India. The East India Company became a target of their attack because of her monopolies, not because of her misgovernment of Bengal. In their consideration of India, the English intellectuals were moved more by the philosophical considerations operating in Europe than by the practical problems of governing and administering India. The narrowing pictures of Company's misdeeds in India, as drawn by Burke were meant to be a justification for the major conclusions already arrived at, namely the end of all monopolies. India figured, not as an object of serious speculation in its own right, but as an incidental issue, justifying or denying a particular point of view. India never occupied such a position in the mind of Europe as did China. The Indian debate in England therefore, was primarily a debate for the vindication of a viewpoint towards human government. The 'Romantic' philosophy, worshiping nature and naturalistic traditions, became not only a literary fashion, but also an intellectual cult. It affected the Indian scene as well. Warren Hastings, and to a lesser extent his predecessor, Clive, were perhaps the two good examples of early romanticist politicians. Their love for India was born
out of their respect for tradition. Humanism and naturalism, the two important ingredients of romanticism found their fullest expressions in the works of Hastings and Sir William Jones. They believed that the best way of governing India was to govern the least, or at least the presence of a foreign and alien government should be felt the least. Hastings political reforms, judicial reorganization or his refusal to make any permanent revenue settlement on Western principles were efforts to preserve the traditional framework intact while retaining British political authority. Cornwallis and Wellesley on the other hand, were the persons who believed unashamedly in an open assertion of English moral and political superiority. They behaved, a priori, as Briggs points out in his land tax, that everything Indian was radically wrong and had to be remade on Western model.

This new trend was inevitable, however, strongly many orientalists might have condemned it. The growth of rationalism, the rise of a powerful middle class and the development of an Indian empire, developed among the British people: an exaggerated view of the power of the legislators to shape the future of the world. The utilitarian school of thought was based upon the two powerful factors of the early nineteenth century liberalism: reason and law. The practical manifestations of these factors were to be seen in the growth of a centralized administration imbued with English ideals, and the growing impact of Christian morals. It was under these pretexts that
the battle for free trade was fought against the East India Company in 1813. The utilitarians believed that the cause of Indian poverty was simply that it had a bad government. They discarded the romantic notion of letting the Indians be, and actively interfered with the local and general administrative system. The winning of the active cooperation of the Indian peoples was unnecessary; the task of persuading them by education and rewarding them by gradual admission to office and power was laborious, and would fail to achieve any large effect. The solution lay simply in a reconstruction of the machine of government.

To a school of Indian administrators, whose personality was made in India by Indian experience, such a doctrine amounted to wanton transgression of a moral trust. Among these were the great administrators of the early nineteenth century: Munro, Malcolm, Elphinstone and Metcalf. It would not be entirely correct to call them 'Romantics', as Prof. Stokes has, since they stood in the twilight of fading romanticism and the new utilitarianism. They knew that pure romanticism was dead and gone, and they must accept some of the new principles. Yet they fought, what they knew to be a losing battle. Briggs was perhaps the purest of them all. Two assumptions which he could never accept concerning India were, firstly the belief that the Indians had no indigenous system of their own, and secondly that India could not be governed without a strong European hand. His vehemence against the Cornwallis system was essentially because
of its cold, lifeless, mechanical principles, its a priori, unhistorical attitude and its imposition of western ideas on India. But in practice, Western ideas meant exploitation.

'... By rigid exactions we have increased our own revenue and reduced the people to the condition of mere labourers. This is the professed maxim of our rule, the certain and inevitable result of taking the whole surplus profit of the land.'

Briggs considered the British interference in the social and ethical values of the Indians as mere impertinence. It originates from the utter contempt with which Europeans are apt to view the natives; from that assumed superiority of our knowledge; from that unfortunate propensity to distrust them... we treat the people as if they were savages, without any frame of society....' He attacked Sir Thomas Munro, not because Sir Thomas was a new-wave man, but because he seemed to have given in to the utilitarians, in however small a measure. He decried the ryotwar system because it gave too much power in the hands of the uncontrolled and ignorant European Collector. He wished that the villages would be allowed to manage their affairs with no interference from the Europeans under the pretext of protecting the people. The ryotwar system tends to dissolve the unity of village communities, which I conceive should be our special object to keep entire.... Their natural born chiefs are humiliated under the plea of affording the inhabitants more complete protection.'
Briggs pleaded for association of the Indians with the British administration. He denied that Indians are timid and pusillanimous. They are bold and enterprising... We may judge whether they will tamely submit to injuries affecting whole communities. The hold we have on them is already too loose: it should be our object to bind them more strongly to our government. This, he believed, could be done by strengthening, and not weakening, the power and prestige of the village communities, and recognizing their complete independence.

