

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AND RESISTANCE NARRATIVES: VIJAY SINGH PATHIK AND POLITICAL ASSERTION IN THE PRINCELY STATES OF RAJPUTANA

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of regional leadership in shaping resistance narratives within the princely states of colonial India, with a specific focus on the political interventions of Vijay Singh Pathik in the Rajputana region. While dominant historiography has centred the colonial experience of British-administered provinces, this study redirects attention to the often-overlooked socio-political struggles in the semi-autonomous princely states. Through an exploration of Pathik's leadership in the Bijolia peasant movement and his broader mobilisation strategies, the paper highlights how he emerged as a key representative of marginalised voices. Pathik's multifaceted approach, engaging with local communities, princely authorities, and international networks, reflects a nuanced model of protest leadership that combined grassroots activism with broader political articulation. Divided into three sections, the paper explores regional political assertion in Rajputana, critically analyses Pathik's leadership in the Bijolia agitation, and contextualises his efforts in constructing a cohesive resistance narrative for the subjects of princely India. By foregrounding regional leadership and its role in democratising political discourse, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of protest politics, marginalisation, and state-society relations in colonial India.

Keywords: Vijay Singh Pathik, Princely States, Rajputana, Narratives of Resistance, Regional Leadership, Colonial Rule

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The political landscape of colonial India was characterised by two domains, namely the British Indian provinces and the princely states.¹ These realms delineated contrasting arenas of governance, socio-economic structures, and avenues for political expression. Within this framework, the British Indian provinces and the Indian states emerged as distinct entities, each marked by unique socio-political scenarios and trajectories of development. In the British Indian provinces, the political landscape was shaped by direct British rule, albeit with varying degrees of democratic development and administrative arrangements.² Here, the British established a hierarchical system of governance, with administrative structures designed to consolidate imperial authority and exploit resources for the benefit of the colonial enterprise. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the backdrop was markedly influenced by the presence of liberal trends in the form of vibrant social reform movements and agitation against imperialist rule, most prominently the movement led by the Indian National Congress and other nationalist trends, which spearheaded efforts towards independence and social reform.

In the princely domain such as Rajputana states, the governance structure existed under a triple layer of political domination, comprising the British paramountcy, indigenous monarchies, and feudal lords designated as *jagirdars/thikanedars*. The layered and complex contextual framework of governance with overlapping jurisdictions and competing interests produced a polity in the princely states that was markedly different from the British provinces. Unlike the latter, the Indian states saw practically no advances in constitutional development, and the pan-India freedom movement led by the Indian National Congress remained distant from the popular movements in the Indian states.³ The administrative integration of British-ruled provinces facilitated the evolution of a united movement for independence, with the Congress emerging as the vanguard of nationalist aspirations. However, such cohesion was absent in the Indian states, where the fragmented nature of governance hindered the emergence of a unified resistance against colonial rule.⁴ Moreover, the limited reach of the socio-religious reform movement in the Indian states, akin to the Indian Renaissance experienced by British Indians in the nineteenth century, led to their regression in the social and educational spheres.⁵ This further deepened the divergent trajectories of the political development of British India and Indian India.

In light of these divergent aspects, comprehending the nuanced realities of colonial India is essential to grasp the complexities of

nationalist mobilisation and the multifaceted nature of colonialism and its impact on the trajectory of Indian history. The paper focuses on the role of regional leadership, with particular reference to the princely states of Rajputana in the first half of the twentieth century, in developing resistance narratives and giving voice to the unheard in the princely states. It explores the theme through three sections. The first section presents the regional voices of political assertions in the Rajputana states. The following two sections explore the proposition, focusing on Vijay Singh Pathik and his leadership in the Bijolia peasant movement, as well as his efforts to build a narrative for the cause of Indian states' subjects at varying stages.

Regional Voices of Resistance in the Twentieth-Century Rajputana State

This work seeks to give agency to these regional voices, who gave stability and substance to the movement at grassroots levels, yet find meagre representation in historical writings. The historical accounts related to people's agitation against British rule have been largely centred around national leadership, which was at the forefront of leading the freedom struggle, overshadowing the critical contribution of the regional leadership.

