CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION.

The conquest of the Maratha country was, perhaps the greatest military achievement of the British in India. Hitherto, their conquests were preceded by diplomatic efforts and, were, in the final analysis, results of these efforts. Nowhere was conquest preceded by so violent a rupture as it happened in Maharashtra. The consequence, therefore, were bound to be of a larger and wider magnitude. It was only in Maharashtra that they had overthrown the ruling authority in a single though long-drawn campaign carried out over an extensive area. Sir John Malcolm claims that "...... we were compelled, by circumstances beyond our control, to pursue an onward course, and in spite of our wishes and resolutions we have been carried forward to supreme rule......" Be as it may, the fact remains that it was in Maharashtra that the British were confronted, for the first time on so large a scale, with the problem of administering a conquered empire. In December 1817, the Government of India had decided to annex the Maratha territories administered by the Peshwa and that the Peshwa was to be deposed. For this purpose, the territories conquered from the Peshwa were formed into an independent charge under the authority of a Chief Commissioner. Mountstuart Elphinstone, was named...
to this office by the Governor-General in Council, was no stranger to Maharashtra. In 1801, he had been appointed as an Assistant to the Resident at Pune, later on, in 1803, he had served General Wellesley as a sort of political assistant and finally in 1811, he was appointed as the Resident at Pune. He had been instrumental in bringing about the treaty of 1817, and on the whole, seems to have been the person most responsible for the downfall of the Maratha Empire. His knowledge, not only of the Maratha polity, but also of the people and their customs, was undoubtedly very keen and profound, as can be seen from his various letters as well as from his Report that he wrote as the Resident. On all hands it was agreed that he was the most suitable person to hold this charge.

The task before Elphinstone was undoubtedly a gigantic one. In the final analysis it could be reduced to three main problems. Firstly, to establish the British authority over a people, who for the past century and a half had been politically independent, and for almost one century the most dominant power in India. Secondly, to win the confidence of the people and thirdly, to avoid any rupture of the peace. So great was Elphinstone's concern with the problem of administering the Maharathas, that he postponed the declaration of the British intention of assuming the government of the Peshwa's territory, decided upon in December, 1817, till February 20, 1818, when a large force
under Gen. Pritzler came to Pune and besieged Sānhagad. This he did because, 'in the native country of Marhattas, where I believe a national feeling still exists sufficient to prevent the people from assisting a foreign conqueror.'

As for the introduction of British rule in Maharashtra, Elphinstone showed singular sagacity. He was a statesman, and he did 'hesitate to affect by forcible means, objects which are most safely and permanently secured by the slower process of moral persuasion and political management.' He knew that he had to win the confidence of the people, and to do that he must preserve the constitution of the country as intact as possible. 'It is, however, to be remembered that even just government will not be a blessing if at variance with the habits and character of the people.' But Elphinstone did not believe that the Maratha government was unjust or intrinsically bad. 'It is of vast importance' he wrote to the Governor-General, 'to ascertain the causes that counter-acted the corruption and relaxation of the police and which kept this country in a state superior to our oldest possessions, amidst all the abuses and oppressions of a Native Government'. The change of government in itself was a great event. Elphinstone was aware of the fact that the conquest 'was so great and radical an innovation that there is scarcely any institution in the country into which it does not necessarily introduce great changes.'
These changes need not be all beneficial. In fact the introduction of the foreign government must bring in its wake evils from which this country has hitherto been exempt. 13

The whole spirit of the native State was that the form of the government was highly personalized. People looked up to persons for protection rather than to a system. 14 It was precisely because of this that Elphinstone was skeptical whether the British would be able to maintain the form of the old government, though he certainly was keen on retaining the officials of the old government. Apart from its political consequences, it was not felt necessary to do away completely with the old system. Elphinstone saw and recognized merit in it. 'The present system is probably not bad in itself as the country has prospered under it'. 16