Briggs earnestly believed that the prosperity of India and that of England were interdependent. In the fashion of classicists, he believed that the British trade with India would never improve unless and until the financial conditions of India improve. He forestalled Dadabhai Nawroji's famous drain theory, when he said, 'Were this tax even expended in India the evil would be less.... About one fifth of the gross taxation, that is to say, four millions, annually is withdrawn from it, either in produce or in specie, to be expended in England.' Briggs felt that it was too much to hope that anything would be done to alleviate the burthen that country now sustains from our injustice.

The 'Land Tax' was, thus, a massive defence of romanticist philosophy of India against the invading utilitarian doctrines. It exposed the evils of British fiscal policies in India. Yet the alternatives that Briggs and other romanticists had, had already become obsolete. They very coming of British
as a political power in India was so great an innovation, that despite the romanticists, India would never have remained the same. Elphinstone, Munro and Metcalf had realized this. The English moral and ethical codes, though not superior, were different. With the political power in their hands, this difference was bound to give them a sense of superiority. The British had built an empire; they could not expect to avoid its psychology.

Briggs seems to have sensed the mood of the times. If the argument in favour of justice was not to have any appreciable effect on the new ruling mentality, he was prepared with another in favour, this time, of imperialism. 'We have, however, stronger motives even than justice to the people — if stronger there can be — a regard for our own safety. Almost all these persons who have advocated the limitation of our demand on the soil, have not failed to adduce, as a substantial argument, the policy of having a body of landed proprietors to give stability and attachment to our rule.' Making an almost prophetic diagnosis of the interrelationship between the British rule and the Indian army, he says, 'our native soldiery may be deemed the main pillars of our strength in the East: while they are steady, obedient, and faithful, we may dictate submission to our foreign and domestic enemies; but this body, of nearly, 200,000 men, with arms in their hands, is composed chiefly of landholders. In case of invasion what have their brethren at the
plough to lose by the downfall of our empire? Can they be worse off? Briggs asserted that if a wise and virtuous prince were to rise in India and administer his government with the principles of ancient Indians, the Indian subjects of British government would like to be placed under his authority rather than the exploitative British authority. "We have more cause to dread the proximity of good and virtuous princes than wretched ones, however powerful."  

Could this situation be retrieved? Briggs felt that time was yet not passed for such corrective measures. He proposes certain remedial actions. (i) The claims of the government on the land should be reduced to the minimum 25% of the gross produce should be the maximum. This would in his opinion leave enough surplus with the landholders to engage in commercial activity so vital for the British economy. "The wants of the people of India are, like those of the human race, bound only by the means of attainment... Where there is wealth to purchase and the means to display, it is absurd to suppose that the inclination will be wanting."  

(ii) The government should give up all claims and demands on the waste land and give it to the cultivators as a bonus. He claims from his experience that charging a low rent on waste land necessarily affects the revenue, since the cultivators on full assessment lands tend to throw up their lands for waste one."
(iii) In the redistribution of the waste lands, the village communities should be given the direction of readjustment of the same. In Briggs's mind, the purpose of the whole exercise was to create a class of small estate-holders, beholden to the British government. It would, in his opinion, also have the added advantage of increasing the real value of the land, village communities, in case their own members had no capital, could borrow money to improve the waste lands, or sell it to strangers. This argument of Briggs sounds rather naive and self-contradictory. If land was so sold, the only people who would have benefited would have been the rich money-lenders from urban centres, making them landlords of waste land, and thereby introducing a foreign and wealthy element in the otherwise cohesive village community.  

(iv) Expenditure on establishment should be reduced by firstly handing over the revenue management to the village community through maujwar settlement, and secondly, by employing more Indians in higher positions in the establishment.

(v) The village communities should be made more independent of the government interference. This would decrease the expenses of the government. If the government insisted on managing and superintending every detail, government would end by being a bureaucracy. 'Our resources are now beginning to fail us; we endeavour to meet the contingency by reduction of expenses; but we must avoid inefficiency....' 141 This can be done by passing a large share of management to the village communities.
(vi) The income of the government should be augmented, not by increasing the land tax, but opening new avenues like customs and excise. This seems to have been an old idea with Briggs. As early as August 1818, Briggs wrote to Elphinstone declaring "... the more I think on the subject, the more I am convinced that ... the bulk of the revenue should be derived from trade and manufactures including duties on exports, imports, licences and stamps ...." 142

These measures were undoubtedly manageable provided the British attitude to India was one of viewing India as an equal. But that stage had long passed. The aggressive liberalism of the utilitarians like James and John Mill, and Macaulay along with the new wave of spiritual imperialism of the evangelicals like Charles Grant, had already undermined such a belief. They considered India as ripe for a change, and the change that they had in mind was a total change. The policy of 'assimilation' that they had in mind was nothing short of anglicizing Indian culture. The middle-class theoreticians and politicians wanted India to exist for the material benefit of England, in return of which England was to bestow upon her the benefits of modern Western values and systems, however doubtful may their character seem to romantics like Briggs. 143 In proposing the remedial measures, Briggs was late by half a century.
NOTES TO CHAPTER V.


