Rajabhakti: Languages of Political Belonging in Colonial Odisha

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IN a broad sense, political language refers to the language of those authors who self-consciously reflect on the political processes in which they find themselves embedded. The notion of a political language has enabled historians to study a wide range of texts, whether classical or ephemeral in nature in terms of their authority and endurance. In these analyses, a text is conceived not necessarily as a unique artifact but rather as a palimpsest of diverse and possibly incompatible languages. Attention to these languages helps historians trace the evolving contours of political debates and paradigms.[1]

Keeping this framework in view, this essay studies how *rajabhakti* or monarchical loyalty evolved as a political language in colonial Odisha in the second half of the nineteenth century. It explores a set of texts that are ephemeral in their nature—letters, tracts, newspaper reports, commentaries, and commemorative biographies, written both in Odia and English. These texts were produced in specific historical circumstances—Victoria's Proclamation of 1858, her assumption of the title of empress of India in 1877, and the coronations of Edward and George in 1902 and 1911, respectively. They faded—if not completely disappeared—from public memory with shifts in the political climate. In their day, such texts helped the colonized construct complex positions of monarchical loyalty and cultivate a sense of belonging to Victoria's empire.

"Providence," "market rationalism," and "character" were three overlapping conceptual terms around which the political language of monarchical loyalty formed itself in the Odia public sphere.[2] These terms have well-known histories in metropolitan Victorian culture.[3] This essay

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excavates their provincial careers in the colony and studies their entanglement with local histories and discourses. Providence enabled the formulation of both radical and conservative idioms of belonging to the empire—if the first separated the royals from the officials and censured the latter, the second promoted a form of paternal obedience to established authority. Market rationalism brought the colonized and the colonizer into a relationship of unequal exchange where each pursued their self-interest, and came to form and belong to an imperial order. The well-educated character of the royals provided the best assurance of good governance, and the colonized subjects affiliated themselves to the liberal projects of character formation and progressive rule.

Specific individuals articulated these strands of the political paradigm. John Buckley, Gaurishankar Ray, and Nilamani Bidyaratna belonged in varying degrees to the urban social middle of Cuttack—the principal market town and the seat of colonial administration in Odisha. As a methodological gesture, this essay pays some attention to their biographies.[4] In the process, it reconstructs the lived world of everyday imperialism within which the language of *rajabhakti* enabled these historical actors to engage and inhabit their local rhetorical and political spaces.

1. Providence and the Queen's Proclamation at Cuttack

> Each one of you, submit to the position of the *pradhan* since all the positions of *sashan* that exist are established by God, [and] without sanction of God, positions are not established. Hence, any conduct that is hostile to the position of *shasan* is against the code ordained by God, and those who do it, invite just punishment.
>
> "A Brief View of the Christian Religion: Christian Mata Sankshep," 1844[5]

On Monday, November 1, 1858, the commissioner of Orissa read out Queen Victoria's proclamation in English to between fifteen- to twenty-thousand people assembled in the military parade ground in Cuttack. Cuttack was the seat of imperial administration in the province. After the rendition in English, the proclamation was read out in translation in the local vernacular, Odia, and some other Indian languages. Present among the audience was John Buckley, a General Baptist missionary of the town. Born in 1813 in "humble circumstances" in the village of Measham, Derbyshire, Buckley attended the General Baptist Academy at Wisbech between 1834 and 1837, and sailed for India as a

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missionary in 1844.[6] He remained in Odisha for the rest of his life and was buried at Cuttack after his demise in 1886.[7] Buckley served as the tutor of the Baptist Academy in the town. His acquaintance with Hebrew, Greek, and Latin helped him in the translation of Christian scriptures into Odia. For his academic contributions, he went on to receive the degree of doctor of divinity from the Bates College, Maine, United States.[8] He also grew to become a prominent member of Cuttack's urban civil society and was well regarded as *priyamvada*—one whose speech is sweet and polite.[9]

Buckley wrote a long letter on Victoria's proclamation to an interlocutor in England. It was published in Baptist denominational periodicals and circulated in London as well as the Midland counties.[10] The letter registered the Baptist missionary's anxieties over how the local Odia readers would interpret Victoria's prose and expressed a corresponding desire to have some control over the processes of its reception. On one hand, the text of the proclamation recorded the queen's personal avowal that she believed in "the truth of Christianity" and acknowledged "the solace of religion" (50). Buckley rejoiced in this acknowledgment. On the other hand, it also conveyed a "strict charge" to her officers to "abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship" of Her Majesty's Indian subjects (50). Buckley wondered as to "What constitutes interference with the religious belief of the natives?" and went on to assert "with unfeigned loyalty, but fearless honesty" that "the honour of Victoria's name" will be "certainly tarnished" if the clause meant to prohibit the queen's Christian officers to "desire others to be partakers with them of its [Christianity's] blessings" (50–51). Having located a contradiction at the heart of the proclamation, Buckley dismissed the manner in which local readers at Cuttack made sense of Victoria's sovereign wish. There was "an evident desire in this place to interpret" the proclamation, he complained, "so as to convey the idea that, though the queen herself believes in Christianity, she does not desire her Indian subjects to do so" (52). He reassured himself and his denominational public in England that such an interpretation "will not succeed" as the "Oriya translation" of the proclamation, done by another Baptist missionary in the town "officiating as Government translator," "faithfully conveys the language and the spirit of the English" (52).