Alternative to the preservation of the existing system was the introduction of the British system. Apart from the evils that he believed attended upon the introduction of a foreign rule, Elphinstone and other like minded administrators in India did not have a very high opinion of the administrative system then existing in British India. As Munro complained to Elphinstone, the ruling vices of the British administration were the British passion for 'regulations' 17 and English institutions for the natives. 'The natives of this country have enough of their own to
answer every useful object of internal administration'. It was therefore not necessary to introduce British system wholesale in the Maratha country. But so great an innovation like the introduction of British power, was bound to be felt by the indigenous population. That they should feel it was inevitable. What was important was that they should not be alienated from it. It was therefore decided that the structure of the government at the level where the government comes in contact with the common people should be left as much unimpaired as possible. There were other considerations for this decision as well. The British government laboured 'under natural disadvantage' in that it had no honours like granting a privilege like "using a particular kind of umbrella or of riding in a palanquin" to satisfy the local gentry. The best method to win over the local gentry, therefore, was to involve it in the process of administration. But even so, "all places of trust and honour must be filled by Europeans".

The administrative structure envisaged and implemented by the Commissioner "formed a chain from the Patil to the Collector...." In this great chain the Collector was to be the king-pin. In his hands the governmental powers were to be unified. "Revenue, and judicial, and when practicable, military powers also, should be exercised by the same person"; and since it was necessary that the omnipotence of the British authority, symbolized by this one
person, should be felt every-where, " union, not division (of power) should be " the aim of British administration in India. 24 It was therefore necessary that the Collector should be judge and magistrate ......." 25 Settlement of so vast a territory was a stupendous task. The Collectors, who ultimately must do the actual work of settlement must be men of unusual character. The British authorities were eager to settle the country as fast as possible. It was therefore necessary to proceed with the task of settlement along with the prosecution of war. There was to be " no innovation, at least during the War....." 26 Munro, while replying to a letter of Elphinstone, expressed his apprehension at the possible appointment of civilians to the post of Collector. " I think that, during the war, harm rather than good would arise from the appointment of Civil Collector....." and he proceeded to advise Elphinstone that " if you have any military officer conversant with revenue, it would be convenient to employ him for the present....." 27 Though himself a civilian, Elphinstone seems to have agreed with Munro, for out of five collectors that he appointed, only one was a civilian, Chaplin, and he too on the recommendations of and as successor to a great soldier, Thomas Munro. 28 Capt James Grant at Satara, Robertson at Pune, Pattinger at Ahmednagar and Briggs at Dhulia were the other appointments made by Elphinstone.
As Prof. Ballhatchet maintains, Elphinstone and Elphinstone and his junior Subordinates, "were the first builders of the new order in the territories conquered from the Peshwa". The 'new order' was in fact a dichotomy between the demands that were being made on the revenues of India by the Directors of the East India Company and the political vision acquired by their servants in India. The servants of the East India Company, those who left their impress upon the history of British India in the first quarter of the nineteenth century; men like Munro, Metcalf, Malcolm and Elphinstone, were inspired by a new ideal, the ideal of an empire as envisaged by Lord Wellesley, under whom all of them had served. They looked ahead to an Indian Empire of Britain wherein the distinctive character of India would be retained. None of them were dreamers, and none of them believed that the British Empire in India was going to be a permanent one. As Elphinstone pointed out the belief that the British Empire in India "will not be long lived is reason and not prejudice". The purpose of the work of these romanticist liberals who insisted upon a benevolent imperialism, was to postpone that day when the Empire would come to an end as far off as possible. And the end of the administration should be to enlighten the Indians in the art of government, and tie them close to the British government. This could be done by involving more natives in the process of government. If
this was not done, it would degrade them, and then "it would certainly be more desirable that we should be expelled from the country altogether, than that the result of our system of government should be such a debasement of a whole people ......." 33 The aim of the government was paternalism, pure and simple.

On the other hand, the East India Company "treated its domain as an oriental despot his estate, to be exploited not improved ......" 34 The Company had lost her trading and commercial monopoly in India by the Charter Act of 1813, and the only monopoly left with her was that of political authority and the consequent authority of collecting revenue.

