

*The Masculinities of Post-colonial Governance: Bureaucratic memoirs of the Indian Civil Service**

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Abstract

This article examines the memoirs of Indian Civil Service officers as they continued to work in what became the Indian Administrative Service after independence. Rather than being understood solely as historical archives, these texts constitute a genre that can be called the ‘bureaucratic memoir’ which reveals masculinities that are both colonial and post-colonial. These memoirs, and their publication decades after independence reveal attempts by elites to preserve the power of the bureaucracy into subsequent decades. The texts hope to disavow but instead also reveal the patriarchal intimacies of these elites, even as these were challenged by charges of corruption and failure which emerged almost from the first moments of independence.

Introduction

In an afterword to H. M Patel’s memoir, his son-in-law, Kersy Katrak, a poet and pioneering advertising executive, reflects on Patel’s life in newly independent India in the following words:

It struck me that the whole of upper class India was in fact a small village scattered geographically in Delhi, Bombay and perhaps three or four other metropolitan cities. Everybody knows everybody else or least someone who

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knew anybody else who mattered. I was amazed at first and later amused by this small fragile ring of concentric circles, amounting perhaps to ten thousand families, who in point of fact were the real rulers of India. I remarked then ... that 1947 may have ushered in a nominal democracy, but this nation remained, for anybody with eyes to see, a seamlessly functioning triple oligarchy of political power, industrial wealth, and media influence.¹

The 'triple oligarchy' Katrak mentions included bureaucrats such as Patel who were part of this ruling group. Patel started out in the Indian Civil Service—the British Indian Civil Service that ruled India—moved to the elite civil service of the new Indian nation-state, and later became an educator, philanthropist, and politician after leaving the bureaucracy under the cloud of a scandal. He was able to move from one realm of power to the other, from bureaucracy to national politics to philanthropy. Katrak's remarks, included in Patel's memoir, also reveal the emerging challenges to such power, as awareness of these networks of elites sat uneasily with other genders, classes, and castes in the new democracy.²

Patel's memoir is one of four examined in this article, whose author-subjects were elite administrative officials who had previously been part of the Indian Civil Service, the civil administration of the British colonial state. These texts are, in order of their publication: Dharma Vira, *Memoirs of a Civil Servant*; S. Bhoothalingam, *Reflections on An Era*; H. M. Patel, *Rites of Passage: A Civil Servant Remembers*; and Jayawant Mallanah Shrinagesh, *Between Two Stools: My Life in the ICS Before and After Independence*.³ More such texts have been published,⁴ but

¹ Mahajan, S. (2005). 'Afterword' by Katrak, K. in Patel, H. M. *Rites of Passage: A Civil Servant Remembers*, Delhi, Rupa and Co., p. 251.

² See Thomas Blom Hansen, for a discussion of the struggle for sovereignty and authority from colonial to post-colonial India and the place of a select group of elites, such as the bureaucrats I describe here, as outside the violence of the colonial and post-colonial state: Hansen, T. B. and Stepputat, F. (2005). 'Sovereigns Beyond the State: On Legality and Authority in Urban India' in *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Post-colonial World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, pp. 169–191.

³ Vira, D. (1975). *Memoirs of a Civil Servant*, Delhi, Vikas Publishing House; Bhoothalingam, S. (1993). *Reflections on an Era: Memoirs of a Civil Servant*, Delhi, Affiliated East-West Press Private Ltd; Patel, H. M. (2005). *Rites of Passage: A Civil Servant Remembers*, Mahajan, S. (ed.), Delhi, Rupa and Co.; Shrinagesh, J. M. (2007). *Between Two Stools: My Life in the ICS Before and After Independence*, Hartog, R. & Hartog, S. (eds), Delhi, Rupa and Co.

⁴ This article concerns one group of upper-caste Indian Civil Service bureaucrats. I do not include here the accounts of other groups who also became Indian Administrative Service after independence and who present some quite different perspectives. But others that are similar to those I discuss here include: Bonarjee, N. B. (1970). *Under Two Masters*, London, Oxford University Press; Mangat Rai, E. N.

these four examples provide evidence of the kinds of bureaucrats who became important figures in the newly independent nation in the elite cadre of the Indian Administrative Service, and whose careers in independent India were continuous with their service in the British Indian Civil Service. Only one of these memoirs was published by the author during his lifetime; the other three were all published a decade or two after the deaths of their subjects.

That the Indian Civil Service was comprised of upper-caste males is well known. Indian Civil Service recruits were from families in professional occupations such as government service, medicine, law, and education.⁵ After initially offering the exams only in Britain, which ensured that the only Indian recruits to the Service were very elite males, in 1922 civil service exams began to be offered in India. David C. Potter suggests that from the 1920s there were fewer European entrants to the service than expected, so the Indian Civil Service was opened up to Indians, although the number of Indians was kept low so as to not make Europeans a minority in the Service.⁶ By 1942, almost half of Indian Civil Service officers were Indians. Janaki Patnaik suggests that access to Western-type education was the crucial factor in the formation of an Indian Administrative Service officer (even after independence), stating that it was primarily the higher castes that made use of Western education.⁷

A study of these bureaucrats reveals much about the formation of networks of male power and the hegemonic masculinities that made up the powerful patriarchies that governed India after independence.⁸ While scholars have written about the nationalist elite who created new domains of 'private' life when faced with British discourses

(1973). *Commitment, My Style: A Career in the Indian Civil Service*, Delhi, Vikas Publishing House; Menon, K. P. S. (1979). *Memories and Musings*, New Delhi, Allied Publishers; Mukherjee, B. C. (1994). *Administration in Changing India*, New Delhi, Blaze Publishers and Distributors Pvt. Ltd.

⁵ Potter, D. C. (1996). *India's Political Administrators: From ICS to IAS*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, p. 116.

⁶ Potter, D. C. (1973). Manpower Shortage and the End of Colonialism: The Case of the Indian Civil Service, *Modern Asian Studies*, 7:1, pp. 47–73.

⁷ Patnaik, J. (1975). *The Indian Administrative Service: Problems of Public Bureaucracy in a Developing Country*, Doctoral Thesis, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, p. 55; <https://dds.crl.edu/crldelivery/7566> [accessed 10 November 2014].

⁸ I am not arguing here that this elite was formative of Indian nationalism; rather, I argue that the memoirs attempt to see bureaucratic history as national history (not as nationalist history).

of reason and rationality,⁹ my research shows that such an elite, though differently gendered from the British, was formed by an interconnected group of men; their power came from a variety of connections and relationships that sustained patriarchal networks among high-caste men, and also produced emerging masculinities that continue to shape post-colonial governance. Such masculinities moved from a more elite form of paternalistic governance to a more technocratic masculinity which became normative within the upper classes as India, under Nehru, moved towards embracing industrialization as development.¹⁰ The masculinities of this group of elite men came not simply from their power within the state, but also from the power they accrued within the networks mentioned by Kattrak; their ability to separate public and private realms often hid the privileges of these interconnected networks.

Patriarchy, masculinity, and the intimacies of corruption

Wendy Brown suggests that ‘the masculinism of the state refers to those features of the state that signify, enact, sustain, and represent masculine power as a form of dominance’.¹¹ She follows Kathy Ferguson in suggesting that bureaucratic power ‘feminizes subjects while it excludes female subjects’.¹² Brown looks at state ‘masculinism’ as a power to ‘describe and run the world’ as well as of ‘access to women’—a view in alignment with some of the particular masculinities I am describing here. While the bureaucratic power of the Indian Civil Service was feminizing to those subject to its authority in the general public, it enabled the production of ruling-class masculinities in the history of the new nation. Yet Brown’s theory of the masculinity of the state is somewhat restricted because it does not account for the heterogeneous ways in which

⁹ Chatterjee, P. (1993). *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post-colonial Histories*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press.

¹⁰ Rosen, G. (1967). *Democracy and Economic Change in India*, Berkeley, University of California Press; Prakash, G. (1999). *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press. For the complexity of this process see, Chakrabarty, B. (1992). Jawaharlal Nehru and Planning: 1938–41: India at the Crossroads, *Modern Asian Studies*, 36:2, pp. 275–287.

¹¹ Brown, W. (1992). Finding the Man in the State, *Feminist Studies*, 18:1, pp. 7–34.

