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The New India

The New India

by

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Throughout this book the word "India" connotes the whole of the Indian Sub-continent and comprises the recently created Dominions of India and Pakistan as well as the Indian States. The term "Indian" means a resident of any part of the Sub-continent, The words "Indian Government" are used for the government of British India before the transfer of power in August 1947.

Chapter I

Introduction

THE position of India in the world of to-day is largely the result of her geographical situation, her physical characteristics and her climatic conditions. A short account of these will be of use by way of introduction to a review of the structure of her social and economic life.

The lofty ranges of the Himalaya mountains and their complex offshoots to the northwest and southeast form the northern boundary of India. On the south lies the Indian Ocean while the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal skirt the western and eastern coasts of the peninsula. From the shores of the Arabian Sea to the Himalayas, as the northwestern land boundary there is another mountain range, not so lofty or inaccessible as the Himalayas. Across this range there are several passages through which invaders and immigrants have reached India from the earliest times. The mountainous region separating India from Burma on the east, with its dense malarious forest and undergrowth, has like the Himalayas proved in the past an almost impenetrable barrier to invading hordes or peaceful traders. The

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Japanese attempted their recent invasion of India through this tract. Their offensive as well as the Allied counter offensive had each to contend with almost insuperable difficulties.

These boundaries have largely, though not completely, isolated India from the rest of Asia; they have not prevented communications with the world outside by land or sea. Mention has been made of the great mountains which surround India on the north, east and west. Inside India, a lower and irregular complex of hills and mountains, known as the Vindhya, separates the great northern plain from the peninsula. The Arabian seacoast is guarded for the greater part of its length by the Western Ghats, another chain of rugged hills, while further south across the apex of the peninsula lie the Nilgiri mountains.

The river systems of India are determined by these mountains. Rising in the western Himalayas, the Indus, with its five tributaries which give the Punjab its name, falls into the Arabian Sea. The Ganges and its affluents, hallowed by story and tradition, drain the southern ranges of the Himalayas and the northern slopes of the Vindhya. Forming an alluvial basin of immense extent in the heart of the northern plain, the Ganges pursues its long easterly course before pouring its vast waters through a delta into the Bay of Bengal. The Brahmaputra, another mighty river, rising in the region to the north of the Himalayas bursts through the north-eastern corner of these mountains and joins the delta of the Ganges. Only two important rivers in the peninsula, both with their source in the Vindhya, flow into the Arabian Sea. All the remaining rivers in the south drain the eastern slopes of the mountains and fall into the Bay of Bengal.

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The extreme length of India from north to south and similarly its extreme breadth from east to west are each only a little short of two thousand miles. Within this vast area is to be found a great divergence of climatic conditions. The snowclad mountains in the north shelter temperate regions, giving place in the west to an area some parts of which have the characteristics of a waterless desert, while in the south and east occur districts with sub-tropical verdure. The most noteworthy feature of the climate, applicable to the greater part of the country, is furnished by what are called the monsoon winds. Dry westerly land winds with little cloud and rain blow from March to May and are followed in the four succeeding months by humid winds originating in the Indian Ocean, bringing much cloud and frequent, sometimes heavy, rain. Between October and February the land enjoys settled, fine and sunny weather and the temperature varies with the latitude of the region. The material development of the different parts of the country is conditioned by their climate, and their prosperity depends largely on the adequacy and distribution of the monsoon rainfall.

The limits of *political* India were the same as those of *geographical* India with three important qualifications. Within the folds of the central region of the Himalayan ranges lies Nepal, which was formerly deemed to be a part of India but is now an independent Hindu Kingdom. On the other hand in the north-western corner of the country there had been an accession to political India of some territory that lay between her and Afghanistan, while further south the country of Baluchistan became an Indian province, making south-eastern Iran a neighbour of India. It has to be added that two European countries, Portugal and France, own small enclaves, mostly on the

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coast. They are the survivals of the empires which these countries had endeavoured to found in India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Burma which was conquered by Great Britain in the course of the nineteenth century and had been incorporated for administrative purposes within the Indian empire was completely separated in 1935.

Apart from the natural division of India into the northern plain formed by the basins of the three great rivers and the southern peninsula, there existed a political division between the British provinces and the Indian states. In order to explain this distinction it is necessary to sketch very briefly the historical development of the country.

