

6 Elephant Tracks

Towards the end of the Second World War, Frank Hawkins addressed the Maharajah of Travancore, Chithira Thirunal Balarma Varma, on his birthday celebration, first in Malayalam – ‘Manya Maha genangeli, Tiruvithancoor Maharajavu tirumansile iruwitomba thamathu tirunal ahgoshikinathinai ...’ – and then in English, congratulating him for his famous Temple Entry Proclamation¹ and the introduction of forms of industry (ceramics, aluminium) to the state. Most important at this time, however, was his contribution to the war effort: ‘You may see therefore how Travancore through its Maharajah has contributed towards the fight for freedom and democracy. After the enemy has been defeated you may see how our victory will advance Travancore and India as a whole among the nations of the world, instead of the slavery which Hitler promises should be our portion. Let us join together in wishing HH a long life of prosperity and happiness.’ (Speech to the Maharajah of Travancore, circa 1945). But although both of them would live on into old age, neither would hold on to their positions in Travancore much longer. The age of European estate managers and maharajahs was drawing to a close.

After the war, the estate managers were faced by several dilemmas. On the one hand, of course, they could finally travel to England again, and reunite with family they had not seen for many years (see Chapter 4). But India was moving towards independence, raising many questions about their futures in the country. In a speech as chairman of the Travancore Branch of the European Association on 3 March 1946, a speech concerning issues such as refugees from Burma, and securing passages back to Europe, a major concern for Frank Hawkins and the other planters was their future status: ‘I put forward as my own personal view, that we might perhaps be well advised instead of seeking Indian citizenship, to accept the status of foreigners, a status which I understand, works very well for British communities in other countries where they maintain a respected position without political rights’. The possibility of becoming Indian citizens was a major point of debate at the time. Under discussion too was the future status of India itself: Frank