¹² Ferguson, K. E. (1984). *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press.

post-colonial subjects became governing elites. Nor does it address the problematics of colonial and post-colonial rule, or the context of India in which familial relationships, patriarchal power, and networks of bureaucracies produced masculinities specific to the post-colonial state. For instance, Mrinalini Sinha's analysis of 'colonial masculinity' suggests that such bureaucratic power was not easily available to racial others in the colonial order in India, especially those who were seen to be more feminized; she argues that certain groups of Indians were seen as feminized in contrast to others.¹³ This complexity of power under colonial rule enabled the specific intimacies that characterized this generation of bureaucrats. Racial difference and British colonial rule, which might have feminized some Indians before independence, were translated into the power and privilege of the Indian Civil Service after independence.

The terms 'patriarchy' and 'masculinities' enable the analysis of networks of male influence and power and suggest nuanced and changing gendered norms, and both terms are necessary here. If the former suggests a power that was accrued from being the heads of the 'ten thousand' ruling families that Katrak mentions, and which was networked and connected, it was not all the same globally and has taken quite different forms historically. Recourse to the term 'masculinities' enables us to understand divergences within the patriarchy itself, but is not by itself sufficient to understand how power was accrued to it or how it became normative within specific contexts. Without the notion of patriarchy, power and inequalities between men and between genders—where networks and intimacies produced notions of public and private—may not be visible, and commonalities and connections according to caste, class, and community may be left out. The post-colonial patriarchy visible in the memoirs I examine saw itself as historical, natural, national, and connected; it asserted its power both against the British (who saw Indians in the civil service as racially inferior) and against lower-status men and female others. This patriarchy of elites saw independent India and the 'Indian family' as needing proper governance through the experience and wisdom of the patriarch, and thus they connected intimate life with governance. The power of these elites also came from and extended into their authority within the family, as well as from participation in colonial and post-colonial rule.

¹³ Sinha, M. (1995). *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

The texts examined here reveal how patriarchal masculinity was a more capacious and differentiated institution than the scholarly understanding of post-colonial male elites has generally shown. If Partha Chatterjee has shown us that ‘nationalist thought’ can be understood as constituted by powerful men,¹⁴ such a connection is visible in these memoirs. Yet this version of ‘nationalist thought’ is precisely what must be questioned.¹⁵ Such ‘nationalist thought’ was not unchallenged in post-colonial India, and was dogged by charges of elitism, exclusion, failure, and corruption. The Indian Civil Service after independence became not a central institution of a well-functioning state, but rather a sign of wealth and elite power, and charges of ‘corruption’ were precisely the means through which this power was challenged, albeit from those wanting access to such patriarchy and power. Corruption thus posed a challenge to the very networks of elite power—some hidden and some visible—of this high-level bureaucracy as it retained power after independence. Some networks were licit and some illicit, some in the domain of domestic life and some in the bureaucratic office. Yet all these connections enabled Katrak’s ‘ten thousand families’ to remain powerful, bringing the bureaucracy, politicians and industrialists together in intimate relations of the ‘triple oligarchy’.

William Gould has argued that the discourse of corruption in India has existed since the 1940s. For Gould, colonial power produced the specific form corruption took in India, and he argues that the Indian preoccupation with ‘corruption’ was defined by colonial power, and that the shift to independence heightened popular awareness of corruption.¹⁶ Rather than quantifying corruption, he sees it as a shifting concept that is difficult to define, but suggests that its discourses tell us a great deal about people’s relations to the state. Gould’s approach of seeing corruption as a broad arena of ‘social

¹⁴ This approach is exemplified by Partha Chatterjee’s *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, in which ‘nationalist thought’ is presented through the ideas of three powerful men. Chatterjee, P. (1993) *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, London, Zed Books, Minnesota Press.

¹⁵ Some historians have concluded that the Indian Civil Service was critical for the new nation. George Rosen, for instance, writes that although the bureaucracy was not upper-caste, it was elite, and it was efficient and influential despite becoming an elite. Rosen, *Democracy and Economic Change*.

¹⁶ Gould, W. (2010). *Bureaucracy, Community and Influence in India: Society and State, 1930s–1960s*, London, Routledge. See also Gupta, A. (2012). *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence and Poverty in India*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, for an analysis of the discourse of corruption, in relation to developmentalism.

advantage' comprising everyday transactions is helpful to understand how and why the Indian Administrative Service was dogged by charges of corruption from the moment of independence. Additionally, his attention to the shift from colonialism reveals why the British Indian Civil Service could be claimed by these men as incorruptible while the Indian Administrative Service was believed to be deeply corrupt: the democratic state, unlike the colonial state, could be held accountable. Furthermore, as S. Rose-Ackerman has argued, close connections with colonial powers may suggest that these elites were already corrupt, having moved into new realms of power under colonialism.¹⁷

Yet much of the discussion of corruption and the state pays little attention to its gendered and sexualized nature. While such issues may become a topic for intervention and publicity only when a sexual scandal involving a high-level official becomes public, the everyday advantages of sexual transactions claimed by powerful bureaucrats escape media attention—even though they may be known to all. Indeed these advantages—those Gayle Rubin called patriarchy's traffic in women (though it may also be access to men)—are highly desirable to many. The advantages for the elite patriarchy are thus not simply bestowed in the realm of work, but rather across public and private divides, so that domestic and professional realms become continuous. These powers of the patriarchy are what make its forms of masculinity attractive to so many. As Ann Stoler has shown, colonialism required social classifications that came from affective and intimate relations within colonial groups as well as between colonizers and colonized. Domestic arrangements were as important to colonial rule as matters concerning military issues or governance. Yet it remains to be understood how such intimacies formed part of post-colonial elite networks in India and elsewhere, and how they were central to the challenges produced by charges of 'corruption'.

In particular, upper-caste exclusion and cohabitation, the relationship with colonial power, disdain for politicians in independent India, and old and new forms of patriarchy enabled these elites to retain power, just as these issues produced challenges to it. Many questioned whether these men ever became the 'servants' of the phrase 'civil servant'.¹⁸ Many bureaucrats continued to add the 'ICS'

¹⁷ Rose-Ackerman, S. (2010). Corruption: Greed, Culture and the State, *The Yale Law Journal*: <http://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/corruption-greed-culture-and-the-state>, [accessed 10 November 2014].

¹⁸ Mukherjee, *Administration in Changing India*, p. 7.

(Indian Civil Service) to their names long after independence. There were certainly paternalistic aspects to Indian Civil Service attitudes that carried into the modern post-colonial state as well, as Amit Rai suggests.¹⁹ The masculine notion of the ‘steel frame’ that held the empire together—Philip Woodruff proclaimed that this steel frame kept law and order in an empire of millions²⁰—became a question and a goal, and the bureaucracy continued to be contested.

The elite civil service bureaucracy was not simply a professional identity, but one that encompassed private and public domains. It was a form that had to be produced in the independent democratic state through kinship across different domains of social, economic and political life, and which also controlled affective relations between those within several hierarchies. After independence, daughters and sons of Indian Civil Service workers married into the same bureaucracy, and many went into the Service. Although caste and class boundaries were maintained, this elite formation was mainly upper-caste, and was sustained through myriad practices of cohabitation and kinship among upper-caste and elite families. As members of the Indian Civil Service, these were supposedly men of ‘good character’ who formed a connection with each other through joint and common training, racial separation from the British Indian Civil Service, kinship and mentorship relations, the cultivation of appropriate sentiments, and the articulation of common concerns around governing the new nation.

If the new nation is understood not simply through bureaucratic power but through writings and texts by and about powerful men narrating the new nation, the question of genre also must be considered. The genre of the memoir creates a specific connection between contemporary readers and these ruling elites. The post-colonial bureaucratic memoir is not simply a historical archive, but is also a genre that consolidates the power of these elites as essential to the new nation-state. Closely related to the autobiography, which seeks to present emotions and intimacies deemed private rather than public, the bureaucratic memoir seemingly provides access to the state, eliding private emotions, while insisting on the demarcation between public and private in order to refocus contemporary readers’ attention onto the importance of these bureaucrats, via a pedagogy of

¹⁹ Rai, A. (2002). *Rule of Sympathy: Sentiment, Race and Power, 1750–1850*, New York, Palgrave.

²⁰ Woodruff, P. (1954). *The Guardians*, New York, St. Martin’s Press.

the *public* world of the men who saw themselves as having built the new nation. Attention to genre and power are thus critical to understanding both the publication of these memoirs and their historical importance.