Buckley's apprehensions and anxieties found resolution in a "radical" language of Providence. In a discursive gesture, which became a crucial part of the urban middle-class political language at Cuttack in the subsequent decades, Buckley neatly separated the queen from her

officials. "My private opinion is," he wrote, "that all the grace of the proclamation is the Queen's own, and that the words complained of are the result of that pestiferous influence at the India Board which I hope some honest M.P. will fearlessly expose. The people of England must keep their eyes open" (51). Separating the queen from her administration enabled the "plain Baptist Missionary" to issue a stern word of caution to the official mind. "The future is known only to God;" he wrote, "but the history of India reveals a series of events which the wisdom of statesmen could not foresee; and the consultations of cabinets and the determination of monarchs could not prevent. There is a Power above Parliaments and Cabinets, and Thrones, 'working all things after the counsel of His own will'" (51–52).

This invocation of Providence and the general rhetoric of John Buckley's letter are in keeping with the radical language of the English Dissent. In his classic study of the long eighteenth century, James Bradley observes that more often than not the Dissent merely tolerated monarchy and reposed its faith in representative politics. Radical dissenters drew upon theories of natural rights to unfurl a moral vision of politics in which "the origin of power was located in the people," and consequently government was viewed as a "trust," and the idea of "the consent of the individual" carried much value.[11] One obeyed government "only in lawful things" (143). The proper aim of politics was public good—that is, the happiness of individuals (140). It behooved people to cultivate "public spirit and virtue," that is, a spirit of "vigilance exercised in guarding liberty" against arbitrary use of power by the state government (140–41). It also consisted of an emphasis on personal habits of character such as diligence and industry (141).[12] Some of this language of moral politics went on to become a part of the political imagination of the urban elite at Cuttack, and we will explore some of that complex history later in this essay.

However, this radical language was not the only idiom of politics that the Baptist pastorate at Cuttack invested its faith in. Let us conclude the section by turning to a more "conservative" invocation of Providence, a more conservative language of political belonging, which the mission made available at Cuttack. The Baptists brought the first press to the town in 1838. The Orissa Mission Press remained the only printing establishment in the region for nearly thirty years. The mission formed a small "public" at Cuttack in the fourth and fifth decades of the century. This public revolved around the agrarian social middle of the region. Survey and settlement operations carried out by the colonial

state in the 1830s and 1840s led to the ascendancy of a class of subproprietors—the village headmen and managers, locally known as the *pradhan*s, *mokkudum*s, and *serberakar*s.[13] The Baptist pastorate drew its early ministers of the gospel from among the lesser members of this class. Some of these ministers and their families moved to the town. Others remained in the surrounding villages. They formed part of the "public" to which the pastorate addressed a conservative language of political belonging.

Here, the pastorate invoked Providence to formulate a doctrine of obedience to the colonial state. A hymn in Odia titled "On Providence: *Bidhatara Karma*" submitted that "God works in unfathomable ways," and advised the reader "not to judge by [his] limited intellect" and "to take shelter in the mercy of the Lord." It dismissed any attempt as "blind doubt" that sought "to see His work as futile" and concluded that "the Lord is the giver of meanings," and "he will bestow meaning [to his work in due course of time]."[14] This language of Providence helped the Baptist pastors in the colony to argue that the authority of the state was not derived from people but from Providence or divine sanction, and to endorse the doctrines of passive obedience and nonresistance. Published in 1844, the Odia tract "A Brief View of Christian Religion: *Khristian Mata Sankshepa*" portrayed an ideal vision of a hierarchical society wherein paternalism and obedience deeply informed relationships between the king and the subject, the pastor and the flock, husband and wife, parents and children, and master and servant. Perfect obedience to existing government, temporal and spiritual, was the central thesis of this Baptist political imagination. Consider the moral-political language in which it addresses women and servants: "O women, just as you are subjugated to the Lord, so also submit to the control of your husband. Just as Jesus Christ is the sheltering head of the body of the congregation, similarly the husband is the head of the wife."[15] And also, "O servants, just as you submit to the Christ in a spirit of fear and shyness, so also obey your master with a candid conscience. Whether free or in subjection, whoever does good work, he will receive the rewards from the Lord."[16] The epigraph at the head of the present section is drawn from this tract.

This language of Providence was close to Anglican political theology, which provided the British monarchical state its dominant ideology in the long eighteenth century. As J. C. D. Clark observes, Anglican political theology rejected a contractarian account of the origin of the state and argued that civil government was not founded on the will of man but

on the institution of God. He created man in a state of natural subordination to patriarchal authority. Subordination to the government of the father provided for the establishment of peace and order. The state is a collection of families. The king of a monarchical state retained the power that the father possessed. Thus the political obligation of the citizen to submit to government does not arise from an original social contract but from the natural Christian subordination to patriarchy instituted by God.[17] In this patriarchal vision of politics, rebellion is a violation of providential order.[18] Some of this language also found a reception among the literate middle orders in Odisha.

Thus the Baptist pastorate at Cuttack formulated a radical as well as a conservative language through which the citizen-subject could politically belong to Victoria's empire at Cuttack. Both relied on an invocation of the idea of Providence. And both drew upon the ideological resources of the long eighteenth century. Only, the first one was available in English and addressed largely to a metropolitan audience, at least in the first instance. The latter came primarily in Odia and spoke to the local respectable agrarian social middle.