This conflict between a purely commercial outlook and a sense of enlightened mission, towards India was not a new one. In the eighties of the 18th century, the merchants of the East India Company were not very enthusiastic about accepting political responsibilities. Their attitude to the first Anglo-Maratha war was characterized by this lack of sense of mission. They wanted to keep to commerce and make as much profit as they could from their possessions in India. It was the romanticist liberal Burke, who revolted against this attitude of the East India Company. In his writings on India, and particularly in his speeches at the impeachment of Warren Hastings, 35 Burke drew a picture of India which was roughly as follows. India was a civilised polity
possessing laws, institutions and traditions worked out
through centuries of effort, framed according to needs,
and representative of the principles of human order, that
is, the natural law. Sir William Jones, the eminent
orientalist agreed with Burke. Burke believed that no
people had a right to disrupt the natural order in any given
society. This was laissez-faire in its sociological
form. The antipathy of the free-traders towards the mono-
polists i.e. the East India Company in this case, led Burke
to draw terrifying picture of the Indian administration.
Moved by genuine philanthropy, Burke urged that India be
governed according to Indian experience and traditions
so that the fabric of Indian society shall remain in tact.
However this concern for India in the late 18th century
England, was more for the vindication of a point of view
towards human government in general, than for the betterment
of Indians in particular. The British thinking opinion was
vastly ignorant of India. There was no derth of information
about India with anonymous pamphlets, translations of
Persian and Sanskrit works, travel accounts, memoirs of
Company’s servants etc. available in abundance. So great
was the publicity received by items on India in the newspapers
that it was accused that a Governor knew that he was 'acting
upon a public theatre, that his proceedings will be publicly
(sic) recorded there and publicly judged of here'. Burke
went on to assert that it was 'the province and duty of
Parliament to superintend the affairs of this country”. But most of the information received by the Englishmen was faulty and often the works were polemical and partisan in character. Even the humanistic conservatism that developed in England meant promoting British institutions at the expense of Indian. The excessive worship of reason and the belief that human ideas and institutions were justified only if they were based upon reason, led to an exaggerated view of the power of the legislators to shape the future of the world. It was done with a belief that it will help India.

Most of these thinkers and advocates of better governance of India had never been to India. At the time of the renewal of the Company’s charter in 1813, it was, for the first time as it were, realized that the problem of the government of India was not an abstraction but a pragmatic reality, and that it could be solved the best by the men on the spot in India, and that the direction to be given to their actions depended upon the ability of the directors in England to comprehend the needs of an alien society about which they had but refracted knowledge. Hence, in the subsequent period, the Governor Generals, the Governors, the Collectors acquired a unique position in the British administration in India. Thus the foundations of a bureaucracy were laid. This realization made it possible for a Munro or Elphinstone to lay down a system within a broad framework of British ambitions in India. The discretionary powers granted
to the Collectors by Elphinstone were motivated by this same spirit and accentuated by lack of means of communication.

Whether it was enlightened paternalism of the Munro school or the fiscal interest of the Company in the collection of the revenue, the fact remained unaltered, that the administration must come close to the native population. The point at which the contact between the British imperialism and its Indian subjects would be focused was the person of the Collector. As Munro in his able minute of 31st December 1824 pointed out 'the good government of the country must rest very much on the talents of our local officers ......' 46 The office of the Collector was to be a trust and the duties of a Collector were " such as to make it imperative on him to know the real State of the country" . 47 This officer was not a distant civil servant, a bureaucrat at his desk, ' but a familiar lord, visiting and speaking' with the people ' of their quarrels and their crops, and looked up to at ma-bap.....' The office of the Collector was "to be the great executive office of local government, controlling in firm subordination, the whole inferior executive arm" . 48 The unobtrusive power of the Collectors to make or destroy, not only the happiness of the people, but also the system of the government, has been aptly described by Elphinstone in a letter to Stuart.
'..... every Collector does not consider the full effect of every measure he adopts to meet the calls that are constantly made on him. In fact he does not always ( perceive ) when he is innovating. One hundredth part of what he does can never be reported to me and what is reported must be instantly and hastily decided on. Thus rules are made ..... Many rules thus hastily made can never be retracted and we may find many years hence that we have inadvertently destroyed some institution or some feeling essential to the existence of the system we wish to preserve ". 49 If this was to be avoided, firm rules must be made which would make the Collector more of a bureaucrat than a public servant and his utility as a sounding post of the popular sentiment would be lost. 59 Alternatively, he had to be conferred with extensive powers, disregarding the concentration of authority, so that he became a miniature government in himself. 51 It was the second alternative of making his Collectors real public servants and the powerful representatives of the British government, that Elphinstone adopted in Maharashtra. He, therefore, had to choose his men carefully and except in case of Capt. Gibbon whom he had asked to look after Ahmednagar charge, and who because of his obvious mismanagement had to be replaced by Henrey Pottinger, 52 he had no apparent cause to regret.