The colonial intrusion was perceptibly witnessed in the princely states of Rajputana after their treaties with the British in 1817-1818. This led to a new politico-administrative setup that transformed the existing political and socio-economic structures characterised by colonial interventions. The region began witnessing different acts of defiance and resistance in various parts of the region (Sharma, 1994, pp.298-299). The British attempted and encouraged administrative and social changes, pushing the states to modernise their administration and other socio-economic aspects. They introduced modernisation with hospitals, schools, postal services, railways, and land revenue systems. While this transformation essentially commenced in the nineteenth century, its impact was effectively perceived and felt in the twentieth century. The emergence of political activism in the twentieth century not only symbolised people's awakening in the region but also drew attention to the unresponsive nature of ruling princes and the limited political rights and civil liberties (Jain, 1993, p.165). These movements altered the idealistic image of the contented population of Indian states. Nevertheless, national leaders such as Gandhi still evaded the critical evaluation of the princely states' administration (Hardiman, 2006, p.37). The

political system of the Indian states continued to be anachronistic and averse to democratic development.⁶ The British protected and patronised these political entities as a useful counterweight to the national upsurge was perceived.

The apathy of the national leaders, coupled with the absence of tangible and intangible spaces for political mobilisation, rendered the endeavours of the leaders working in the regional spaces of the princely states arduous. The efforts of the regional leadership in the princely states represent the much-needed advocacy to highlight the miseries and problems of the Indian states.

The growth of political organisations and the foundation of the Indian National Congress in the British provinces intensely impacted the resurgent sections of Rajputana. The neighbouring princely states of Rajputana witnessed glimpses of revolutionary activities with a patriotic band of people, such as Damodar Das Rathi, Rao Gopal Singh, Kesari Singh Barahath, and Arjunlal Sethi. They met the revolutionaries from British India, such as Ras Bihari Bose and started directing their patriotism toward activism. Krishna Singh Barahath and his son, Kesari Singh Barahath, were notable for spreading the message against slavery and bureaucratic bondage. Kesari Singh Barahath wrote the famous composition *Chetavani ra Chugatiya*, which stood for resurgence, freedom, and fight against bondage (Paliwal et. al., 1984; 1986). Arjunlal Sethi also opened a school that became a medium to awaken and organise the youth. Damodar Das Rathi, with the aid and support of Shayamji Krishna Verma, established a mill and gave employment to the backwards sections of society. Here, they also planned revolutionary activities for which Rathi gave economic aid. Gopal Singh Rao and Bijai Singh Pathik⁷ were actively involved in providing weapons to extreme groups and organising training camps for the youth (Sharma, 1990, pp. 133-166).

Though these revolutionary activities could not take deep roots in the region due to the absence of concerted direction, leadership, resources and organisational energy, these men's enthusiasm and patriotic fervour inspired peasant and political movements. Numerous acts of defiance and resistance against authority took the form of peasant movements in various parts of the region, such as Bijoliya (Mewar), Bundi, Sikar, Shekhawati, Marwar, and Bikaner. The peasantry was among the most exploited lot in the new political scenario, bearing the brunt of the increasing expenditure of the administration. The agrarian unrest paved the way for political activism in the region, both presented distinctive

facets of the same brewing disillusionment with the triple layers of authority. M. S. Jain (1993) argues that the relationship between the agricultural movements and political awakening is not causal but complementary. It was perceptibly witnessed when the Praja Lok Parishad in Bikaner and Jodhpur put forth the peasant grievances; the peasant injustice also provided the newly conscious political leadership to portray themselves as the spokesmen of the masses (p.166). The Bijoliya movement was an important and flourishing part of the wider peasant mobilisation, showcasing the exemplary organisational and leadership initiatives at the grassroots level (Ram, 2013). The regional leaders, such as Manikya Lal Verma, Bijai Singh Pathik, and later Hari Bahu Upadhyay, and Jamna Lal Bajaj, played an instrumental role in this peasant uprising.

Pathik and Bijolia: Voicing the Voiceless

Peasant protests form an important section in the history of mass mobilisation in the pre-independent period. The peasant movement in Bijoliya Jagir in the princely state of Mewar was a pioneer for the peasant movement and political mobilisation in the region. It went through different phases stretching from the last decade of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century.⁸ The subsequent sections primarily analyse the mobilisation strategies deployed by Vijay Singh Pathik in the Bijoliya peasant agitation. In order to focus on the techniques of mass activism employed by the leaders, the micro-details of the movement have been omitted. However, it would be pertinent to briefly recapitulate the earlier phase of the movement led by Sadhu Sitaramdas, which began in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In this phase, Sadhu Sitaramdas mobilised and educated the peasants about their exploitation in the *jagir* and developed a solid base for the later phases of the movement. He used organisations such as *Mitra Mandal* and later *Vidya Pracharini Sabha* for mobilisation. The associations were established to promote education and literacy in the region. This helped enlighten and awaken people about the movement and what was happening outside the region, such as in the provinces of British India. In the Indian states, political activities that aimed to raise political awareness were largely forbidden and penalised. The early organisations were primarily established to disseminate education.