2. Market Rationalism and the Prose of Loyalty

> Keeping the poor condition of Odisha in mind, some people think that instead of spending so much of money on the Empress Town Hall, it will be better if the money is used to provide scholarship for the education of the poor youth or establish an industrial school or promote the study of Sanskrit. We have received a letter with this import. Since it is quite long, we cannot publish the letter. However, what we wish to say is that wants are countless and they are increasing everyday. The need of a common public building is no less than many others. The edifice will serve many purposes—those of a library, theatre hall, meeting-house etc. There is an ongoing effort to fulfill this particular want. All should join the cause with joy. There is no further need for debate.[19]

As Buckley stood among the audience at Cuttack to listen to Victoria's proclamation in November 1858, a young Odia scholar named Gaurishankar Ray participated in the commemorative celebrations in Calcutta. Born in 1838, Gaurishankar completed matriculation at the English school at Cuttack, which the Baptist mission had originally established. By the time Gaurishankar became a student there, the local imperial government had taken over its management. After matriculation, Gaurishankar went to Hooghly near Calcutta for higher education.

Troubled by rumors of his impending marriage in the degenerate capital city of colonial India, his father asked him to return before he could secure a degree. In November 1858 Gaurishankar was on his way back to the more reassuring environs of Cuttack via Calcutta. At Cuttack, he began his career in the local colonial administration. Starting as a temporary clerk in the office of the commissioner, in due course he went on to work as a money order agent in the post office, as a full-fledged clerk in the collector's office, and retired as the government translator in 1892.[20]

Gaurishankar Ray brought print capitalism to Odisha. Along with his partners, Gaurishankar established the Cuttack Printing Company in 1865. One of the first and most successful joint stock enterprises in the town, the company began with a capital of 7,500 rupees. It edited and printed early modern classics of Odia literature. It brought out *Utkal Dipika*, the most prestigious weekly in Odisha in the second half of the century. It also had a considerable presence in the cheap and popular print market of the town. Besides, it owned a business concern dealing in office stationery and associated articles. These market ventures proved profitable, and Gaurishankar was at the heart of them all. He served as the secretary of the company and was editor of the weekly. At the time of his retirement from the company in 1915, he took immense satisfaction in the fact that he had earned a profit of 50,000 rupees for its shareholders and had built assets worth 40,000 rupees.[21] It is no wonder that Gaurishankar's contemporary commentators chose to characterize him as a "Man of Business."[22]

This man of business fashioned the most respectable language of belonging to Victoria's empire at Cuttack. If "Providence" was a keyword in the prose of the Baptist pastorate, "market rationalism" was the implicit term in Gaurishankar's style. Historians of Victorian political economy have observed how Adam Smith's vision of a natural, rational, and harmonious market order remained popular through the nineteenth century.[23] According to Smith, markets brought buyers and sellers into a relationship of fair and deliberate exchange. This relationship was driven, not by benevolence, but self-interest. Free pursuit of self-interest created a rational and harmonious order. This order was a natural outcome of the interface between supply and demand. Prices and wages varied freely. Effort was rewarded, idleness received punishment.[24] However, revisionist historians have contested this model and have rightly argued that the Victorian market order was not a natural phenomenon but rather a construct. As a construct, it evolved over time and was embedded in contemporary histories of bargains and contestations.[25] Thus,

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"construction and reconstruction of market relationships involved bargaining and compromise between different vested interests, and the end result frequently reflected the relative power base of these groups."[26]

Drawing upon some of these observations, I argue that Gaurishankar's language of belonging to the empire was a language of mutual exchange. Belonging here is best understood as being part of a market relationship of exchange where all the parties concerned pursued their self-interest. It was certainly not a free or equal exchange. The bargains and compromises reflected relative power bases of the players involved. Nevertheless, the market relations created an order, which had its rationale and harmony. There were moments of disruption. These were recognized as aberrations and were accordingly censured. There is room here to study a particular occasion when the provincial editor and print entrepreneur mobilized a political language that resembled one of unequal exchange.

Consider the Empress Town Hall project that animated the public imagination of Odisha between Victoria's assumption of the title Empress of India in 1877 and her golden jubilee in 1886. In the wake of the celebrations of 1877, the civil society at Cuttack, which included English officials, the Odia landed elite, and the educated middle orders, resolved to build an Empress Town Hall. The proposal, along with other such commemorative projects from different parts of India, was brought to the notice of the queen and duly published in the *India Gazette*.[27] T. E. Ravenshaw, the commissioner of the Orissa Division, and John Beames, the collector of Cuttack, were the prime movers behind the proposal. Beames drafted an architectural plan of the monument and prepared a cost estimate. However, both Ravenshaw and Beames were transferred out of Odisha in 1878.[28] Thereafter, the cause of the town hall was taken up by the Suhrud Samaj, a society that was formed by the English and native gentlemen-residents of the town to work for the progress of the region.[29] Funds required for the monument were meant to be raised through public subscription. An initial effort raised a limited amount of money but generated promises for more. The new commissioner and collector convened a meeting later in the year 1878. The initial cost estimate of 47,000 rupees was deemed unrealizable and was revised to a more moderate sum of 30,000. It was also resolved to deposit the amount already collected in a bank on interest. A committee of prominent English and native gentlemen was formed to work toward the collection of money. Gaurishankar was a member,[30] as were the chiefs of the princely states of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar, who were each honored with the title of maharaj during the durbar of 1877.[31]