The Collectors appointed by Elphinstone were all young men. None, except Chaplin, had any revenue or administrative
experience. Chaplin had been the Collector of Bellary and was considered quite capable by Munro. Munro considered him 'the fittest person in the Madras Civil Service' and 'a man of ability and temper'. James Grant, (Grant Duff) had been a student of Marischal college, Aberdeen in his early teens when he came out as a cadet in the Bombay army in 1805. He was born in 1789. Henry Pottinger, born in 1789, was educated at the Belfast Academy and had come to India in 1803 as a cadet in the Bombay native Army. He was a daring explorer, having explored Sind and Baluchistan. He had been a man of the world, but never had any revenue experience. In fact, 'he was better fitted to deal firmly with a crisis than to conduct ordinary administrative duties'. Not much is known about H. D. Robertson except that he belonged to Bombay Army was made an Ensign in 1807 and a lieutenant in 1810. Briggs, born in 1765, came to India in 1801 as a cadet in the Madras army. Most of the persons who later on constituted Elphinstone's official family had been young men in their teens when they came out to India. Except Chaplin, none of them had any preconceived notion about civil administration, and their Indian experience was confined to army about which they had good opinion. Their lack of civil experience was considered by Elphinstone more than as an advantage than otherwise. Except Chaplin again, all other collectors had been associated with
Elphinstone when the latter was Resident at Pune. His wide knowledge and obvious sympathy for the natives and their institutions must have made deep impressions upon them. Chaplin shared the same sympathies, since his own patron Sir Thomas Munro had the same propensities as Elphinstone. Long before Elphinstone became the sole Commissioner for the Deccan, a viewpoint, a policy to be followed towards the natives, had already emerged. His young colleagues had grown into it and they became closely associated with the spirit of sympathy for native ideas and institutions. The dilemma before Elphinstone was: whether it was to be a government of laws or of men? He had no patience with the Bengal or Bombay regulations, nor did he see it possible to fuse Bentham with the native 'Mamool'. It had to be a government by men, and since it was to be so, he wanted his men to have the greatest understanding about the natives. These young men, who shared their Master's ideas, moreover, were bound to the system through the person of Elphinstone. The term 'family', a typical benevolent patriarchal family, is perhaps the most fitting description of Elphinstone and his band of young colleagues.

On 3rd June 1818, Bajirao surrendered to Malcolm and the war came to an end in most of Maharashtra. But in the northern most district of Maharashtra, namely in Khandesh, desolatory war continued for a fairly long time. Khandesh, lying between the main seat of Maratha Confederacy at Pune and the principal confederates in the North India, occupied
an unique strategic importance. Bounded on the north as it was by the Satpuda ranges, it also was subject to depredations by such tribes as Bhils and Kolis who infested these ranges. It was to Khandesh and through Khandesh that followers of Bajirao would flock and try to escape into the north. Undoubtedly Khandesh was an important charge, and Elphinstone recommended the name of Captain John Briggs of the Madras Army for this collectorate. According to Elphinstone ' Briggs is (a) very clever, active and intelligent fellow ....' Briggs continued to be in Khandesh till 1823, when he succeeded Captain James Grant as the Resident at Satara. He continued to be at Satara till 1827. In 1827 he went back to England and returned in 1831, when he was appointed the Senior Commissioner at Mysore. Within a year he resigned the post as he could not get along with the government of Madras. By Christmas of 1832, Briggs was appointed and had taken up his duties as the Resident at Nagpur. In 1835 he relinquished this post on grounds of ill-health and returned to England, never to come back to India.

II

The family of Briggs had had a long association with India. Within his life-time and recollection five generations of Briggs family had occupied places in the Indian army and civil service. Briggs came from a Sturdy
Stock of Scotland. His grand father and grand uncle, Gilbert and Stephen Briggs respectively, had settled in Southampton. His grand uncle established himself there as a medical practitioner. Gilbert Briggs died as young man leaving behind him three children, James Stephen and Elizabeth, scantily provided for. James, the eldest son of Gilbert, was brought up by his uncle to the medical profession. He joined the East India Company's services as a medical officer. James Briggs was twice married, first in 1784 to Martha, daughter of Mr. John Bryan Pybus of the Madras Civil Service. By his first wife, he had two sons, John and Stephen. John Briggs was born on 18th September 1785, and his younger brother was born in 1787. Stephen Briggs, John's younger brother entered the Navy in 1799, saw much service in the West Indies and died a post Captain. By his second wife, Miss Honor Dodson, James Briggs had two daughters and nine sons. The two daughters and one son died in the childhood. His remaining eight sons all entered the public service in India, and five of them died in that country.