Further, he moved from village to village, communicating about the realities of the authorities. He and his companions used to sing nationalist songs to motivate the peasants. The movement did not

develop in isolation. The nationalists in British India facilitated its propagation and also put pressure on the authorities. For instance, Sadhu Sitaramdas, through Lokmanya Tilak and his newspapers *Maratha* and *Kesari*, was able to get British and eventually the Maharana's intervention in the jagir (Surana, 1983, pp.68-73). However, this one-sided settlement of the grievances left substantial scope for the next phase of the movement.

The second phase of the movement was led by Vijay Singh Pathik. He built upon the initial phase of the agitation, but more effectively resorting to multipronged mobilisation, resulting in the voices of the peasants resonating countrywide. Pathik led one of the most successful peasant agitations of its time.

Associations, Activism and Pathik

Pathik made a significant contribution to the movement by providing a robust organisational structure, facilitating effective mobilisation of peasants. He had joined Bijoliya as a teacher in the *Vidya Pracharini Sabha* and prepared for the emerging movement through 'teaching', 'military training for boys', 'lectures to inspire patriotism' and 'contacts with the jagir and state officials'.

The *Uparmal Kisan Panch Board*, a peasant organisation, had till now chiefly manoeuvred the movement. However, Pathik was aware of the need for a broader organisation at the forefront of the protest. As a result, the Board joined forces with the Kisan Sabha, a peasant grouping of the majority *Dhakad* caste. The Board was inclusive and democratic, with representatives from all agricultural castes. It was manned by an honorary sarpanch, secretary, treasurer, and advisory council, which oversaw judicial educational, and social welfare activities. These organisational activities facilitated the evolution of local leadership at numerous levels in the region. The Board began providing education through a school for both children and adults, following the example of *Vidya Pracharini Sabha* (Surana, 1983, pp.81-83). A broad-based Kisan organisation was thus formed, and Pathik wrote a couplet that later became the motto of the association. The couplet reflects his regional fervour and his crusade for the agrarian cause.

Who doesn't bother about the reputation of my panchayat (Kisan organisation),
That Rajasthani is not mine, and Rajasthan is not theirs either.

(Pathik as cited in Rajpurohit, 2013, p.217; English Translation Mine)

Pathik recognised the significance and influence of newspapers and public relations in the movement, as well as the network of activists who could make a difference. In this regard, Pathik's brainchild, *Rajasthan Seva Sangh*, played a crucial role in political activism in Rajputana. The association was founded in Wardha in the early 1920s with the support of Jamna Lal Bajaj and other co-activists, including Ram Narain Choudhary and Hari Bhai Kikar. The *Rajasthan Seva Sangh* shifted its activities to Ajmer shortly thereafter. Although the organisation was active in other Rajputana states, its primary focus was on peasant agitation in Bijolia jagir in Mewar. The organisation was further strengthened when Manikya Lal Verma and Sadhu Sitaram Das joined the *Rajasthan Seva Sangh*. In addition to the focus on Bijolia, the *Seva Sangh* garnered support for the tribal uprising led by Motilal Tejawat and the atrocities committed by state authorities in southern Rajputana states. A detailed report about the movement was produced by Ram Narain Choudhary on behalf of the association (Gupta, 2003, pp. 99-106). *Rajasthan Seva Sangh* played a crucial role in supporting the struggles in Mewar and publicising the issues in neighbouring regions and British India through its mouthpiece, the *Rajasthan Kesari*.