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In his capacity as editor of the most influential weekly in the province, Gaurishankar regularly issued public appeals for generous donations and occasionally published full lists of subscribers as an encouraging measure.[32] However, after five years of effort, enough money could not be raised. During a meeting in 1881, the commissioner A. Smith stalled a proposal to use the collected amount for some other purpose and called for a revival of dwindling enthusiasm to raise the required funds for the Empress Town Hall. The architectural plan was revised, and a new estimate of 20,000 rupees was made for the building and the surrounding park.[33] Things did not move as expected. Eventually, in 1886, the commissioner C. T. Metcalfe called a meeting of the subscribers and resolved to divert the "Empress Town Hall Fund" to the "Countess of Dufferin's Fund." As is well known, Lady Dufferin began her National Association for supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India in 1885 at the behest of Victoria. Metcalfe duly wrote to the viceroy at Shimla intimating the new resolution and received Victoria's direct approval for the measure.[34] Some of the old subscribers to the Empress Town Hall Fund expressed doubts about the success of Lady Dufferin's scheme but went with the general consensus to divert the money to Lady Dufferin's Fund.[35] The new project went in two directions. First, a new committee was formed to lead the foundation of a training institute for native nurses and midwives, appropriately named "The Victoria's Institution." The name was communicated from Shimla.[36] Second, a dispensary for women, the first of its kind at Cuttack, was planned to honor Lady Rivers Thompson, who had first suggested the extension of Lady Dufferein's scheme to Orissa. A local landed gentleman bore the entire cost and opened the dispensary in 1886.[37] Interestingly, Gaurishankar was not personally involved in either of the latter ventures. In any case, the town hall took some more years to materialize. Gaurishankar did not forsake the cause. He personally donated 11,000 rupees and helped to build the Cuttack Town Hall in 1909.[38]

The urban civic project was an instance of the business of the empire. It relied on the everyday "order" and "harmony" that existed between the colonized and the colonizer who were engaged in unequal exchanges to pursue their self-interest and conduct the empire's business. The epigraph helps us to note that the self-interest which Gaurishankar represented was that of an urban civil society. A study of the lists of subscribers to the Empress Town Hall Fund suggests that the major patrons of the project came from the landed elite who were

closely associated with the urban centers in the region—gentlemen such as Vaidyanath Pandit and Choudhury Visvanath Das of Cuttack and Vaikunthanath De of Balasore. The first two pledged 1,000 rupees each to the cause, and the latter promised 600 rupees. The urban middle order also lent support to the project. The Bhagats of Cuttack town, a trading and moneylending family, contributed about 250 rupees. The Padhis of Balasore, another trading family, contributed about 100. Members of the native professional class—lawyers and clerks—also stood up in support.[39]

However, in the case of the Empress Town Hall, this urban landed elite and middle order could not win much support from the more substantial landed elite who were not immediately associated with the urban centers. The chiefs of various princely states in the region did evince interest and made donations. For instance, Boud, Talcher, Nayagarh, and Athamallik contributed a total of 550 rupees. However, the largest states, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar, did not donate more than 250 rupees together.[40] In comparison, Mayurbhanj alone had donated 20,000 rupees in 1878 to a similar civic project to build a college in Cuttack, the first and only institution of higher education in the province in the second half of the century.[41] The urban elite and middle order also did not receive much support from the agrarian social middle of the countryside. According to a published estimate, prominent individuals of this rural social middle donated more than 16,000 rupees for public works in the single financial year of 1878–79. The public work or *sat karya* these individuals believed in and donated money for included digging up water tanks and constructing small bridges in their localities.[42] The town hall did not fit into their scheme of things and did not receive patronage from them. By and large, the urban civil society at Cuttack was thus in a market relationship of exchange with the official mind at Cuttack. The Empress Town Hall project came to be a symbol of both civic progress and political loyalty. Progress and loyalty came to be deemed mutually exchangeable. One side could expect progress in return of loyalty. The other side could expect loyalty in return for progress.

This market relationship of exchange went through constructions and reconstructions. As we saw above, Mayurbhanj singlehandedly contributed a large amount of money for the college at Cuttack. And this gesture was on the record in appreciation of the work Ravenshaw had done for the province.[43] However, after Ravenshaw moved out of Orissa, the relationship of exchange went through reconstruction, and

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neither Mayurbhanj nor Kendujhar, the largest of the princely states, showed much interest in the Empress Town Hall project. Dinanath Bandyopadhyay, a prominent resident of Cuttack, felt that local English officials were not careful enough to ensure that proper recognition was conferred on the landed elite of Odisha. In a letter to *Utkal Dipika*, he drew attention to the manner in which officials in Bihar worked to cultivate the goodwill of the landed elite and wrote, "The kings of Odisha are in many ways more respectable and independent. Still then, for what reason do they not receive high recognition from the English government?"[44] The letter concluded with an appeal to the English government to confer proper recognition on Odia's landed elite and to encourage them toward beneficial public works or *sat karya*.[45]

