

# Ex 1: Bag of Words

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## Analysis:

Excerpts from two source texts were provided for analysis- 'The Autobiography of an Indian Princess' by Sunity Deveen, and 'The Last Maharani of Gwalior: An Autobiography' by Vijaya Raje Scindia (with Manohar Mangalkar). I used the Bag of Words model to compute the frequency of the keywords from those excerpts separately. Then, I used this data to attempt to analyse the difference between what was going on in and around the time of the marriages of these two Indian *Maharanis* set some 63 odd years apart.

The word "father" is very frequent in both the texts. In Vijaya Raje Scindia's autobiography, the word father is comparatively less frequent but the word "uncle" is most frequent. This does not surprise me as the elder male members of the family would typically be heavily involved in marriage preparations for young women. I noted that the higher frequency of words like "grandmother" and "mamiji" in case of Vijaya Raje Scindia could indicate that maybe the importance being given to woman had developed over time. The word "*maharaja*" is also unsurprisingly very frequent as both these women are eventually getting married to the *Maharajas* of the princely states of Cooch Behar and Gwalior respectively.

However, I then notice the high frequency of the word "one" and what is interesting here is the sharp difference in the use of this word. In Sunity Deveen's autobiography, she mentions,

*At that time they had not realized that the hope of the Government was that the Maharajah would take one wife only when the time for his marriage came.*

This pointed out two important things to me- firstly, the tension between the Indian royalty and the British Raj and secondly, the fact that society was finally slowly changing but many within the royalties were not ready to accept the change. Sunity Deveen later mentions that even the *Maharaja* of Cooch Behar himself believed that "no man should take more than one wife". However, the

conservative Hindu royal family was not necessarily on the same line in this regard. Things were changing but polygamy was clearly still well prevalent. I also noted how the discussion of polygamy was not mentioned during Vijaya Raje Scindia's marriage discussions, which thus shows that things did gradually change for the better during that era. Another important aspect must be highlighted here. The *Maharaja*, as we know, is from a Hindu royal family while Sunity Devee's family are strictly Brahmo, and the Brahmo principles clashed directly with many of the traditional Hindu beliefs. This created great unrest during the marriage and could be resolved only with the British government's intervention. Sunity Devee herself mentions,

*"One thing is certain, I shall not change my religion"*

So, unlike the *Maharaja* who does not share many of his family's beliefs, Sunity Devee was a Brahmo by birth and by heart.

Unlike in the case of Vijaya Raje Scindia, the word "government" and has an unusually high frequency in Sunity Devee's autobiography, considering the excerpts checked mainly involve marriage and romance. This proves the amount of influence the British government had even in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, we get to see a different situation in the other text as we even come to know how by that time, protests were at an all time high and a huge chunk of Indians were abandoning foreign products and were defying the British laws. "Dalton" has a high frequency in Sunity Devee's text as we read how he kept attempting to convince her father Babu Keshub Chander Sen's to approve of her marriage with the *Maharajah* of Cooch Behar till he gave in. The scenario was different with Vijaya Raje Scindia where many prospective grooms were talked about.

We see many places like "Delhi", "Bombay", "Calcutta", "Sagar", "Jhansi", "Benaras" and "Gwalior" popping up in case of Vijaya Raje Scindia and this could indicate the development of transport and communication in the early 1900s. And also, we know women were often restricted from meeting other people and travelling to different places earlier. Although it is true that Vijaya Raje Scindia was an entitled woman because of her royal background, it at least shows some signs of societal progress.

So, with the help of the computational bag of words exercise, we were successfully able to draw various fundamental similarities and comparisons between these two queens' early lives.