2. Bell, op.cit. p. 90

3. Governor-General to Elp. 15.12.1818, PRC Vol.13, p.272

4. Elp. to Governor General, 18.6.1818, PRC Vol.13, p.397

5. Elp. to Grant, 18.4.1819, Ballhatchet, op.cit. pp.19-20


7. Ibid.

8. Elp. to Grant, 18.4.1819, Ballhatchet, op.cit. p.20


10. Kulkarni, op.cit.p.96

11. Grant to Elp. N.D. Ballhatchet, p.239.


13. Grant to Elp. 16-10-1822, MSS EUR F# BOX 6 B


15. Pratapsing Diaries, Vol.4, p.43, entry 30.11.1820.

16. Ibid, p.243 entry 3.7.1821. '...

...परंतु या कामाचार दुसरे साहिब

ज्ञाने स्थाने महाराजास अनंतर यें यां दुसरीने राज्ये.'
17. Ibid. 'कुन्नूरा फार मर गोड़े हाजीम चालाये नाहीतर तैये कलिंग राहीत तो कुन्नूरा फार कम माहाराजास अज्ञान घरीला.'

18. Infra. See his attitude towards the army in Khandesh.


20. Briggs to Govt. 1.1.1827, Ballhatchet, p.241


22. Briggs to Elp. 17.2.1825, MSS EUR F# BOX 6 D , Vol.III.

23. Pratapsing Diaries for the years 1823 and 1824, passim.

24. Briggs, Autobiographical Notes, Bell, p.91.

25. Briggs to Elp. 9.9.1826, MSS EUR F# BOX 6 D Vol.III


27. Briggs to Elp. 12.11.1826, MSS EUR F# BOX 6 D Vol.III

28. Bell, op.cit. p.97

29. Ibid.

30. Herein after referred to as Letters.


32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.
34. **Letters**, (London 1#2#), p.vi.

35. Briggs to Elp./MSS EUR F # BOX 6 D Vol.III


37. Ibid, p. 9


39. Ibid.

40. Ibid, p.18

41. Ibid, letter nos. X, XI, XII, XIII and XIV

42. Ibid, Letter No.XI, pp.79-84.

43. Ibid, p.103

44. Ibid, p.139


46. Ibid

47. Ibid, Chapter I.


49. Bell, op.cit. p.97.

51. Bell, op.cit. p.52
52. Ibid
53. Ibid, p.101
55. Ibid
56. Ibid.
57. Letters, p. 4
58. Briggs, Autobiographical Notes, Bell, p.102.
60. Briggs, Autobiographical Notes, Bell, p.101.
62. Elliot. op.cit pp 216-217
64. Ibid, p. xiii
65. Ibid
66. Ibid
67. For his labours, Briggs recommended Mooshtak for a life pension of £100/- per month. Briggs to Elp. 2.1.1427, MSS EUR F 5 & BOX 6 D, Vol. III.


69. Ibid, passion.


71. Letters, letter No.II.


73. Bell, op.cit. p.112.


75. Ibid p.416.

76. Ibid p.457.

77. Ibid p.456.

78. Ibid p.1.

79. Ibid p.2.

80. Ibid p.30 ff.

81. Ibid, p.35.

82. Ibid, p.42.
83. Ibid, p. 54
84. Ibid, p. 55
85. Ibid, p. 65, Briggs under scoring.
86. Land Tax in India, p. 119.
87. Ibid, p. 119.
88. Ibid, p. 120
89. Ibid, p. 121
90. Ibid, p. 122
91. Ibid, p. 123.
92. Ibid, p. 126.
93. Ibid, p. 127
94. Ibid, p. 130.
95. Ibid, part I, chapter III, passim.
96. Ibid, pp. 133-135
97. Ibid, p. 135
98. Ibid, 142.
100. Ibid, p. 149.
101. Ibid, p.162

102. Charles Grant, the Evangelical.

103. Ibid, p.164.


105. Ibid, p.177

106. Ibid, p.165


108. Ibid, p.218

109. Ibid, p.356

110. Ibid, p.368

111. Ibid, p.262.

112. Munro to Government, 15.A.1807, cited in Ibid,p.266

113. Ibid, p.267

114. Ibid


117. Land Tax in India. p.399.

118. Ibid.
119. This minute by Sir Thomas Munro, is cited in Gleig, 


121. Land Tax in India, p.410.

122. Bell, op.cit. p.130


125. Mukherjee S.N., Sir William Jones, (Cambridge, 
1968 ) p. 6.

126. Ibid, p.5

127. Stokes, E. The English Utilitarians and India, (Oxford 
1959 ), p.66

128. Ibid.

129. Land Tax in India, p.414.

130. Ibid, p.447

131. Ibid, p.443.

132. Ibid, p.446

133. Ibid, p.337

134. Ibid, pp.454-455.
135. Ibid. p.459.
137. Ibid, p.429
139. Ibid, p.430-
140. Ibid, p.432 ff.
141. Ibid, p.457
143. Stokes, op.cit. Chapter 1, passim.