Finally, the market order of unequal exchange that was in place at Cuttack in the third quarter of the century had its share of market irritants. Certain kinds of conduct on the part of the colonial officials and the colonized alike brought disruptions to the everyday "order" and "harmony," which the business of the empire created and depended on. Gaurishankar criticized both. In a discursive gesture that was reminiscent of Buckley, he made a distinction between the individual officials of the colonial state and the colonial state in itself. While the peculiarities and foibles of the former were not spared the barbs of public satire, the latter, the colonial state itself, of which the queen stood as a symbol, was deemed above controversy. An Odia-language fortnightly in a neighboring town, for instance, issued general advice to the people who wrote letters to it: "We will not publish any letter against Sarkar Bahadur. However, if it describes real shortcomings of any official of the Sarkar Bahadur, we will publish it."[46] On several occasions, Gaurishankar censured the conduct of specific English officials. He chastised the rude behavior of H. G. Cook, the magistrate of Balasore, toward Raja Vaikunthanath De, a prominent local landowner, who also used to serve as the honorary magistrate of the town and vice chairman of its municipality. He welcomed the just gesture of the lieutenant governor of Bengal who looked into the matter, reprimanded, and demoted the English official.[47] Gaurishankar criticized the manner in which the joint magistrate of Cuttack, G. E. Manisty, forced women peddlers of the town to sell their vegetables in the municipality market and levied fines on those who erred.[48]

This discursive move to separate the monarch and state from her officials resembled the radical language of moral politics that Buckley had mobilized on the occasion of the proclamation. Gaurishankar and

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the Odia newspaper press at large kept public good in mind and closely watched against arbitrary exercise of official power. However, if the Christian pastorate took recourse to a notion of Providence and drew upon the language of natural rights to issue a note of caution to the official mind, Gaurishankar appealed implicitly to the sense of everyday market "order" and "harmony." Both the landed grandee who served as honorary magistrate and the women peddlers who sold vegetables in the market were engaged in the conduct of the business of the empire. The errant behavior of a "hotheaded" Cook or Manisty was considered to be the market irritant, which disrupted the everyday order and was duly censured. It is the personal character of the official that is censured. The arbitrariness of colonialism in itself is not yet a subject of public criticism.

Market irritants did not exist only among the English officials. They also existed among the members of the native intelligentsia who practiced *kapata bhakti* or false loyalty. Consider the censure that Gaurishankar reserved for Kalipada Bandyopadhyay. Kalipada wrote a school textbook for children, which carried the following advice on the subject of revenue collection:

> Mutiny involves terrible quarrels, do not indulge in it, else consequences will be bad.
> He is the *zemindar*, he will collect revenue by various means and tricks.
> In this matter, Victoria, the Empress of India, is merciless;
> She has proclaimed laws, think of them beforehand.
> Quarrels, disputes, false allegations—forsake them all in haste;
> Remember the scriptures and do the work that is ordained.[49]

Gaurishankar chastised Kalipada for the use of the adjective "merciless." Civilized monarchs, he argued, proclaim laws so as to govern their kingdoms. Uncivilized and uneducated kings do not know the rules of governing a country. Hence they fail to proclaim any law or establish a system of governance. If it is just to punish those who indulge in conflicts and disputes according to well-established laws, then why should the empress be described as merciless? Among those who are presently enshrined in various apex positions of the world, the argument continued, there is hardly any one who is as merciful as Victoria. In this context, it is seditious to call her merciless and to inculcate this adverse sentiment among the children.[50] Gaurishankar also had particular reasons to object to Kalipada's use of the term "merciless" for the queen. On an earlier occasion, driven by personal animosity, Kalipada had accused another Odia textbook writer of treason on flimsy grounds, and had succeeded

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in getting the latter off the school syllabus and hence out of the nascent print market. Ironically, now, Kalipada himself comes to use an "unnecessary" adjective for the queen. Gaurishankar chastised Kalipada for the manner in which he had brought false *rajabhakti* to serve his personal agenda and injure the interest of another writer. In conclusion, Gaurishankar cautioned the officials of the colonial education department. "Kali babu has got the higher officials as well as the lower clerks of the education department in his pocket. With consummate skill, he has established himself as a *rajabhakta*. . . among the queen's officials. Without their encouragement, would he have dared to write such unsubstantial books and sell them at such high prices?"[51] The practice of *kapata bhakti* or false loyalty in Gaurishankar's language is not conducive to the business of empire, to more fruitful transactions between the rulers and the governed.

3. In the Image of Middle Orders: A Character for Governance

> On being afraid that if he lives in the royal palace, adulation, wealth and power will make him arrogant and addicted to pleasure, [Albert and Victoria] had a cottage built in a secluded area of the Isle of Wight to the south of England, and made all arrangements therein for the stay and education of the prince. Accordingly, the prince lived there like the son of an ordinary householder.
>
> Nilamani Bidyaratna, *Samrat Charita*, 1902[52]

> Everyday, the Honorable Maharaj carefully examines the income and expenditure of the previous day. Besides, he examines all the bills related to the estate before approving them. The Honorable Maharaj is ever careful in keeping an account of money. This is a sterling example of his mastery over the science of economy.
>
> Nilamani Bidyaratna, *Shri Krupamaya Charitra*, 1909[53]

> The moral and ethical ideals of the new Emperor George V resemble those of the people of middle classes in England.
>
> Nilamani Bidyaratna, *Nabina Samrat: Life of George the Fifth*, 1911[54]

If Gaurishankar's engagement with print was mediated through the market, Nilamani Bidyaratna's was dependent on patronage. Born in 1867, Nilamani could not pursue higher studies after minor class on account of poverty.[55] He spent some time in a teacher-training program at Cuttack and began teaching school to support himself and his family. Soon after he entered the field of journalism and at various stages of his