Initially, with the assistance of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi's *Pratap*, Pathik edited and published news related to Bijolia and other issues of the Rajputana states in the Kanpur-based newspaper. Later, with contributions from Jamna Lal Bajaj, Pathik started *Rajasthan Kesari*, a newspaper exclusively devoted to the concerns of the subjects of the princely states. Pathik also started *Navin Rajasthan*, which was later renamed *Tarun Rajasthan*. Pathik's critical stance towards the state alarmed the rulers, resulting in prohibitory orders on his entry into the region. Later, after leaving the *Sangh*, he founded his own independent newspaper, *Rajasthan Sandesh*. Pathik firmly believed in the power of the printed word and continued his journalism with *Nav Sandesh* even after departing from Ajmer (Saxena, 2003, pp. 209-220). Pathik was a skilled mobiliser who developed various strategies to engage the community.

The foregoing discourse shines a light on the innovative mobilisation tactics of Pathik that included the setting up of a robust organisation base, involving diverse networks and community leaders, promoting shared decision-making, establishing communication channels such as newspapers and educating the community. Another effective strategy to disseminate the message and infuse enthusiasm among the peasantry was the use of musical activism and deployment of powerful symbolism.

Musical Activism

Protest songs and compositions have historically played a vital role in mobilisation strategies worldwide. They have proven to be an effective medium for mobilising the masses, and regional leaders have successfully expressed and communicated their emotions and spirit through them. This is especially important in societies with limited literacy. Pathik was a skilled mobiliser and organiser, utilising his literary talents for this purpose. He wrote scores of songs to mobilise and mobilise the masses. Some of his songs have been listed below to highlight the main themes that Pathik took up to strike a chord with the peasant masses and uplift their spirits. Mobilising the peasant masses required prioritising their cause.

The raising and bearing of a flag carries a profound representation of an independent and fearless voice. Pathik extensively used this symbolism-laden flag to raise the banner against injustice. In his famous song '*Kisano ka Jhanda*' ('Farmers' Flag'), he calls on farmers to wake up from their slumber and raise the 'plough-marked flag', which is a symbol of farmers' dreams. He encourages them to unite, elect their own councils, and develop their own businesses instead of being dependent on others.

Farmers' Flag

It will wave, it will wave, the flag of farmers.

At homes, palaces, temples, forts, warehouses, villages, markets, entrances,
and walls. This plough-marked flag is the symbol of farmers' dreams. It
will wave, the flag will wave...!

Have slept a lot, now we have woken up, we have given up laziness and
sleep.

Have suffered a lot, we will not suffer anymore,

We will take village self-rule. Have seen the character of the ministers, the
selfishness of the rich people! It will wave, the flag will wave...!

Now we will not depend on others, we will manage on our own, we will
vote for farmers in *Panch*, board and council elections.

Now you will not get the license/contract for forests or mines.

It will wave, the flag will wave...!

We will run a home-based industry, we will make solid goods, we will ignite
every house with light, and educate all. We will become strong in this
world because everything is for the strong!

It will wave, the flag will wave...!

(Pathik, as cited in Shalabha, 1990,p 54; English Translation Mine)

Further, Pathik's song '*Dhrujaarpan*' (Flag Hoisting) invokes the symbolism of the tricolour flag and encourages the inhabitants to stand up for the fight for freedom. The song references national incidents such as the *Jallianwala Bagh* massacre and General Dyer, establishing a connection with the events at the national level. The tricolour flag is used to reconcile local and regional aspirations with the concept and vision of the Indian nation. Additionally, the author invokes God to provide religious sanction to the agitation, thereby increasing its legitimacy.

Flagship - Music

Even if you lose your life, Friends, don't bring the flag down!
Our flag is tri-coloured, with the spinning wheel in the middle like a
shining star,

It is our pride, this is our respect, whole Hindustan bows its head.

Offering everything on this with joy!

But don't bow the flag down!

This is a sign of freedom; behind it, there are millions of stories,
Only live-hearted ones lift it; men would offer their head on this!

You too take all the trouble!

But don't bow the flag down!

Have you forgotten the Jallianwala or the dark history of Dyer?
When there was a flurry of bullets, the foundation of freedom was laid
then.

If you remember that bloodbath!

So don't bow this flag down!

What oppression did he not commit that made us run on our stomachs,
Children were made to run on foot for miles, and made mothers and
sisters cry in every house.

If you remember that trap!

So don't bow this flag down!

This flag will climb on every fort; its strength will increase twice daily,
Arrows and swords will be useless; those who sleep will also be useless!

Everyone will say that, sacrifice the head!
But don't bow the flag down!