In his childhood, John and his brother Stephen, were kept in India in the custody of their uncle John Pybus. They were placed at the school kept by Dr. Winter. Shortly afterwards, John Briggs was sent to Eton. He was only nine years old when he was placed at Eton, where on examination he was placed in the forth form. The promise he had shown...
was not maintained later, for when in 1799, when he was almost fourteen, he was removed from Eton, he was "in the upper remove of the fifth form. " I am sorry to say " says Briggs, "that I benefitted little by my public school education ....." 68 In 1800 he obtained his appointment as cadet for the Madras establishment. He arrived in Madras on 10th July 1801.

The childhood of John Briggs was not a happy one. He confesses that " there was the ancient and proverbial want of sympathy and affection between us ( i.e. John and his brother Stephen ) and our step-mother ". 69 The two children spent their holidays with their mother's relations, where they had " examples of the strictest integrity and where any loose sentiment inadvertently expressed was sure to meet with instant reproof ....." 70 This almost orphan like childhood coupled with five years of public schooling, seem to have made Briggs an extremely tenacious character where and when his personal rights were concerned. This made him " a born radical ". 71 Throughout his life, he seems to have " thrrove on difficulties and disputations ", and he was never short of them. 72 Prof. Ballhatchet describes his portrait drawn when Briggs was 78 years old in the following words. " ..... a keen agressive expression : the lips thin and firmly compressed together ..... "73 Throughout his autobiographical notes reproduced by his biographer
Evans Bell, there is hardly any mention of his father; and whenever there is, it is cold and almost impersonal.

At Madras, John Briggs had to go through military training and also had to learn "the local language". Briggs took both these trainings seriously. He paid a sergeant for extra drill at his quarters and "devoted as much time as (he) could spare to our Native instructor of languages ......." Since he was born in India, he seems to have considered himself a part Indian and because of that, "fell into correct pronunciation" and was "favourably reported on". Having passed as an officer fit to join a Company, Briggs was posted to the 15th Native Infantry Regiment and joined it as Sixteenth Lieutenant. Briggs seems to have had acquired some bad habits during his stay at Madras; because he says that "..... before I was seventeen years old, I had been effectively cured of three fatal propensities, that of drinking and gambling besides that of smoking tobacco...." His first station was in the territory then lately acquired from the Nizam. Before long he was ordered along with his company to take field against a minor but turbulent chief. This seems to have been a duty more in the nature of policing rather than campaigning. After return from this duty, his company was detached to an outpost in a small Fort, whose commandant one Captain de Morgan, went on leave after the arrival of Lt. John Briggs
there. About this accidental command which devolved upon him, Briggs, in his autobiographical notes, writes with a touch of vanity. "I, at the age of sixteen and six months, was left as a Governor of an important post". During the Second Anglo Maratha War, Briggs was made the adjutant of a training battalion. "I got great credit for it and I think I deserved it". This rather vainglorious self-esteem was not so much a part of his vanity, but indicative of a neglected childhood and the consequent urge to establish himself in the eyes of the world.

At the time of the Vellore mutiny of 1806, Briggs was in Hyderabad as the adjutant of the 1st Expeditionary (i.e. Subsidiary) Battalion. During the Vellore crisis, there seems to have had some minor trouble in the 1st Battalion, and as the adjutant of the Battalion, Briggs seems to have taken some very strong action. He blames his Commandant Major A.H. MacDowell, for not taking him seriously. "Maj. MacDowell never made any official report of this incident ...." Somehow or other his relations with me were never on a cordial footing after that day ...." But a perusal of the incident in the words of Briggs himself fails to alarm us and we feel Major MacDowell’s refusal to take Briggs seriously, justified. Briggs seems to have been a man of strong emotions, and it also seems that he was not a man to forgive. A serious rupture between Briggs and
MacDowell took place when both of them were in Khandesh. But it must be owned that if in this minor instance in 1806, Briggs was mistaken, in the major issues that were at stake in the controversy between these two men in 1818 over the principle of prize-money, MacDowell was in the wrong and the Collector of Khandesh received support of both the Commissioner and the Governor-General.