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career found employment in printing presses established by the small princely states of Bamanda, Khallikote, and Bada Khemandi. The phrase "vernacular print capitalism" best describes the work of these royal presses.[56] They sustained small-scale artisanal production, had a fairly limited commercial character, and were financed by philanthropy. Nilamani managed these presses. He also edited the pioneering weeklies they brought out, *Sambalpur Hiteishini*, *Prajabandhu*, and *Ganjam Gunadarpan*. Our protagonist's engagement with vernacular print capitalism went hand in hand with his Odia-language nationalism. Here also, the landed patrons led the way. They joined hands with the educated intelligentsia to form the Utkal Sammilani in 1903. The voluntary association lobbied with the colonial government to unite all Odia-speaking regions as one administrative unit—they were being governed separately then under the aegis of different presidencies and provinces.[57] Nilamani was a prominent representative of the intelligentsia, and his political activism was fairly crucial to the work of the voluntary association. His early demise in 1923 elicited public lamentation. "Born in poverty, and with a little education," a poet wrote, "O Nilamani, what you have accomplished / Is not that impossible, O gentle readers, for the well educated sons of rich families?"[58] Contemporary public opinion described Nilamani Bidyaratna as a quintessential "Selfmade man."[59]

This self-made man who drew upon the patronage of the landed elite for his literary and political endeavors produced a series of slim biographies of the English and Indian royalty. Beginning with that of Victoria (1896), he went on to write those of Edward (1902), George (1911), and of his personal patron, Krupamaya (1909). The biographies evolve a third language of politically belonging to the British Empire. If Providence and market rationality provided the key concepts around which Buckley and Gaurishankar imagined their respective modes of political affiliation, *character* was the term that Nilamani chose for himself. His biographies of royals, both English and Indian, narrate how they have come to form their "middle-class" characters. This middle-class character of the royals—avoidance of luxury and personal arrogance, cultivation of intellectual curiosity, faith in God, an ethic of hard work, regard for familial comfort, and disciplined everyday life—furnished, he argued, the best assurance of good governance. Nilamani belonged to this imperial project of character formation. Drawn from several royal biographies that he wrote, the epigraphs above attest to the self-made man's commitment to character.

Dipesh Chakrabarty has studied the importance of character as a political category in imperial literary and historiographical traditions.[60] Understood as "the sheer capacity in humans for leadership, discipline, effort, reason, mastering passions, and self-cultivation," character was "both a moral and political word, signifying a zone of human freedom within the structure of Providence, creating space for human drama and action."[61] This notion of character "belonged to a liberal form of thought the British empire in India had encouraged. . . . Potentially, anybody could acquire strength of character, for 'character' implied sovereignty over self. It was like virtue: it needed to be cultivated. It was a measure of sovereignty because in it lay one's destiny; one became the maker of one's own fate by imbibing character."[62]

Drawing upon this line of argument, it is possible to see how Nilamani represented the royals as liberal makers of their own destiny. Proper education forms the right sort of character that the prince requires for his political role as the governor of the people. Thus a minor Krupamaya inherited an estate spread over 572 square miles whose income was about 200,000 rupees per year. Unfortunately, the estate had accrued a debilitating outstanding debt of 150,000 rupees due to mismanagement, and it devolved upon Krupamaya to set the finances of the house in order. He received right education under the supervision of the court of wards, and the young prince acquired personal habits of financial prudence and diligence. Not only did he repay the debts but also went about improving the estate by building a new modern palace, new water storages, and a canal for agricultural irrigation; by opening schools for girls and working-class pupils; and by implementing welfare measures such as an annual pension to widows and relief to the orphans and the poor.[63]

In their turn, Edward and George received proper education under the careful supervision of their parents. Mother Victoria put an emphasis on the formation of Edward's character and instructed that he should not be given to *bilas* or luxury. She sent him to stay in the Isle of Wight like a "*sadharana gruhasta santana*" (son of an ordinary householder) and learn farming, cattle rearing, etc. Father Albert taught Edward kindness toward animals and inculcated in him a curiosity for knowledge, steam engines, botany, and zoology.[64] As for George, Victoria taught him obedience to elders. His parents trained him to avoid arrogance and luxury, and to be generous and kind in his attitude toward the world at large.[65] Character helps Edward to face the untimely demise of his children and other members of the family with equanimity,

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and eventually take up the role of a benevolent emperor in the footsteps of his mother, Queen Victoria.[66] Similarly, education helps George to acquire strength of character, which in turn enables him to maintain equanimity in face of grief and joy. He vows to follow the proclamations of Victoria and take up his responsibility and duty toward the subject people of India.[67] Proper royal character, Nilamani concludes, is the best guarantee of good governance. "The subject-inhabitants of his empire," he writes in the context of George, "look forward with hope to the auspicious time to enjoy the good results of his experience and many godly virtues and merits."[68]

The liberal language of education and character formation, the dominant *rasa* or aesthetic sentiment in Nilamani's biographies, operates within the overarching structure of Providence. Both Edward and George are addressed as "*bhagya bidhata*," one who determines the destiny of the subject-people.[69] As we saw in the first section, *bidhata* is the term that the Baptist pastorate first used to translate the concept of Providence into Odia and formulated a patriarchal language of submission to the established order, to colonial rule. Later on, Odia historians also employed the concept of Providence-*bidhata* to interpret the colonial condition. Pyarimohan Acharya, for instance, the first Odia historian who wrote a history of Odisha in 1879, considered the advent of the English to Odisha as a manifestation of Providential order. He expressed hope that God's auspicious desire will be fulfilled in history and residents of India will progress with the help of the British, their "fellow Aryan brothers."[70] In Nilamani, this usage finds a culmination in the apotheosis of Edward and George.