The genre of the post-colonial bureaucratic memoir

In their edited anthology, *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography and Life History*, David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn focus on 'life histories'—a term embracing written and oral histories—of ordinary people, not only famous figures, because such lives have 'value as social documents, as insights into the ways in which individuals (or the societies around them) sought to present their versions of "truth"'.²¹ For them, 'life histories' are 'genres worthy of systematic analysis', not simply as historical data but as 'accounts of personal lives that reflect culturally specific notions of the person or self'.²² They seek to find what is specific and different about life histories written in India, moving from the autobiographical writings of Nehru and Gandhi to oral narratives collected by anthropologists.²³

Arnold and Blackburn's term 'life history' signals the use of such texts for historical analysis. However, the production and consumption of these texts sheds light on the power of bureaucrats that is both topical and historical. The memoir as a genre has gained popularity in recent years and has a specificity, in terms of both the audiences it tries to reach and the access it seemingly provides to details of particular lives. The bureaucratic memoir is a genre variant that provides access to the state, and its differences from autobiography, in particular Indian nationalist autobiographies, are instructive in suggesting how distinctions between public and private are produced, and in providing details of what is seen as a properly public life. It is closer to a political memoir than to a personal one, aiming to provide details of national significance, but also carefully constructing the participation of the memoirist in what is seen to be a public life. Thus the term 'life history' may not encompass the project that is the memoir, and producing and

²¹ Arnold, D. and Blackburn, S. (2004). *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography and Life History*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press and Permanent Black, p. 5.

²² Arnold and Blackburn, *Telling Lives in India*, pp. 4–5.

²³ Nehru, Jawaharlal (1946 [2004]). *Discovery of India*, New Delhi, Penguin; Nehru, Jawaharlal (1936 [1962]). *An Autobiography*, Delhi, Allied Publishers; Gandhi, M. K. (1994), *An Autobiography or My Experiments with Truth* in Mahadev Desai (trans.), *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Delhi, Government of India Publications Division.

publishing such a text can reveal much about the desires and purposes of their production.

In discussing the genre of the political memoir, Leslie Pal states that ‘an almost universal feature of political memoirs’ is that they have ‘an undertone of contrived humility; the writer often appears as an ingénue confronted by large, malevolent forces. This undertone is of course at odds with the dominant theme of any memoir, which is to indicate the astute and virtuous character of its author.’²⁴ If the very genre of the memoir produces this tone of the ‘ingénue’ facing difficult forces, in the bureaucratic memoirs most often the ‘difficult forces’ are the politicians, or those higher up in the bureaucratic ladder, who are believed to work malevolently, corruptly or unfairly to malign the author. Yet, the narrative must also claim authority in order to be a reliable historian of the new nation. The memoir’s structure itself—moving from childhood to adulthood and revealing the autobiography’s influence on the narrative—produces the powerful and patriarchal historian’s voice as that of a child who becomes an adult. In so doing, it simultaneously claims a benign, pastoral paternalism as well as innocence from power. It demonstrates a closeness to power that endows authority but also forecloses blame or responsibility.

In particular, such a disavowal of power becomes a strategy to rebut charges of elitism and excessive authority, and to obscure the private networks of power and the domain of domestic life might make that power visible. In order to achieve this effect, the narratives work to always lay the blame for corruption elsewhere. Even memoirs, such as those by H. M. Patel or Bhoothalingam, written after the authors had had to deal with corruption charges of a very public nature, project the tone of the ingénue. Patel and Bhoothalingam’s memoirs are clearly a response to the charges of corruption that dogged them in their careers. Accused of corruption in what came to be called ‘the Mundra Affair’, Patel left the bureaucracy, disgusted that he had been scapegoated for what he saw as the corruption of T. T. Krishnamachari, the finance minister. He became a politician and then moved to Gujarat to redeem himself by creating educational institutions in his home state.

Mostly written in English, as the language of colonial and post-colonial governance, the memoirs, like all political memoirs, try to

²⁴ Pal, L. (1988). ‘Thanks for the Memories . . .’: Political Memoirs, Public Policy and the Political Imagination, *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques*, 14:1, pp. 92–103.

limit revelations just as much as they claim to disclose. They compare British and independent India, presenting bureaucratic power as both continuous with British rule but also distinct from it in the making of the new nation. Certainly, the work that these elites performed was distinct from colonial rule, for instance, dividing up assets of the country for partition, creating and managing the first steel plants, forming treaties with other countries, seeking technologies for the new state—these responsibilities were different from the work of being a collector, or magistrate in the British Indian Civil Service. Most of the memoirs conclude with some reflections on governance, as well as with lamentations about the failures and mistakes of politicians.

Differences within the genre emerge from nuances of paternalism and masculinity as these men become technocrats, management experts, banking and finance managers. The emerging fields of industrial technology, management, and finance enabled these officials to create new realms of post-colonial masculinity through forms of expertise that Tim Mitchell has also described in the case of Egypt.²⁵

The compilations of the memoirs reveal the importance of an analysis of the genre for understanding the historical contexts of these masculinities and patriarchies. The memoirs reveal the desire of historians and family members to defend and extend this power into subsequent generations. Such a desire is evident in the particular editorial methods used in compiling the memoirs. These are often, though not always, compilations created by editors, family members, and friends who select for inclusion papers written by the subjects of the memoir. They comprise narratives written at different times, incorporate multiple temporalities, photographs, and appendices, and as such they tell us a great deal not only about the subject or author of the memoir but also about those who compiled the memoir. The production of the memoir also indicates an interest in the wider dissemination of these texts and a market for them in contemporary India. The ‘truths’ the texts reveal are thus multiple and heterogeneous, but what they reveal about the nature of the genre of bureaucratic memoir is its post-colonial variant.²⁶

²⁵ Mitchell, T. (2002). *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

²⁶ Holden, P. (2008). *Autobiography and Decolonization: Modernity, Masculinity and the Nation-state*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press.

J. M. Shrinagesh's memoir, *Between Two Stools*, was published because his sister, Shakuntala Hartog, and her husband, the writer Rudolf Hartog, discovered his papers, and as historians, they believed them to be of interest to the history of post-colonial India.²⁷ Shrinagesh's memoir includes insights into what are understood as key moments of national history: partition, the creation of the first national steel plants, and the first airplane factories. It is not expressly fashioned to teach subsequent generations how to govern, unlike Dharma Vira's text, although it does include reflections on the emerging form of knowledge that came to be called 'management' as a form of elite expertise. In contrast, Dharma Vira published his memoir soon after retirement because he wanted to claim the effectiveness and efficiency of President's rule after being appointed as governor in a number of states—Punjab, Haryana, Mysore, and West Bengal.

H. M. Patel's memoir reveals both the context of its publication, and the editorial concerns of the historians who created it through selections from his papers. The memoir was published because one of his daughters, Amrita Patel, sought out the historian Sucheta Mahajan to go through Patel's papers and compile the memoir. Because Mahajan had interviewed Patel for a historical project for the Nehru Memorial Library, she was asked to edit Patel's papers and also wrote an introduction. This introduction is preceded by a foreword written by another historian, Bipin Chandra. An afterword written by Patel's son-in-law, Kersy Katrak, testifies that Patel had been intent on writing the memoir but left it unfinished because, as Katrak notes, 'like all public minded men, the life to be lived came first, and absorbed him wholly'.²⁸ The memoir's narratives and inclusions suggest the intention of Amrita Patel, Katrak, Chandra, and Mahajan to remember and recognize Patel as a 'public' man, and in eliminating mention of his family or friends, the memoir only gestures to the intimacies that might have questioned the power and privilege that constituted elite masculinity. Mahajan points out that omitting personal matters was important to the making of the 'public persona' that created the 'eminent men' of the nation.²⁹ In the process the text

²⁷ Rudolf Hartog wrote *Sign of the Tiger: Subhas Chandra Bose and his Indian Legion in Germany, 1941–1945*, New Delhi, Rupa and Company, 2002. This was an English version of the German edition, *Im Zeichen des Tigers: Die Indische Legion auf Deutscher Seite, 1941–1945*, published by Busse Seewald in 1991. Hartog was attached to the Indian legion as an interpreter in Germany in those years.

²⁸ Patel, *Rites of Passage*, p. 239.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xix.

suggest the demarcations of public and private that are critical to the genre of the bureaucratic memoir.