We will have silent weapons, but they will break razors blade,
It is only good that the British wake up, renounce the greed of Hindi
rule!

Otherwise, how will this place change!
The whole world will change with them!

O, Lord! Give us strength, make us patient, keep it, or we lose
everything.

Not only we, the whole world says, look, don't bring shame to the
mothers' milk!

Even if you lose your life!
But don't bow the flag down!

(Pathik as cited in Shalabha, 1990, pp. 58-59; English Translation Mine)

Additionally, during this period at the national level, the use of the *charkha* (spinning wheel) was a significant non-verbal communicative tool. Pathik also elevated the *charkha*'s importance by drawing an analogy with the Hindu god Krishna. The *charkha* was a nationalist symbol. It is noteworthy that the *charkha* is compared to *Sudarshan Chakra*, Lord Krishna's wheel, and is endowed with divine power. Pathik intelligently used idioms that were familiar to the villagers to explain the power of the *charkha*. The economic and symbolic significance attached to the *charkha* would not have been comprehensible to the villagers, so Pathik must have used mythology to explain the power of the *charkha*.

Don't tell it frivolous, don't laugh,
This spinning wheel is the wheel of God.
God's (*Krishna* /*Vishnu*, Hindu god) wheel, celestial discus,
It's just our spinning wheel.

(Pathik, cited in Pankaj & Jain, 2003, p 247; English translation Mine)

The mobilisation techniques deployed by Pathik also stirred the womenfolk of the countryside, who remember him in their songs and adore him for his virtuous and heroic character. He was venerated as a saviour who saved them from atrocities by challenging the king's forces and empowering their children to fight back. Significantly, the following song/ *geet* also mentions that Pathik taught them the

lessons of *satyagraha*, to use quintessential Gandhian idiom, ‘the power of truth based on nonviolent courage and self-sacrificing’. This displays how Gandhian ideals and styles were infiltrating the Rajputana countryside and connecting them to national goals and politics.

Song

Vijay Singh has come and awakened us, our mother.
 We will not forget your character.
 We were saved from being beaten with shoes, our mother.
 We will not forget your character.
 Our children are made brave, our mother.
 We will not forget your character.
 Saved our sinking boat, our mother
 We will not forget your character.

We were taught real knowledge, our mother.
 We will not forget your character.
 We were taught the lesson of *satyagraha*, our mother.
 We will not forget your character.
 Kings’ men were shown down, our mother.
 We will not forget your character.

(Pathik, as cited in Rajpurohit, 2013, p. 271; English translation Mine)

In this line of socio-political poetry, the mention of ‘Pragyachakshu’ Bhanwarlal Swarnakar seems relevant. He is a poet whose songs resonated in the Bijolia movement and voiced the emotions of the people. One of his songs sung during this period, *Bhavana* (emotion), depicts the state-wide charisma of Pathik in Mewar, addressing him as a *mahatma* and God-sent. Again, the usage of Gandhian idioms with national expressions and songs such as *Vande Matram* depicts the attempt to connect with the national movement. The sacral undertones of the songs present Pathik as an incarnation or *avatar* sent by God to protect them from their sufferings. It gives sanctity and holy validation to Pathik’s actions and movement, thereby ensuring mass acceptance and adherence.

Emotion

The glory of the Pathik is profound,
 All the men and women of Mewar state praise him.
 There is sorrow in the country; no one listens to our pleadings.
 Our work is completed only after giving bribes; the highly placed
 people loot and plunder.

Earnings remain insufficient, die of hunger while chewing gram.
Pay taxes by selling grass, get beaten with shoes, despite that.

Baniyas weighs the salt, and Rajputs are made to do patrolling.
Brahmins come to make bread, with bullock carts, making us sad.

Pained by these sufferings, losing the whole human birth, stop this
injustice further, take us into your refuge, protect our pride, O Lord,
make us fearless.

The royals have given us heavy suffering and destroyed the boundary of
freedom.

Lord has heard my prayers; the lord has blessed us with the incarnation
in the form of Pathik.

Brought knowledge to us all, as he came, trained us with the *satyagraha*,
taught us the mantra of *Vande Mataram*, and rescued us from the
sufferings, this ascetic saint, Pathik.