That Briggs had taken his studies of Indian languages very seriously and had acquired proficiency therein is evident from the jobs on which he was employed during this period. In 1804, he was working as Persian and Hindustani Interpreter to the Army. In 1807 he accompanied Malcolm to Persia. He made a second trip to Persia in 1810 and returned in 1811. The embassy of Malcolm failed, but Briggs got invaluable experience, particularly in connection with his Persian studies. On his return he was appointed Persian Interpreter to the Hyderabad Subsidiary Force. It was during this year, on the 3rd of September 1811, that John Briggs married Miss Jane Dodson, the youngest sister of his step-mother.

During the greater part of the year 1812 and 1813, Briggs remained at Jalana as the Persian Interpreter. He had undertaken, with the help of his munshi, translation of Ferishta's history. At Jalana he went into it more seriously. But his duties as carriage and intelligence officer, led him into an entirely different field for the
time being. As carriage or transport officer, he was brought in communication very frequently with that singular race...... of itinerant dealers ...... the Brinjarries (Banjaras)......" As there was no description of these people available, Briggs wrote an essay on them, which was published by the Bombay Literary Society's Transactions. 67

John Briggs was appointed as the third Assistant to the Resident at Pune, Mountstuart Elphinstone, and Briggs joined him in early 1816. His other colleagues on the Residency staff were Francis Russel and Henry Pottinger. 88 At Pune also Briggs was given the function of an Intelligence officer, and his main job was to translate the various news-letters (अखबार) that Elphinstone used to receive from different parts of India. 89 In his autobiographical notes, Briggs gives an interesting account of Elphinstone's modus operandi of getting intelligence. So accurate was the secret service that at Mahuli when Bajirao met Malcolm, he complained to the latter that the Resident "knew the very dishes that were served at his meals". 90 This account of Elphinstone's intelligence service is fully corroborated by the papers published in the selections from the Peshwa Daftar. 91

In September Briggs left the Pune Residency to join Sir John Malcolm at the latter's invitation as Malcolm's Political Assistant. Malcolm himself was appointed by the
Governor-General as the Governor-General's political Agent with the Army of the Deccan under the command of Sir Thomas Hislop. So, when the fateful battle of Khadaki was joined on the 5th November 1817, Briggs was not present at Pune. However, he had left his wife and children behind at Pune. His wife managed to escape capture by Peshwa's soldiers, thanks to the gallantry shown by the native troops accompanying her. This incident when reported to Briggs, left a deep impression on his mind. "Such acts of gallantry and fidelity on the part of our Native soldiers were uncommon in those days, and were not, I fear, thought so much of, or so well requited, as they ought to have been ...." His natural philanthropy and his love for India seem to have been reinforced by incidents like these. But Briggs's house on the Sangam was burnt to ashes and along with it his whole library. Fortunately, the unfinished translation of Farishta was with a friend in Bombay, and it survived the carnage to give Briggs his lasting fame.

In mid September Briggs joined Sir John Malcolm on the Narmada. Briggs was present at the battle of Mahadipur that ended the war between the Holkars and the British. On the 6th January 1818, the Treaty of Mandsore was signed. Immediately thereafter, Sir John Malcolm was ordered with his Division, to go in pursuit of Bajirao. This led to the devolution of the office of Political Agent with the Army
of the Deccan on Briggs. He was present at the fall of Thalner and of Chandor in that capacity. In May, Captain Briggs was ordered "to take charge of the cessions and conquests" in Khandesh. 96

Brigg's appointment was confirmed by Elphinstone and ratified by the Governor-General. 97 Ever since Briggs had left Pune to join Sir John Malcolm, he had still remained on the establishment of Elphinstone as one of his assistants. 98 In May 1818, the Army of the Deccan was broken, and Sir Thomas Hislop, on his way back to Madras, handed over the forts and territories ceded by Holkar and conquered from the Peshwa, into the care of Capt. Briggs. He was further ordered "to consider himself under the direct orders of the Hon'ble Mountstuart Elphinstone, sole Commissioner for the Government of our acquisitions in the Deccan". 99