For the historians Chandra and Mahajan, Patel's memoir is public because it provides information about national history. Chandra suggests that the book 'highlights many hitherto less known aspects of the Partition of India'.³⁰ Mahajan relates that she was responsible for suggesting that the narratives of the Indian Civil Service years be combined with those of Patel's work during partition,³¹ thus creating a sense of continuity between colonial rule and governance in independent India.³² Mahajan points out Patel's biases, such as, during meetings with Pakistani counterparts, identifying all Muslim civil service officers as Pakistani, even if they were Indian. She suggests that Patel's papers cannot be read simply as a 'ringside' view of history,³³ even as she believes they are valuable as an 'impartial, even dispassionate view' remembered many years later.³⁴ Thus she concludes that although the memoir has 'little of the self' and no mention of family or children, it is valuable because 'H. M. Patel's life story, where a civil servant goes on to play an important role in nation building mirrors the transition from colonial to independent rule'³⁵ and narrates a "'bridge of service" that spanned political change'.³⁶

Though Bipin Chandra is invested in seeing the memoir as a 'historical document', Mahajan is more critical.³⁷ Perhaps the claim of 'rational' and paternal governance is to be attributed as much to historians such as Chandra as to the subjects of history. Mahajan, on the other hand, points out Patel's paternalism, designating Patel's work in the civil service as following a 'paternalistic ideal, in which the benevolent administrator was the mai-bap [mother-father] of the ordinary village folk',³⁸ a description that combines governance with

³⁰ Ibid, p. xii.

³¹ Ibid, p. xlv.

³² My thanks to Gyan Pandey for making this point.

³³ Patel, *Rites of Passage*, p. xxxii.

³⁴ Ibid, p. xxvi.

³⁵ Ibid, p. xxxii.

³⁶ Ibid, p. xxxvi.

³⁷ Ibid, p. xii. Bipin Chandra, a historian based at Jawaharlal Nehru University, was a prominent historian of India and the nationalist movement, author of key books on the struggle for independence and economic history, and an engaged and politically active scholar. For a critique of Chandra's historiography from a subaltern studies viewpoint, see Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2000). *Subaltern Studies and Post-colonial Historiography*, *Nepantla: Views from the South*, 1:1, pp. 9–32.

³⁸ Patel, *Rites of Passage*, p. xxvii.

a paternalism that is also maternal in its caring approach to ordinary villagers. Patel certainly emerges as a father figure in the photographs included in the memoir, making clear how a paternalistic masculinity and the patriarchal network were combined with the work of the bureaucrat. The private life, though erased in the main chapters of the memoir that are attributed to Patel, is visible in the reasons for publication and in the photographs included in it. Mahajan writes that Patel's daughters were the impetus behind the memoir and that Amrita Patel 'was a relentless slave driver in her mission to secure public recognition of her father's work as a civil servant'.³⁹ Mahajan's introduction points out the devotion of Patel's 'dutiful daughter', who wished the Indian public to remember her father.⁴⁰ For Mahajan, the work of the nation and of the family were unified, and such a unity reveals Patel's paternalism, despite the fact that little about the family enters the narrative. Even without mention of his personal life in the narrative, the photographs included in the book feature several images of Patel with his wife and children. Here the paternalism of governance, of being '*mai-bap*' ('mother-father') to ordinary folk, is linked to the raising of dutiful daughters and the intentions of the editors. Moreover, the comment from Kersey Katrak concerning India's ruling elites, with which I began this article, highlights the continuing importance of these memoirs for the family. Katrak's comments provide most of the insights into Patel as a father, even though such aspects are seen to be outside the purview of the main parts of the memoir.

If Patel's memoir reveals a paternalism via the efforts of his daughter and his son-in law, who remembers him as both a 'public' man and a father, Bhoothalingam's memoir is more of an ideological economic project intended to confirm to its editors the need for India to move from a socialist economy to a more liberalized one. Compiled by the S. Bhoothalingam Literary Trust, the memoir states in a note that the 'recollections [were] dictated by the author at a late stage in his life'. In order to put them 'to use', the Trust 'felt they needed to be read by a wider audience' and that the comparison of 'Nehruvian era with later times', which comprise the focus of the memoir, is 'relevant even today'.⁴¹ Manu Shroff, a former International Monetary Fund and World Bank executive and a key architect of economic

³⁹ Ibid, p. xiv.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. xiv.

⁴¹ Bhoothalingam, *Reflections on an Era*, 'A Note', no page number.

liberalization in the 1980s, helped put together Bhoothalingam's memoir, and wrote a foreword to it in 1993 which argued that the post-colonial planned economy was a continuation of the paternalism of the Indian Civil Service.⁴² He also wrote an addition to the memoir, 'The Civil Service in Retrospect', in which he addressed his own concerns for India's governance. For Shroff, the memoir was important not only because he felt Bhoothalingam was incorruptible in contrast to recently appointed officials, but because it was a historical account that justified contemporary economic policies. In addition, Shroff saw the value of Bhoothalingam's narrative as lessons for 'younger generations of administrators and the general reader' because it was representative of a time 'marked by commitment to the Constitution and observance of institutional norms' which is in 'total contrast to later years'.⁴³

Divergent masculinities, some paternal-benevolent, some nationalist, some more authoritarian, some aligned with a governmentality undergirded by Keynesian economic ideas, become visible in the miscellaneous editorial and other pieces that are included in the memoirs. The genre provides access to the details of the historical narrative of the making of the nation, while constructing public and private realms as separate. Private life appears only in relation to its participation in the formation of the bureaucrat, and though many of the memoirs begin with childhood and family, these recollections quickly move to more official matters. Yet, details of childhood and education, though insignificant in relation to the narratives of bureaucratic work and relations, provide insights into the loyalties and relationships that shaped this elite network, and particularly into how issues of race and gender were critical in constructing the intimacies of colonial and post-colonial power.

Childhood and career: producing public and private spheres

Similarly to autobiography, bureaucratic memoirs often begin with childhood, parents, and education. The narrative of the memoirs predominantly concerns the making of the bureaucrat, because the focus throughout is the job—the joys of being selected, the travails and mastery of training in rural locations, and then the

⁴² Many Shroff, 'Foreword', in Bhoothalingam, *Reflections on an Era*, no page number.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

detailing of accomplishments, promotions, interactions, and conflicts with politicians and famous people (in urban centres), ending with retirement and then the closing remarks (in most cases) on what needs to be done to improve the Indian Administrative Service. The apex of the career is the position in New Delhi in the prime minister's office or a similar high-level position at the centre.

While they begin with childhood, the memoirs narrate the early years as preliminary to the making of a powerful bureaucrat. For some, even the harshness of the British educational system emerged as a solid foundation for a future in government. Shrinagesh, for instance, was sent off as a child with his brother to boarding school in England and did not see his parents for 16 years.⁴⁴ Shrinagesh's memoir begins with his birth, in the fashion of the *Bildungsroman*, though with an Indian difference: 'I was born on 1 January, 1905, and if my father had believed in horoscopes, I am sure the astrologers would have gone to town on the future that awaited me.'⁴⁵ The memoir, from its first moments, highlights his modernity and his importance to the world, while describing a childhood in which maternal influences were all but absent. Shrinagesh makes a gendered division between his mother, who insisted on the horoscope for his elder brother, and the father, who was too modern and scientific to believe in such things. He relates that the year of his birth was significant because it was the year of the Wright Brothers' first flight, and of the Russian Revolution and the Moroccan crisis. This observation becomes noteworthy in light of his subsequent account of managing India's first aircraft company. He sees his life, from the start, as beyond the scope of the family and life in India. Still, he esteems his father's work as a doctor, a researcher in bacteriology, and as a Brahma Samaji who broke with caste rules in order to marry an educated woman from a different caste.

He shows appreciation for his mother, who his father supported in her quest to get a degree from the University of Edinburgh. She also bore seven children while remaining active in many organizations. Yet, his mother's astonishing achievements do not receive more than a cursory mention, and this is not surprising given Shrinagesh's childhood in a British boarding school, where maternal influences were banished

⁴⁴ There is even a fictional account of his school and the life of its headmaster which mentions two Indian boys. Delderfield, R. D. (1972). *To Serve Them All My Days*, London, Hodder and Stoughton.