(Swarankar, cited in Saxena & Sharma, 1972, p.280;
English translation mine)

Sacred and cultural symbolism played a crucial role in the mobilisational strategies, as the peasant masses relied on religion and faith to sustain their hope. As previously noted, songs were used to reflect this religious symbolism. Additionally, Pathik strategically chose to launch the second movement on the occasions of *Ram Navami* and *Hariyali Amavasya*⁹, adding religious sanctity to the struggle (Surana, 1983, p.80). To commence the movement, Pathik would invoke God through the recitation of 'Ganpati Vandana'. The use of divine symbolism was a deft way of convincing the God-fearing masses that their activism had the blessings of God and that it meant service to God. The following song, '*Padhāro Phir Mhām ke Gaṇrāj*' by Pathik, exemplifies this. The song effectively articulates the concept of a modern, democratic, and self-sufficient village. It indicates control over village resources such as mines and forests, panchayats in every village, accompanied by a strong determination to educate each and every villager, foreshadowing the Gandhian vision of a self-sufficient village economy governed and managed by the villagers themselves.

Come again to our place, O Lord Ganesh/Ganraj!

Teach us again, O Lord Ganesh, the way of Panch Rule,
We will manage our rules and work, and the governance will become
cheap.

Among the Panchs, there will be no shame in winning or losing,
 Defence, education and justice, we will manage together in villages.
 The cost of courts is very high, but it will be gone; we will keep the
 truth in our hearts.
 We will do true justice like Swans, which will reform all the work and
 lead to betterment in all areas,
 We will manage forests and mines, and set up industries.
 Villages will be transformed, enjoying them.
 We will crown the Ganpati in all villages.
 All villages will have Panchayats, everywhere we will have *chatshalas*
 (elementary schools)
 In our homes, everyone will study,
 Cleanliness inside and outside homes will reflect our decoration.
 Ganesh will be installed on the doors, and light up the lamp every day.
 We will teach four people every day and then go to sleep.
 Remove obstacles and problems in our life, and let the enemies face
 the lightning.
 Come again to our place, O Lord Ganesh!
 "Vijay Singh Pathik"

((Saxena & Sharma, 1972, p. 281; English Translation Mine)

Fostering a shared vision among community members is crucial for successful mobilisation. This song conveys the common goals and dreams of the farmers of Bijoliya, teaching people to identify with a common vision. A shared vision is essential for unity and the success of any movement.

Pathik and Narrative of Resistance

Interestingly, regional leaders such as Bijai Singh Pathik, an important figure in the early half of the twentieth-century Rajputana, displayed their publicity skills in highlighting the plight of the state's people on both national and international platforms (Vijay Singh Pathik Collection, NAI). This approach was effective in highlighting the issue and generating support. Pathik employed various methods, such as sending numerous letters to the princes of several Indian states on different occasions, to draw attention to the hardships of the people. His copious letters to the editors of the newspapers in London urged them to give some space in their newspapers to publicise the plight of the Indian states' subjects and the desperate efforts of their leaders to be heard (Vijay Singh Pathik Collection, NAI). A fascinating exhibit of Pathik's communication with newspaper editors in India and abroad unravels an overlooked chapter of history that narrates the efforts of these regional leaders

in projecting and publicising the concerns of Indian states. Hence, the stories of the people of princely states require a good spread in the history of modern India.

Outreach: Within and Outside the Region

A significant contribution of Pathik has been not just the publicity of the movement outside the region through newspapers, but also in gathering support by encouraging the participation of the peasant representatives of Bijoliya in the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress in 1918(Delhi), 1920(Nagpur), 1921(Ahmedabad). It successfully drew the interest of nationalist leaders such as Gandhi and resulted in leaders such as Jamna Lal Bajaj and Haribhau Upadhyay joining the movement (Saxena & Sharma, 1972, p.86). Pathik was highly respected in the region, often compared to Gandhi in terms of influence and charisma. This comparison is reflected in a popular folk song, “Gandhiji ro Danko”(‘Gandhiji’s Drum’), in the region by a popular poet, Bhanwarlal Pragyachakshu, whose folk songs were sung to raise the spirits of the people in the Bijoliya movement.

Gandhiji’s Drum/Fame

Gandhiji’s drum/fame has swayed the country,
And Vijay Singh thunders like Lord Indra in the princely domain.
After a long time, this happiness is soaring over this land,
The oppressors are ashamed after seeing these colours/changes all
around.