Briggs left the charge of Khandesh in 1823 to succeed James Grant, the Political Agent at Satara. His stay at Satara, -- it lasted till 1827 -- was a quite one, particularly after a stormy charge like that of Khandesh. It was here, at Satara, that he did most of his literary work and completed the translation and critical collation of his magnum opus, Ferishta. 100 After a short visit to England in 1827-29, he returned to India and was ordered to the Senior Commissionership at Mysore by Lord Bentinck. He tried to follow in the footsteps of Elphinstone, and believed
that his position was identical to the Sole Commissioner in the Deccan. He also believed that he will get unlimited support from Madras government or from Calcutta against Madras government. In all these beliefs he was mistaken and the result was that he had to resign his office. He was thereafter appointed to Nagpur as Resident. "I am happy to have it in my power to show to the world that your honour and character stand unimpeached in my opinion by nominating you to the Residency of Nagpore...." He arrived in Nagpur in late 1832 to find Nagpur "had not suffered from the transfer of the Government to the young Rajah". After the stormy stay at Mysore Briggs found Nagpur, calm and restful. However, his health had suffered great hardships. He had always suffered from severe headaches, and had to take large doses of medicine to keep it low. Sometimes, the attacks of headache would continue for three or four days together, rendering him miserable. It was on the grounds of health that he relinquished his post of Resident at Nagpur and went back to England in 1834-35. In 1838 Briggs was promoted to the rank of Major-General. Briggs did not return to India. His salary of £ 1,750 per annum, and the income that he derived from his Indian securities, made him fairly independent of official patronage. Besides since the day he returned to England, he may be said to have "gone into opposition" against the Government of India. In England he associated himself with the Liberal
Party and joined the Anti-Corn Law League. In 1844, he tried a parliamentary seat, but lost. He opposed the annexation policy of Dalhousie as being immoral and potentially dangerous. He further warned that the loyalty of the Indian soldiers could be counted upon in ordinary circumstances, but if their very social and cultural basis were threatened, they would desert. He strongly opposed the deposition of the Raja of Satara and kept up a losing battle in his behalf in the Court of Proprietors. He harnessed his pugnacious instincts to the promotion of philanthropic principles. Briggs was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in recognition of his proficiency in Oriental Languages. Already, i.e. in 1830, he was elected an Honorary Member of the Asiatic Society of Paris and of the Society of Universal Statistics. In 1851 he was promoted Lieutenant-General and in 1861 a full General. General John Briggs died at Bridge Lodge, Burgess Hill, on the 27th April 1875, just three months before the completion of his ninetieth year.

Sources for the Study:

The present study is based largely on the primary sources, both unpublished and published.

The Deccan Commission's Files preserved at the Pune Archives, Pune, throw a great deal of light on the career of Briggs as the Collector and Political Agent in
Khandesh. These Files are grouped in two sets, viz. Deccan Commissioner's Inward and Deccan Commissioner's Outward. The Inward Files contain the letters sent by the Political Agents and Collectors to the Commissioner. Those concerning Khandesh and Briggs begin with File No. 170 and run through about a dozen files, but not necessarily in consecutive numbers. The letters, obviously are not arranged subjectwise, but are arranged chronologically. However, the reading of these letters becomes unintelligible unless read along with the Deccan Commissioners Outward register, the files beginning with No. D. C. 401. These files contain replies to the letters in the Inward, or originate the replies that are to be found therein. Most of the revenue, judicial and political matters concerning the Collectorates are covered by these files.

The Satara Residency Files at the Pune Archives cover the Residency of Briggs at Satara. Along with these files containing the official correspondence of the British officials, the volumes of the Diaries maintained by Raja Pratapsing of Satara, are also available at the Pune Archives. They make a very useful supplement, and more often than not, a very useful corrective to the otherwise onesided official correspondence. The files of the Political and Foreign Departments of the Government of Bombay, preserved at the Bombay Archives, (formerly Record
Office Bombay throw valuable light on the Nagpur residency of Briggs.