⁴⁵ Shrinagesh, *Between Two Stools*, p. 1.

from a homosocial world.⁴⁶ He was sent to boarding school in England with his brother when he was nine and his brother was 11. Shrinagesh followed his brother in becoming a school prefect, which must have been a remarkable achievement in the face of the racism of early twentieth-century Britain. He attributes his success at school to his excellence and delight in sporting activities; he emulated his brother in this regard, too. At university, he continued with the sporting life, and it was his athleticism that Shrinagesh believes gained him the respect of his fellow students at school and university.⁴⁷ Yet he was aware of racism from the early years. All through the narrative, he shows his awareness of what he calls the 'colour bar', mentioning that his brother, while at the elite English military academy Sandhurst, encountered a 'colour situation' that was far worse than the one he himself encountered at Cambridge.⁴⁸ He discusses how such racism at Cambridge affected him, explaining that he became one of the 'niggers', a term that he suggests was used to refer to students from India and the colonies. For Shrinagesh, this racism served to 'fan the flame of nationalism in me and I am certain that many of the extremists of the political scene of the British colonies was born there'.⁴⁹

Srinagesh mentions few friends in England by name. His closest relationship was still with his brother, though at various points they competed against each other, especially with regard to women. He narrates how a girl he brought home at college seemed to prefer his brother, and, acknowledging that the girl was enraptured with his brother, Srinagesh simply left them together. This is the first inkling of Shrinagesh's complex relationship with women, particularly English women, as sexual partners. On his return to India after university, he remarks that the English women with whom he had been friends in England would not associate with Indians on the ship because they were so intent on finding English husbands—the 'fishing fleet' he calls them, echoing masculine derision but also revealing anger at the racism he encounters from them. He mentions this racism as evidence of 'an old acquaintance, the colour bar; but this time polished

⁴⁶ For more on the British boarding school, see Vicinus, M. (1984). *Distance and Desire: English Boarding-School Friendships*, *Signs*, 9:4, pp. 600–622.

⁴⁷ See for instance, Deslandes, P. R. (2005). *Oxbridge Men: British Masculinity and the Undergraduate Experience: 1850–1920*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

⁴⁸ Shrinagesh, *Between Two Stools*, pp. 25–26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

to an even finer art',⁵⁰ so that even in the close confines of a ship, racial boundaries were maintained. Thus, he says, 'we who observed this spectacle (of segregation) from the wings, were touched on one particularly sore point: once we had left the docks on the Thames, even those emancipated young women, with whom many of us had passed the time of the day at college, now kept their distance'.⁵¹

In some ways, his single-sex boarding school experience, his rejection by English women, and his claim, which emerges later in the memoir, that he was against 'mixed marriages', indicates that there was much that was too painful to remember or write down. Such comments are also reminders of the narrative exclusions and erasures of the genre of memoir. His memoir includes photographs of his parents, his mother and sisters travelling with him in his job, and he seemed to admire that his mother was an intrepid traveller. He did not marry, remarking that he was a 'confirmed bachelor', even though the early death of his father resulted in his mother and sisters coming to live with him as he began his career in India. But despite accepting his role as patriarch, he did not exhibit the same authoritarian paternalism visible in Dharma Vira's text, for instance. He did accept responsibility for his sisters, because 'Hindu custom gives the responsibility for the widow to the eldest son' and, as his older brother was in the army, 'the responsibility of the head of the family devolved upon me and it was a responsibility that I have never had the occasion to regret'.⁵² His mother, he says, took over the duties that 'fall to the wife of an administrative officer, duties that are by no means social', although there is little other mention of her remarkable achievements. In mentioning such duties, Shrinagesh's paternalism acknowledges the importance of what is seen as the 'women's work' his mother did in caring for women in the village where he was posted. In mentioning his mother's contributions, he differs from Patel or Vira or Bhoothalingam, all of whose wives seem to have been invisible participants in their private lives rather than participants in governing. In these latter texts, wives appear only in the photographs that show the bureaucrat at some important official function; they have been erased from the narrative of the accomplishments or work of the bureaucrat.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 37.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 38.

⁵² Ibid, p. 65.

Much of Shrinagesh's intimacy and admiration was with and for his brother, but it also extended to his valet, Nawab. Shrinagesh had a special relationship with this valet, recalling, 'it was in my first subdivision that I found Nawab, my major-domo in official language, but in reality my friend and mentor'.⁵³ Nawab left for Pakistan during partition because it was too dangerous for him, a Muslim, to remain in what became Indian Punjab. Shrinagesh calls him 'my chauffeur, my valet, my housekeeper and my advisor', and says that he 'lost a friend' at partition. This mention of someone who worked below him is an example of something that is largely absent from the rest of his memoir, which focuses on relations with superiors, famous people or politicians. Subordinates do appear in the office photograph included in the memoir, which confirms his position at work, revealing that for those compiling the memoir, visual evidence of his position was important; while there are photographs with his mother and brother and sister, there are also some with his office staff, visually revealing the male world that this 'confirmed bachelor' inhabited.

H. M. Patel's memoir begins, as does Shrinagesh's, with autobiographical elements: 'I was born and brought up in the early decades of the twentieth century', and Patel tells us that his father was newly arrived in the city, struggled to make his living and worked hard to be successful.⁵⁴ Patel's account of travel to England includes mention of financial difficulties, in which a family friend had to step in to support Patel, and this support appeared to be part of his family tradition. For Patel, these experiences seemed to inculcate a strong sense of family responsibility and friendship, which marked his life, culminating in his participation in the circles of power that constituted the network of political, media, and corporate power that ruled India. It also contributed to his paternalism, which allowed him to support his extended family, and later his community, in similar ways.⁵⁵ His memoir includes more photographs with his wife and daughters than do the others texts under discussion, although it is likely that the editors and/or his daughters, who enabled the book's publication, selected these photographs.

Bhoothalingam's memoir begins with a similar trajectory, showing how his childhood was indicative of his later eminence: 'I think I was

⁵³ Ibid, p. 55.

⁵⁴ Patel, *Rites of Passage*, p. 3.

⁵⁵ After retirement from politics and bureaucracy, Patel helped develop various educational institutions at Vallabh Vidyanagar in Gujarat.

subconsciously aware that I would do something with my life by the time I was about 12. I was quite developed mentally. I had read a lot, a great deal for my age, and very widely too.⁵⁶ He writes of his education at Cambridge, especially in economics with John Maynard Keynes, and states that the lessons he learned from Keynes were useful to him throughout his career. It was this devotion to economic ideas and ideals that enabled him to participate forcefully in the economic decisions of the Nehru era, and he came to have both responsibility and concern for India's Five-Year Plans and its controlled economy. He was less interested in paternalism than in his authority as an economic expert. He participated in the debates over economic policy and pointed out the inefficiencies of the state and the problems inherent in the economic policies he had to implement. More than Patel or Vira's memoirs, this memoir suggests a patriarch who gained authority from expertise on the economy and finance rather than through a broader notion of governance.

Vira's memoir reveals a much more authoritarian patriarchy than that visible in Patel's text. When he was appointed governor of Tamil Nadu, his belief in patriarchy defined his governing style. He uses the analogy of the father knowing best what the family needs in order to suggest that he governed as a patriarch, and that such governance benefits everyone because the nation is a family. Just as the bureaucrat knows best what people need, by extension the central government and its representatives know best what the state must do, more so than elected officials. Thus he states:

[the] head and the states are all the members of the joint family. We cannot expect that there will be uniformity in the thoughts and actions of every member of the family. There may be differences of approach, and even disagreements but, when in the interest of the continuance of the family as an entity, the father or the oldest member counsels a particular course of action, this advice has to be followed.⁵⁷

The wisdom of the state, and of the patriarch as bureaucrat, suggests that the rationality of the bureaucracy was co-constituted by power of the upper-caste, upper-class patriarch. This notion of a co-mingled power from control of state and family supported the national discourse both of the 'joint family' as rationally governed

⁵⁶ Bhoothalingam, *Reflections on an Era*, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Vira, *Memoirs of a Civil Servant*, p. 145.

and of a benevolent patriarchal state, and was driven by the need to perpetuate this 'family'. Thus, he states:

When a particular member of the family refuses to be influenced by the advice of the older member and acts in a manner prejudicial to the prestige, honour and security of the family, the only course of action for him, if the family structure is to be preserved with the cooperation of the other members, would be to assume to himself the conduct of the affairs of the recalcitrant.⁵⁸

Here Vira explains that his work as governor when President's rule was established was an improvement over the corruption and failures of the democratically elected politicians. There is a sense here of the expansion of bureaucracy as patriarchy, in which rationality and kinship were combined. In the case of Dharma Vira, this form of authority, although paternal, also came with the law and order machinery of President's rule as he moved from being an Indian Administrative Service bureaucrat to a governor. The notion of an authoritarian patriarchy, different from Patel's benevolent paternalism, sutured law and order to heteronormative notions of family and to a law and order-based authority that continued after independence. Vira's account makes visible the contradictions between support for a democracy and the proper governance of the state, since he was a fervent nationalist, a good colonial bureaucrat, and a believer in the authoritarian nature of President's rule. Such a combination suggests both a continuation of colonial power as well as the emergence of post-colonial differences.