The prose Nilamani mobilizes to represent royal coronations helped form a new point of view in the modern Odia language—that of an imperial-global spectator. This spectator saw, relished, and discussed various forms of celebrations organized on the imperial occasion in his own locality as well as in different parts of India and the empire. He learnt to see himself as a node in an imperial network of places and celebrations. This spectator had already emerged earlier in Gaurishankar's news reports on various *rajotsava*s or royal festivals, notably Victoria's acceptance of the title Empress of India in 1877 and her golden jubilee in 1887. Nilamani also evokes this spectator. In the narrative economy of his royal biographies, the coronation, the rhetorical usage of the phrase *bhagya bidhata*, and the formation of the imperial-spectator are tied together. That is, the biographies typically begin with the birth of the protagonists and come to a conclusion with their ascension to the

imperial throne. The narrator typically addresses Edward and George as *bhagya bidhata* precisely when they ascend the throne. And the imperial-spectator is invoked as a witness to the events. Together they constitute the *telos* or the final event that gives meaning to the preceding narrative of liberal character formation.

At this climactic moment, Nilamani's imperial-global spectator draws upon the indigenous *niti* discursive tradition and offers political counsel and blessings to the *bhagya bidhata*.[71] For instance, having described how the coronation of Edward takes place in London and how the occasion is celebrated in his own patron's capital in southern Odisha, Nilamani's imperial global spectator offers the following advice: "O Emperor Edward the Seventh, the joyous celebration of your coronation that goes on all over the vast British empire which spans over one crore and fifteen lakh square miles or a little more than one fifth of the world, testifies to the deep regard for justice and affection for subject people of your deceased mother and the king. On this auspicious occasion of the coronation, we pray to Ishwara in the words of ancient poets."[72] In the case of George, there is a more elaborate description that brings the coronation alive before the Odia readers as an unfolding theatrical scene. George passes through the well-decorated town to Westminster Abbey, there is a solemn dialogue between him and the archbishop of Canterbury, George takes his vows, receives the homage and worship of his people, and then returns to the palace. The scene culminates with the imperial spectator's blessings in Sanskrit: "May you have devotion to truth like Yudhisthir, may you have the wisdom of Bidur, may you remain steadfast in your devotion to Narayan."[73] The bourgeois liberal language of character formation of the preceding sections of the narrative finds a culmination in the *niti* tradition of Sanskrit political aesthetics.

4. Conclusion

John Buckley, Gaurishankar Ray, and Nilamani Bidyaratna can be described as "provincial Victorians." In different ways they imagined themselves as belonging to Victoria's empire. Sukanya Banerjee has recently studied how a political language of citizenship was mobilized by British Indians to construct narratives about and claim "their perceived rights" as imperial citizens.[74] She works with a particular idea of citizenship—it is situated "not so much in the realm of statutory enactment as in the cultural, imaginative, and affective fields that both

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engender it and are constituted by it."[75] The present essay is in sympathy with Banerjee's project to pay attention to "the 'dialogical' and 'narrative' constructions of political self-hood."[76] Having said that, the political language of *rajabhakti* this essay explores does not immediately coincide with the language of citizenship or rights. Buckley identifies himself as "a plain Baptist Missionary" who is loyal but honest. Both Gaurishankar and Nilamani would relate to *praja* as the more appropriate term of self-definition than citizen. They all imagine themselves as belonging to the empire but do not necessarily see themselves as imperial citizens. In Banerjee's fascinating study, the language of citizenship or rights gets activated in moments of contestations—memorandums and petitions are the genres in which she locates this language in the first instance. In contrast, Buckley, Gaurishankar, Nilamani, and their genres of letters, tracts, newspaper reports, and biographies evoke a sense of belonging of a different order. It is marked by a more everyday tone. The article employs the phrase "provincial Victorians" to describe their position, their quotidian sense of politically belonging to Victoria's empire from afar.

Notes

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1. For a discussion of the political language of ephemeral texts, see Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, 10–14. Also see Pocock, "The Concept of a Language."
2. For a discussion of the Odia public sphere, see Mishra, *Language and the Making*, 76–105. Also see S. Mohanty, *Periodical Press and Colonial Modernity*.
3. For a study of Providence, see Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*. For a discussion on economic rationalism, see Johnson, *Making the Market*. And for character, see Collini, *Public Moralists*.
4. For a discussion on the importance of life writing as an approach to global histories of the empire, see Gareth Curless, Stacey Hynd, Temilola Alanamu, and Katherine Roscoe, "Editors' Introduction," 723–25.
5. "A Brief View of the Christian Religion," 26. My translation.