(Pragyachakshu, as cited in Rajpurohit, 2013, p. 277;
English Translation mine)

The Bijoliya movement, as David Hardiman (2018) points out, “was notable because it involved the nonviolent mobilisation of peasants by nationalists other than Gandhi, revealing that such movements were developing in their own ways before he became involved. Although in Bijoliya there was a laxity about violence...this did not characterise the movement in general, which was remarkable for the way in which peasants were mobilised by a nationalist leader, Pathik, who encouraged the people to act as independently as possible in establishing the parallel authority of the Board. In this, he taught them how to set up and run a civil institution that acted as a counter to the power of the state. This in itself provided a revolutionary repudiation of all that the feudal polity of Rajasthan stood for

(p.126).” Hence, Pathik devised multi-faceted mobilisation methods and successfully linked them to the Indian national movement as a crucial ally in this struggle. He was a regional leader with a much broader vision and foresight who succeeded in lending visibility to the issues of the Indian states at the national and international levels.

The mobilisation strategies and methods of Pathik formed a template for the subsequent socio-cultural and political movements in the region of Rajputana. The exemplary use of local as well as national symbols, aligning the regional with the pan-Indian ethos, was a strategy deployed later by leaders such as Manikyalal Verma and others. Also, the prolific use of songs composed in the local dialect to educate, inspire and exhort the peasants emerged as an effective method to arouse the populace in a region lagging in literacy and education was pursued by leaders of the Prajamandal movement. The consistent emphasis on social reform in Pathik’s speeches and songs continued to remain a significant feature of mass mobilisation in Rajputana states, wherein social issues went hand in hand with political propaganda, an attribute where they differed from the British region (Meena, 2022). His efforts to build liaisons with agencies and leaders outside Mewar were a trend that subsequent regional leaders of Rajputana also adopted. During the Prajamandal movement also the local leaders of princely states in the region were always keen to maintain contact with national-level leaders like Gandhi. Above all, Pathik could gauge the pulse of the peasantry in Bijoliya and deployed methods that appealed to their hearts and minds. In that sense, he can rightly be called ‘*the Gandhi of Bijoliya*’ and a trendsetter as far as mobilisation patterns in the princely states are concerned.

Notes

1. The scholarly works on princely states by Copland (1997), Robin Jeffrey (1978), Ernst & Pati (2007), and Barbara N. Ramusack (2004), among others, have been instrumental in facilitating a meaningful restoration of the princely states within the context of colonial Indian historiography. Furthermore, recent works, such as Manu S. Pillai’s (2021) *False Allies: India's Maharajahs in the Age of Ravi Verma* emphasise the necessity for more diverse and inclusive discussions on Indian history that extend beyond the British-ruled provinces. This approach could assist in developing a more profound comprehension of the experiences of the numerous individuals who inhabited Indian states during that era and the political transformations they underwent.
2. Constitutional development in British provinces can be traced to the Regulating Act 1773 CE.
3. The official stance of Congress to consciously remain distant from the Indian states shifted in the Haripura Congress Session in 1938 (Wood, 1984).

4. The treaty obligations forced the princely states to hand over their foreign relations to the British to control and prevent any association between the states (Travers, 2014; Rudolph & Rudolph, 1966).
5. Reform movements in British India were responsible for the development of an awakened and conscious middle class.
6. The constitutional and democratic institutional developments were witnessed as late as in 1940s after the Praja Mandal movement gathered momentum in the states for responsible government, whereas the British provinces had been witnessing the constitutional development across the century, even though half-baked (Hooja 2006, p.977).
7. The records show his name is spelt as *Bijai Singh Pathik*. Though now his name is popularly spelt as *Vijay Singh Pathik*. Hence both spellings have been used interchangeably in this paper to address the same person.
8. For a detailed analytical and sociological discussion on the Bijolia movement across the period, see Pushpendra Surana, *Social Movements and Social Structure: A Study in the Princely State of Mewar*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983). Surana has categorised the Bijolia movement into three different phases stretching from 1897 to 1941. Also, see S.S. Saxena and P. Sharma, *Bijoliya Kisan Andolan ka Itihas*, (Bikaner: Rajasthan State Archives, 1972).
9. *Hariyali Amavasya* is also known as *Shravana Amavasya*. On this day, people worship Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, and Goddess Parvati, and is a very important festival for Hindus. It is a day to celebrate the arrival of the monsoon season and to seek the blessings of the gods.

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