Colonial kinship: the tensions of the public life

Ann Stoler argues that it was not reason and rationality that produced colonial governance but the 'management of "states of sentiment"'.⁵⁹ She shows how the colonial Dutch government, in adjudicating entrance requirements for civil servants, focused a great deal on 'sentiments', 'sensibilities', and 'aspirations' that would fit the position, and on 'estrangements' from feelings that would distract from the proper sentiments. She points out that in British India, too, such exams selected for something called 'character': 'self-denial,

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 145.

⁵⁹ Stoler, A. L. (2009). *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, p. 59.

diligence, temperance, and self-control were coveted bureaucratic traits'.⁶⁰ For the Indian Civil Service who constituted this elite bureaucracy, such feelings were crucial to the ideologies of the colonial regime. The idea of 'character' was a critical element of the selection process, and after independence it continued to be so in the Indian Administrative Service, but with changes which came from challenges to elite power.

All of the memoirs under discussion share a concern with 'modernity, rationalism, empiricism and the nation', which Partha Chatterjee argues are visible in Nehru's autobiography.⁶¹ The memoirs reveal that patriarchal power was central to this formation and that an upper-caste position was often taken for granted as ensuring 'character'. Potter states that in opening the Indian Civil Service to Indians, the British wanted an elite with British norms of respectability—proper family history and a 'respectable socio-economic position'. In the early days of the admission of Indians to the Indian Civil Service, the British rejected anyone who had participated in nationalist movements. Later on, during periods of greater nationalist participation, according to Potter, the British worked to separate the bureaucratic disposition from the nationalist one.⁶² The memoirs, however, indicate that racial discrimination was also part of the Indian Civil Service bureaucracy and had an effect on the making of the post-colonial Indian Administrative Service.

The question of loyalty and character for these Indian elites was both a matter of a career in which authority, caste, and class position provided high status, both before and after independence, and a concern to prove that their participation in colonial rule did not make them traitors to the new nation. As Leela Fernandes argues:

Connections between the middle class and the state in the post-independence period were first consolidated through the structure of the state bureaucracy. The basic structure of the colonial authority, the Indian Civil Service, was retained and expanded into the Indian Administrative Service ... In particular, the IAS remained a central draw for the English-educated segments of those classes (the middle classes) given the significance of English-language skills for entry into IAS employment.⁶³

⁶⁰ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, p. 65.

⁶¹ Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*.

⁶² Potter, *India's Political Administrators*, p. 113.

⁶³ Fernandes, L. (2006). *India's New Middle-Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, pp. 22–23.

In a newly independent India, the decision to continue the civil service in the same form as that of colonial India produced its complex relation to the colonial state and to the new state. Despite professing loyalty to Indian nationalism and the new nation, employees of the Indian Civil Service continued to distinguish themselves from their Indian Administrative Service colleagues on the basis of their selection and experience of governance. Yet, their loyalty to the nation and to the new political elites was often filled with tension, and the question of loyalty itself reveals that many nationalists viewed their close relationships with British supervisors, colleagues, and the colonial state with suspicion. Nehru famously disdained these bureaucrats, and it was Vallabhai Patel who championed their cause and necessity after independence.⁶⁴ Such disdain was often mutual; for instance, Shrinagesh worked closely with Nehru, the first prime minister of India, but regarded him with some disdain—in his memoir he does not neglect to mention that Nehru tried to enter the Indian Civil Service and failed because he graduated with a second-class degree from Cambridge, not the first that was the requirement for entrance to the British civil service.⁶⁵ Patel, too, had conflicts with Nehru, and later with the Congress Party, but he saw his own work after independence, dividing up the country with his Pakistani counterparts and his work on refugees after partition, as vital to the new nation-state.

While the history of close relations with the British created distrust towards these bureaucrats, their status and power continued unabated and they also took care to demonstrate their distance from their British colleagues by narrating the racism they encountered on the job. Yet in these texts, these bureaucrats never quite disavow colonial power and its networks, and their memories of the colonial 'steel frame' of the Indian Civil Service often claim that the British were better tutors or mentors, or fairer or more objective as compared to the new politicians of India. The 'steel frame' of the Indian Civil Service therefore continued as a living concept in the formation of a group identity in terms used by powerful bureaucrats such as C. D. Deshmukh to refer to the Indian Administrative Service as the 'sinews of the state'.⁶⁶ All of these terms signal strength and power and connect

⁶⁴ Krishna, B. (2007). *India's Bismarck, Sardar Vallabhai Patel*, Mumbai, Indus Source Books; Guha, R. (2008). *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, New York, Harper Collins, p. 746.

⁶⁵ Shrinagesh, *Between Two Stools*, p. 35.

⁶⁶ Deshmukh, C., Bihar IAS Association Lecture, 'The Sinews of the State', Institute of Public Administration, Patna University, 7 October 1955.

the Indian Administrative Service and its emerging masculinities to the Indian Civil Service.

In particular, the link between careers in the Indian Civil Service and Indian Administrative Service and the growth of the nation suggest both the masculinism of the state and nation and these elites' continued claims to power. In his memoirs, Patel recounts the importance of his work during partition and how hard he and his colleagues had to work to divide up the country. Shrinagesh states that the Indian Civil Service enabled the administration of India and that although after independence many junior and untrained people filled the administrative services, still the old Indian Civil Service was the 'mainstay of the civil administration'.⁶⁷ He mentions with regret that Nehru called it 'the kept services', or considered the bureaucracy an 'expensive luxury'—feminizations which he clearly found offensive. He complains that Nehru's view was that the Indian Civil Service '[clung] to their superiors and bully[ed] their inferiors', and that it was the 'cause of intellectual and cultural decay of the country'.⁶⁸

Despite such differences between various factions of nationalist power, bureaucratic masculinities became normative through their links to the colonial state and participation in an emerging modern and technocratic future.⁶⁹ New intimacies and connections were forged which connected these elites to newer realms of power. Thus, the memoirs include photographs and narratives detailing accomplishments at work, including examples of the Indian state's projects of industrialization under Nehru. Shrinagesh's memoir presents the frustrations of taking over Hindustan Aeronautics as a government enterprise, and Bhoothalingam relates the difficulties of establishing steel plants at Rourkela, Durgapur, and Bhillai. Bhoothalingam mentions technology-seeking trips to the United States and Europe which brought him into contact with engineers, technology experts, state officials, and industrialists and his struggles to create agreements between India and foreign states for the importation of the technology. In particular, in these memoirs

⁶⁷ Shrinagesh, *Between Two Stools*, p. 148.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Shiv Vishwanathan argues that bureaucratizing science and the focus on importing technology, which these bureaucrats carry out in trips to Europe and North America made knowledge undemocratic. But it is also obvious that it made science and technology also masculinist enterprises. For a quick summary, see: Visvanathan, S. (1998). A Celebration of Difference: Science and Democracy in India, *Science*, 280:5360, pp. 42–43.

two areas of work are mentioned which are significant for the new technocratic elites: technologies of manufacturing and industrialization, and expertise in finance and management as a specific area of knowledge. All of the memoirs engage with at least one of these areas, producing what Mitchell, in the case of Egypt, calls the ‘rule of experts’, in which an emerging masculinity of ‘technopolitics’ comes to define how nations must be governed.⁷⁰

Bhoothalingam’s narrative exemplifies how such new realms of expertise were linked to emerging networks of masculine power. While in the British service, he served in the Department of Supplies and the Directorate-General of Munitions Productions. He recounts that this experience was what led Nehru, after independence, to put him in charge of creating new steel plants. ‘I can say,’ he states, ‘that my main achievement was the construction of three new steel plants in the public sector’. Because of the targets set for these plants, he tells us that the task required ‘herculean efforts’, and he succeeded only because he was a ‘disciplined civil servant’.⁷¹ In a chapter on ‘Nehru’s Industrial Policy’ he writes of the contradictions of the Indian state trying to combine Nehruvian industrialization with Gandhian cottage industries, and he claims he was a champion of a liberalized state. The next step in his career took him to the Finance Ministry, and his account of his work there ends with a great deal of self-congratulation: ‘It is in such ways that I completely changed the character of the Department of Expenditure. To this day, both my contemporaries and many younger people vividly remember this. I made it a live ministry by introducing new concepts.’⁷²

Shrinagesh’s area of expertise was management—which was a separate new realm of knowledge production in India—even as he moved from managing the first aircraft company in India to the first steel plants and the first oil refineries. These last assignments are the topics of the later chapters of the memoir, and the text ends with a note in which he evaluates the contribution and strength of the Indian

⁷⁰ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*.