Besides these, the private correspondence of Mount-stuart Elphinstone with his Collectors, preserved at the India Office Library, London, is also used herein. This correspondence has been partially transcribed and brought to India by Dr. A. R. Kulkarni, Professor of History, University of Poona. It is preserved at the Department of History, and it throws a great deal of new light on the persons and the period.

Along with these, the Jamavbandi papers of Khandesh and Satara, in Modi script, that are preserved at the Pune Archives give valuable details and statistical data.

Among the Published primary sources, the Poona Residency Correspondence, in thirteen volumes, may be considered as very useful for understanding the British attitude and policy towards the Marathas. Besides these, the Selections from the Peshwa Daftar edited by Prof. G. S. Sardessai, particularly volume No.41, throw a flood of light on the period under study. These selections are in Marathi. The Selections from the Records of the East India Company, (in 4 Vols.) is also of great help, particularly it makes the heuristical problem very easy.

The official reports written by men like Elphinstone (Report on the Territories conquered from the Peshwa) and
Chaplin (Report on the Deccan 1822) are important among the very useful published primary documents. Warden's Report on the Land Tenures in Bombay, 1816 is also an important and interesting document for comparison.

The published works of General John Briggs, which for the purpose of this study, must be considered as Primary Sources, do not present any difficult heuristic problem. His Land Tax is available in the library of the Bombay University. His other minor works like "Letters to Young Men" and his maiden paper on the Banjaras, are available, the first one in the Mandalik Collection of the Fergusson College, Pune, and the other in the Collected Transactions of the Bombay Literary Society, available at the Jayakar Library, Poona University, Pune. His Ferishta presents no problem whatsoever, as it is one work, in the words of Sir Elliot, which is available in almost "every town of India". 110

The biographical information is gleaned from Major Evans Bell's Memoir of General Briggs, London, 1865. Bell's book has the great virtue in that, he quotes at length from the autobiographical notes of General Briggs.


4. Ballhatchet, K., op. cit., p. 2


6. See PRC, Vols. xiii and xiii


8. Quoted by Ballhatchet, op. cit., p. 17.


20. *Ibid*.
27. *Ibid*.
28. Munro to Elphinstone, 26th April, 1818, *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72. Munro had suggested the name of Chaplin, and if he was not available that of Thackeray.
29. Ballhatchet, op. cit., p. 28
33. Ibid., p. 156.
38. Bearce, op. cit., p. 17.
42. Marshall, P. J., op. cit., p. 53.
43. Bearce, op. cit., p. 28.
44. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 5.
51. Metcalf, quoted by Stokes, p. 22.
53. Munro to Elphinstone, 23rd April, 1818, Gleig, *op. cit.* p. 69.
59. Elphinstone to Munro, 3rd May, 1818, quoted by Ballhatchet, p. 34.

60. See PRO, Vol. xii, particularly Elphinstone’s Long Minute on the Southern Jahagirdars.

61. Elphinstone to Malcolm, 27th January 1819, Ballhatchet, p. 36.

62. Past tense is used here since there is no Khandesh District today.


64. Elphinstone to Adam, 30th June, 1818, Ballhatchet, p. 39.

65. Bell, E., op. cit., p. 4, The Life Sketch of John Briggs is drawn chiefly from Bell’s Memoir.

66. Ibid., p. 5.

67. Ibid., p. 8.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., p. 9.

71. Ballhatchet, p. 27.


73. Ibid.

74. Bell, op. cit., p. 12.

75. Ibid. p. 13.

76. Ibid.,

77. Ibid., p. 14.
78. Ibid., p. 18. Italics mine.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid., p. 20.
82. Ibid., p. 25.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., p. 70.
85. Ibid. p. 39.
87. Bell, op. cit., p. 40.
88. Ibid., 48.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid., p. 49.
91. See Vol. 41 of the Selections, particularly the letters written by one Balwantrao Bapuji.
92. Bell, op. cit., p. 50
93. Ibid., p. 52.
94. Ibid., p. 53.
95. Ibid., p. 54.
96. Ibid., p. 56.
98. Bell, op. cit., p. 59.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid., p. 97. It was at Satara that Briggs first thought of writing a book on the Land Tax of India.

102. Ibid., p. 221.


104. Bell, op. cit., p. 235.


106. Ballhatchet, p. 27.


108. Briggs Memoir, Bell, p. 110.