6. "Buckley, John," 84–86. For Buckley, see also Brannon Ingram's chapter in this volume.
7. "Funeral of the Rev. Dr. Buckley," 5.
8. "Buckley, John," 84–86.
9. Rath, *Cuttack Darshana*, 12. Rath describes him as "priyamvada Buckley."
10. Buckley, "The Queen's Proclamation at Cuttack," 49–52. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
11. Bradley, *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism*, 418, 144. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
12. For similar assessments of the radical Dissent in the nineteenth century, see Biagini, "Radicalism and Liberty," 102–4.
13. For an analysis of the settlement and rise of this agrarian class, see Chakrabarti, *Assembling the Local*, 94.
14. "On Providence," 189–90. My translation.
15. "A Brief View," 25. My translation.
16. "A Brief View," 25. My translation.
17. Clark, *English Society*, 200, 208, 222, 223, 224, 232.
18. Clark, *English Society*, 213, 218, 225, 226, 227, 232.
19. "Bharateswari attalika," *Utkala Dipika* (Cuttack), February 1, 1879, 18.
20. Chand, *Gaurishankar*, 18, 21–22, 24, 35.
21. Chand, *Gaurishankar*, 33–35.
22. Fakir Mohan Senapati, the most prominent among the early novelists in Odia, described Gourishankar as a "Man of Business." Chand, *Gaurishankar*, 134.
23. Johnson, "Market Disciplines," 203, 210, 214, 215. Also see Johnson, *Making the Market*, 23–24, 31–32.
24. Johnson, "Market Disciplines," 203, 210, 212, 214, 215; Johnson, *Making the Market*, 31–32.
25. Johnson, "Market Disciplines," 215–16.
26. Johnson, "Market Disciplines," 216.
27. News report, *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), January 19, 1878.
28. "Bharateswari mandira," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), December 14, 1878. On Ravenshaw's contributions as the commissioner of Orissa from 1865 to 1878, see N. Mohanty, *Ravenshaw College*, 26–61. On Beames's contributions, first as the collector of Balasore from 1869 to 1873, and then as the collector of Cuttack from 1873 to 1878, see Das Mohapatra, *John Beames*, 1–73.

29. "Suhrud samaj," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), August 31, 1878. Also see News report, *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), September 14, 1878.
30. "Bharateswari mandira," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), December 14, 1878.
31. News report, *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), December 28, 1878.
32. For appeals, see News report, *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), October 4, 1879, and News report, *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), October 18, 1879. Lists of subscribers were published at least on two occasions. "Atirika," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), February 16, 1878, and "Atirika," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), February 1, 1879.
33. "Bharateswari attalika," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), July 16, 1881; News report, *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), July 9, 1881.
34. "Proceedings," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), May 22, 1886.
35. T. E. Ravenshaw expressed his reservations in a communication to Metcalfe. See "Sanskaraka o bangali," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), May 22, 1886.
36. "Proceedings," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), May 22, 1886.
37. News report, *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), July 24, 1886.
38. Chand, *Gaurishankar*, 97.
39. "Atirika," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), February 1, 1879.
40. "Atirika," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), February 1, 1879.
41. N. Mohanty, *Ravenshaw College*, 52–53.
42. "Atirikta," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), December 6, 1879.
43. N. Mohanty, *Ravenshaw College*, 52–53.
44. "Gadajatara prati atyachara," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), May 9, 1885.
45. "Gadajatara prati atyachara," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), May 9, 1885.
46. Editorial, *Baleswar Samvad Vahika* (Baleswar), August 16, 1874.
47. News report, *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), November 6, 1880, and News report, *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), January 1, 1881.
48. "Hata Atyachara," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), March 25, 1882, 46.
49. "Balya Siksha," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), May 7, 1881, 91.
50. "Balya Siksha," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), May 7, 1881, 91.
51. "Balya Siksha," *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), May 7, 1881, 91.
52. Bidyaratna, *Samrat Charita*, 3.
53. Bidyaratna, *Shri Krupamaya Charitra*, 37.
54. Bidyaratna, *Nabina Samrat*, 30.
55. Behera, *Pandit Nilamani Vidyaratna*, 7, 8, 12, 29, 33, 35. Information about Nilamani's life and work are drawn from this source unless otherwise mentioned.
56. I borrow the term from Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press*, 15.

57. On the work of Utkal Sammilani, see Mishra, *Language and the Making*, 106–151.
58. Nanda Kishore Bal, a well-known poet of the early twentieth century, wrote the lines. Behera, *Pandit Nilamani Vidyaratna*, 37.
59. Fakir Mohan Senapati described Nilamani as a "Selfmade man." Behera, *Pandit Nilamani Vidyaratna*, 1.
60. Chakrabarty, *The Calling of History*.
61. Chakrabarty, *The Calling of History*, 212.
62. Chakrabarty, *The Calling of History*, 213.
63. Bidyaratna, *Shri Krupamaya Charitra*, 17–18, 21–22.
64. Bidyaratna, *Samrat Charita*, 2–4.
65. Bidyaratna, *Nabina Samrat*, 2–4.
66. Bidyaratna, *Samrat Charita*, 9, 11, 13.
67. Bidyaratna, *Nabina Samrat*, 9, 12, 27–29.
68. Bidyaratna, *Nabina Samrat*, 31.
69. Bidyaratna, *Nabina Samrat*, 1. Also, Bidyaratna, *Samrat Charita*, 15.
70. Acharya, *Odisara Itihasa*, 157–58.
71. On *niti* tradition and its interface with bourgeois moral literature in colonial India, see, Hatcher, *Idioms of Improvement*, 117–37.
72. Bidyaratna, *Samrat Charita*, 16.
73. Bidyaratna, *Nabina Samrat*, 38.
74. Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*, 3.
75. Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*, 5.
76. Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*, 6.

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