⁷¹ Bhoothalingam, *Reflections on an Era*, p. 72.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 108. Despite these accomplishments, Bhoothalingam was dogged with a scandal later in his career involving deals for steel manufacturing with private companies—charges that Shrinagesh mentions in his memoir about how corrupt politicians destroyed honest Indian Civil Service men: Shrinagesh, *Between Two Stools*, pp. 146–147. Indira Gandhi, prime minister at the time, established a commission which exonerated him, but he lost out on an ambassadorship that he had expected after retirement.

Administrative Service and Indian Civil Service, contradicting Nehru's charge of the civil services as elite and an unnecessary luxury. The memoir shows his ability to move from being a generalist to becoming an expert in management, as well as evidence of his importance to the new India. His account of the strengths of the service are clearly drawn from ideas of management of the new industries, and the editors have included in Appendix 2 a reprint of a lecture he gave at Patna University, comparing 'public administration' with 'business administration'. The memoir also includes a list of the positions he held during his career: after retirement he worked as the vice president of Calcutta Management Association and was a visiting professor of the Indian Institute of Public Administration. The memoir suggests that for Shrinagesh, governance and management became allied, and the bureaucrat had great faith in his abilities to provide wisdom on these questions, even as he distinguished between these realms of expertise.

While Shrinagesh's memoir shows his shift to technocrat managerialism, the more colonial notion of governance as a form of paternalism and patriarchal power continues in Vira's memoir. Vira narrates that after his stint in Tamil Nadu as governor, people wanted him to continue to govern, preferring him to their elected officials. He presents himself as providing an example of good governance, an ability that stems from what he describes as his rule-bound and rational approach. A comparison to the capricious and corrupt political parties is implicit. He states that many policies created by politicians were ineffective, while he praises his own powers of governance. Through his career and after retirement, Vira continued to provide expertise and lectures on governance, lauding rational goals and objective measures as key elements of rule.

Corruption and challenges to elite patriarchy

Even though Vira saw politicians as the source of corruption, his memoir claims that it was the corruption of the bureaucracy that he wanted to purge. He created a pledge for Indian Administrative Service officials to not take bribes, or to be incorruptible. And it is through this focus on 'good governance'—despite his faith in state control—that he argued that the liberalized economy and the end of 'license rule' would be positive solutions to the problem of bureaucratic

corruption.⁷³ He hoped that under liberalization the ‘regulatory and discretionary powers of bureaucrats w[ould] be vastly reduced’ and would ‘remove a large field of patronage and arbitrary power’, contradicting his belief in his own patriarchal notion of governance.⁷⁴

Similarly, the Bhoothalingam and Shrinagesh memoirs include reflections on how and why the bureaucracy became a ‘problem’. Both texts suggest that the problems stemmed from a rule-making and strong state rather than from the classist or patriarchal nature of the bureaucracy. The narratives argue that it is not the bureaucracy as an emerging and often corrupt elite that was the problem, as some scholars have suggested,⁷⁵ but it was the socialist leanings of the Indian government after independence that was the source of corruption. Thus, says a quote from Shrinagesh, ‘the greater the volume of legislation the greater the reach of law enforcement. The greater the volume of state involvement, the greater the potentiality of abuse.’⁷⁶

To charges that the continuation of the British bureaucracy was the source of corruption in the democratic nation, Vira provides some sense of the tensions that occurred during the ‘transition’. He suggests that the bureaucracy of independent India is different from the British service. He states that the bureaucratic project of the Indian state was concerned with welfare, whereas the British Indian Civil Service was concerned with law and order. In a personal interview, Vira made this point:

From being a purely law and order administration, it was very deliberately being converted into a welfare administration and that in itself required a complete change in the outlook of the administrators also. They had to look at the problems not so much from the point of view of the administration as from the point of view of the good of the people.⁷⁷

Despite the powerful positions held by Vira during and after his time in the service, and despite suggesting that the British were racist towards the Indian Civil Service, he also applauds them for their fairness, their mentorship, and their trust, implicitly contrasting that period with the corruption of post-colonial India.

⁷³ Vira, *Memoirs of a Civil Servant*, p. 192.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Bardhan, P. (1998). *The Political Economy of Development in India*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 52.

⁷⁶ Shrinagesh, *Between Two Stools*, p. 150.

⁷⁷ From transcripts of Oral History Interview with Shri Dharma Vira, New Delhi, 24 May 1969, by Mrs Aparna Basu for the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

These bureaucrats' narratives argue that because they were part of British rule, they were not corrupt, suggesting implicitly that democracy was responsible for the failures of the bureaucracy, since it allowed politicians to control the civil service. Patel's account contrasts politicians' governance after independence with British rule. He says, for instance, that the British were careful in explaining reasons for promotion and did not promote people for political gain. He mentions that he was once passed over for 'Interim in Charge' in 1946, and a Britisher was put in charge instead, but Lord Wavell called him in to explain why this had been done, adding that Wavell 'was always anxious to do whatever was fair and just in the circumstances'.⁷⁸ In a later oral history interview, Patel elaborated:

The point here is this that they did not want a civil servant, whom they trusted and respected, to feel that he had been unjustly treated. This is something that never happens nowadays. The importance of maintaining the morale of the civil service is not realized. You can only maintain it only in this way that you take the trouble to explain your decisions.⁷⁹

The editor of the memoir, Sucheta Mahajan, points out some of the flaws in Patel's views, and notes that the memoir leaves out many of the catastrophic effects of British rule during the Second World War, as British India's contribution to the war effort created tremendous problems in India.

Shrinagesh's memoir is more measured in his approach to British rule. While clearly accepting its modernity and rationality as admirable, he states that governance under the British was more authoritarian. He points out that although the Indian Civil Service was praised for keeping order, it could do so only because of the presence of the military. For Shrinagesh, there were 'two systems needed for rule—civil and military', and this combination ensured the power of British rule.⁸⁰ Yet he also notes that even though they did not have to resort to plunder, the British were there to exploit India, and the mode of their departure caused great violence and turmoil, which he saw at first hand because he was stationed in Punjab.

These memoirs thus reveal ambivalence towards the British—they are admired, disavowed, and critiqued. It is only when he mentions the war that we see in Bhoothalingam some distrust of the British.

⁷⁸ Patel, *Rites of Passage*, p. 69–70.

⁷⁹ B. R. Nanda, Interview with H. M. Patel, Transcript, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Oral History Project, Recorded 31 October 1968, p. 21.

⁸⁰ Shrinagesh, *Between Two Stools*, p. 6.

Even while this memoir contains much admiration of British rule, it mentions British misuse of power when Bhoothalingam reveals that in his war supply position he noticed that the needs of the Indian population were only taken into consideration after a certain point.

Vira's text claims incorruptibility through participation in colonial rule, but also makes the strongest argument for post-colonial difference from British bureaucracy on the grounds of loyalty. He mentions that there were problems in the Indian Civil Service because the British did not want to accept Indians:

The Indian civil servant was all the time on trial. The Indians compared him with his British colleagues in regard to competence and dignity while the British closely watched his loyalty to the Crown. To them he was a Trojan horse in the outfit. The Indian nationalists, on the other hand, while happy at the advent of Indians in the high administrative scene, did not know what to make of these highly-paid minions of the government who, though Indian by nationality, were expected to serve the British loyally.⁸¹

Vira does not claim loyalty to the British but rather to the status and privilege of the Indian Civil Service, and he is the most certain that the shift from Indian Civil Service to Indian Administrative Service involved a movement from law and order to welfare.

Patnaik suggests that the Indian Civil Service became a 'house divided' because of 'racial exclusiveness', British 'moral superiority', and their belief that Indians were not as competent.⁸² Although she argues that Indians in the Indian Civil Service became loyal subjects to the British and 'helped the British Raj to last as long as it could', the memoirs narrate their nationalism.⁸³ Arudha Burra argues that they were both nationalists and colonial servants because the two issues of morale and loyalty were seen by the British as linked.⁸⁴ The British could rely on Indian officers to do their jobs, even if the Indian bureaucrats sympathized with the Congress; and Indian officers did not need to fear future retaliation precisely because they would be seen to have been merely doing their jobs. Sympathy for Congress did not necessarily, according to Burra, interfere in the bureaucrat's ability to rule with rationality and reason.

⁸¹ Vira, *Memoirs of a Civil Servant*, pp. 16–17.

⁸² Patnaik, *The Indian Administrative Service*, p. 32.

⁸³ Patnaik, *The Indian Administrative Service*, p. 29.

⁸⁴ Burra, A. (2010). The Indian Civil Service and the Nationalist Movement: Neutrality, Politics and Continuity, *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 48:4, pp. 404–432.

But old intimacies are never forgotten in the memoirs. There is clearly support for independence among these Indian Civil Service workers. They note the racism of the British no doubt because of the racism that they experienced, while also believing in the superiority of the training that made them able to govern independent India. The narratives of the Indian Civil Service apprenticeships are filled with nostalgic stories— anecdotes from out in the field, of ‘touring’ the district on horseback. Patel says his mentor was another Indian Civil Service employee, A. D. Gorwala, who taught him all he needed to know about administration. Shrinagesh mentions the British officials who mentored them, but is also clear about their racism. Patel narrates a similar view:

These early years of my service in Sind were of great value to me . . . I had the good fortune to see a number of able officers at work. Their methods of work differed greatly but they all believed in the importance of delegation, of hard work and attention to detail, of the value of justice and just attitude in administration, and, above all, in providing full support to those working under them.⁸⁵

Bhoothalingam says very little that is negative about British rule, but mentions the good Indian Civil Service bureaucrats who taught him to know a village, to learn skills, and about Keynesian economics from their education in Cambridge. He seems to appreciate British rule; for instance, he notes how expeditiously magistrates disposed of cases in British times:

The difference between the magistrate then and today is the enormous swiftness with which he did the whole job in the past. That is not because we were particularly better men, but only because over the last twenty years long delays have become habitual. Nothing ever gets settled anywhere in India, even simple cases, for months and, more often, years. But in our time, three months was the absolute maximum and this was enforced by a system of returns. Every year we had to send periodical statements of cases disposed of, cases pending, and how many pending for over a month, over three months and so on. There was some minor cheating, but, still, this kept everyone on his toes.⁸⁶

Bhoothalingam here places blame on the bureaucracy for its delays, but seems not to take any responsibility for it himself. His alibi is his work in the Indian Civil Service during British rule, when bureaucrats like him did accomplish their tasks.

⁸⁵ Patel, *Rites of Passage*, pp. 30–31.

⁸⁶ Bhoothalingam, *Reflections on an Era*, p. 15.

The memoirs' narratives create post-colonial corruption as a departure from an incorruptible colonial rule. Thus Shrinagesh says:

Whatever power and privilege it (British rule) might have represented—and there is no doubt it did indeed comprise an elite form which not only the public but also the politicians were excluded—efficient and incorruptible, its strength lay in its absolute exclusion from political involvement.⁸⁷

Shrinagesh goes on to say, 'The turning point (in the Indian Administrative Service) came with the gifted new generation of the sixties who had another ideology and other values. In their opinion, the notion of an uncommitted bureaucracy in a democratic setup was a myth. They initiated the controversial and unprecedented reality of a "committed bureaucracy", a civil administration that was no longer politically neutral but ideologically oriented.'⁸⁸

Despite blaming corruption on politicians, the fact that there were charges of corruption against the Indian Administrative Service suggests that the elite patriarchy did not go unchallenged after independence. The memoirs dispute these charges in different ways, and the most authoritarian and masculine of these eliminates details of the domestic intimacies of these powerful men from their accounts—there is nothing here of family, social lives, religion, or relatives. There is little mention of the privileges of elite bureaucracies in which private life was intricately a manifestation of public position—the status (which Alpa Shah suggests is an important barrier to ordinary and minority groups) and its benefits are often left out in the narrative of traffic with political masters and superiors.⁸⁹ Houses, cars, domestic help, gifts, and privileges all are unworthy of mention—the spectacle of the private realm must be excluded from the memoir.⁹⁰

In this case one can see how the production of the 'economy' of the state, which Tim Mitchell has argued becomes the central project of the modern state, with its division between 'formal' and 'informal', spoke to the work of these bureaucrats and to subsequent generations of their supporters for whom the 'informal' work of the household

⁸⁷ Shrinagesh, *Between Two Stools*, p. 149.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁸⁹ Shah, A. (2009). Morality Corruption and the State: Insights from Jharkhand, Eastern India, *Journal of Development Studies*, 45:3, pp. 295–313.

⁹⁰ It can be argued that H. P. Patel lived simply and without ostentation. Yet his power and privilege would have been visible to many through his interests, his connections, his work and his travels.

itself is disregarded.⁹¹ Thus it is not just the female or the feminine that is excluded, but all those considered peripheral to the narration of ‘history’ or to the governance of the state. The memoirs always narrate upwards in the social and political hierarchy, listing traffic and kinship with famous figures and promotions gained and lost. They hope to maintain power even as all those who see themselves as part of a state that these memoirs cannot comprehend, challenge them. But generally, few of the obligations of family life or of the ways in which the bureaucrat’s life is made possible by the multiple family members, subordinates, or servants who work in the home as well as in the office are ever noted. Rarely do these bureaucrats mention the world of the everyday, those working below them, those whom they control—junior officers, clerks, drivers, subordinates, peons. The intimacies of a separated private domain, which may not enter the memoir of the bureaucrat, are erased in favour of connections with politicians, famous visitors, peers, and superiors. This kinship looks upwards; those with more power and those who form the patriarchal network are endowed participation in colonial rule. In particular, important political figures are mentioned, mostly Indian, but also international, rather than others in industry or society or popular culture. Other bureaucrats and politicians form the main subjects of the narratives, but not any industrialists, as business is also secondary (and ‘private’) to the job of governing, and state power is seen to be paramount. High-ranking state functionaries, particularly other Indian Civil Service workers, are cross-referenced: H. M. (Patel was known as H. M. probably to distinguish him from the other Patel, Vallabhbai), A. D. Gorwala, L. K. Jha, C. D. Deshmukh, B. C. Mukherjee, and S. Bhoothalingam.⁹²

In their reiterations of the connections and contacts between these men and other key figures of national history, these memoirs reveal how elite masculinities as a patriarchy were created through these

⁹¹ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*.

⁹² For instance, the second collection of H. M. Patel’s papers, edited by Amrita Abraham and commissioned by his daughter, Amrita Patel, begins with a dedication to A. D. Gorwala. This dedication suggests that Gorwala was an exemplary bureaucrat. The acknowledgements page states that the volume is meant to ‘bring his work and values to a younger generation, the Trustees of the Savita Memorial Trust and his daughters . . . initiated and supported a project to prepare his writings for publication’. The foreword, by I. G. Patel, states that the book is a ‘mirror to what was attempted, achieved and advocated . . . and lays down at the same time, a road map of what we need to do to recapture our dreams’. Patel, H. M. (2005). *The First Flush of Freedom Recollections and Reflections*, A. Abraham (ed.), New Delhi, Rupa and Company.

networks which continued from before independence. H. M. Patel, for instance, suggests that the work involved in partition could not have occurred without the old Indian Civil Service hands, who knew each other and were able to work together to divide up the country.

Conclusions

Although Stoler's focus on the 'intimacies' of colonial rule suggests that domestic arrangements provide important insights into colonial governance, the erasures of domestic intimacies and the focus on relations with superiors and powerful men visible in the memoirs also suggest that intimacies are not just about a domestic or private sphere. Rather, they are about separating the public from the private while retaining different sorts of intimacies in both domains.

These memoirs insist on the place of patriarchal networks, long after this particular group of bureaucrats had retired or passed away. The post-colonial specificity of the bureaucracy came from a desire to both claim and disavow colonial legacies, even as in later decades the bureaucrats came under attack by those who accused them of elitism and corruption. Because of their participation in British rule, and the emerging demands of an independent democracy in the decades after independence, these bureaucrats had both to defend colonial rule and to claim its superiority and necessity in independent India, while decrying its discrimination and the racism manifest in their relations with the British. They reveal that the goal of those who write and compile the memoirs (often different entities) is to remember and defend these men within a history of the Indian nation-state in which the civil service is seen as increasingly inefficient and corrupt.

If some have suggested that the problem of the Indian Administrative Service was that of a bureaucracy unable to transition into being a 'servant' of the people, others believed that it provided stability to the new nation.⁹³ But the question of failure of governance and the accusations of corruption remain critical narratives of power in the new democracy, suggesting that these elite connections were not unchallenged—either by those wishing to join them or by those angered by their power. The participation of these men in the post-colonial ruling class enabled patriarchal power but also generated suspicion and frequent scandals, investigations, and

⁹³ Mukherjee, *Administration in Changing India*, p. 7.

corruption charges. In such charges, accusations of corruption were as much about intimacies in patriarchal networks and the challenge to liberal divisions between public and private realms that hid the exercise of power, which feminist scholarship sees as access to others—women and men—who are deemed less powerful, as they were about a patriarchal power that was a basis of authority and of governance.