From the earliest times two contrary trends have been noticeable in the political history of India. During most of the period preceding the Moslem invasions of India there were in the country a number of states, some large and others small, with separate administrations but with a great similarity of institutions. At the same time the thinkers of those ages developed the theory of an "empire" embracing these kingdoms and making the whole of India a political unity. All the constituent kingdoms might not disappear but their rulers would become subordinate to the emperor and pay homage and tribute to him. Instances of such empires occur in pre-Moslem Indian history and in some cases the emperor undoubtedly exercised authority over the greater portion of geographical India. In the course of time the imperial power weakened and complete independence was asserted by the rulers of the old kingdoms or of newly formed states.

When the first effective Moslem invasions of India took place in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there was no

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such "empire" in India and there was an utter lack of cohesion among the Hindu rulers who offered no united resistance to the new-comers. For a long time the new Moslem states had to contend against one another or against such Hindu Kingdoms as continued to exist. The idea of an Indian empire, however, survived and it became the aim of ambitious Moslem rulers to found such an empire. This was accomplished in the second half of the sixteenth century by the Mogul emperor, Akbar the Great, who established his suzerainty over the larger part of India. His successors on the Delhi throne steadfastly endeavoured to extend the limits of the empire to the boundaries of geographical India. In the eighteenth century weakness supervened at the centre and the empire was split up again into a number of independent Moslem and Hindu states, at war with one another and bringing social and economic ruin to the whole country.

It was at this time that two European nations, the French and English, began to play an important part in Indian history. The Portuguese had come to the western coast of India in the sixteenth century for trade and also with a view to spreading Christianity among the population. In order to achieve these objects they had secured some territorial possessions in India and adjacent lands. The French and English followed in the next century, also with the object of trade and in the struggle that ensued between the three competitors the Portuguese were obliged at an early stage to accept a minor position. During the general upheaval of the eighteenth century the French and English discovered that their trade would not prosper unless they obtained the support of some of the indigenous powers by aiding in their wars. The two nations espoused opposing interests; in the end the French had to abandon

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both their trade and their territorial ambitions **in India** and to remain content with a foothold on the southeastern coast. The British were more fortunate and it became incumbent upon them, willingly and sometimes unwillingly, to intervene in local factions and hostilities and to assume political responsibility in different areas. By the end of the century, the East India Company, which was the representative of the British interest, became the actual ruler of large tracts of country. Then followed a period of deliberate expansion of British rule, the impulse coming largely from a conviction in the minds of the British authorities that the system of law and order introduced by them would secure great moral and material benefit to the inhabitants. This belief was strengthened both by the approving attitude of their new subjects and by the misgovernment that prevailed at the time in regions still under Indian rule. Partly as the result of wars and partly by methods of peaceful annexation, nearly three-fifths of the area of India had come under the British by the middle of the nineteenth century.

Then came a change of policy. In 1857, a serious mutiny broke out in an important section of the Indian soldiers of the British army in India. A few of the displaced rulers and some of their subjects joined the mutineers and large parts of the country suffered from disorder. The outbreak was ultimately quelled and the authorities in England then decided that in future India should be ruled directly by the British government and not through the agency of the East India Company. In regard to the various states which survived, outside the British possessions but within the limits of political India, it was declared that the British government as the Paramount Power would preserve their integrity, subject to

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the condition that flagrant misgovernment by their rulers would be prevented or arrested by timely intervention. This position was accepted by the states. Twenty years later, Queen Victoria assumed with the approval of the princely rulers of the states the title of Empress of India and her successors retained the imperial designation. Thus the ancient idea of a unified Indian empire reasserted itself.

There are over five hundred and fifty of these 'states' scattered all over India, which cover two fifths of the area of India and include a quarter of its total population. In many instances, especially in western and central India, state boundaries were interlaced with British Indian territory. A large number of states are very small in size and importance and a few are virtually fiefs of the larger states, though they were specially protected by the Paramount Power. Only about one hundred states are of real significance and some twenty of the larger states make up the great bulk of state territory and population in India.

Not all the present Indian states are of ancient origin. Kashmir, the largest in size, was established on its present basis only in the middle of the nineteenth century. The dynasty now ruling the premier state of Hyderabad, which is the largest in population and revenue, was founded in the first half of the eighteenth century. The same troublous period witnessed the rise of the three extensive states of Baroda, Gwalior and Indore. On the other hand the important state of Mysore in the south traces its origin to the fifteenth century and the history of some of the states in Rajputana goes back to very early times.

British territory in India was originally divided into three 'presidencies' with capitals at the three ports of

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Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. In the course of time the presidencies were split up into provinces, the last partition taking place in 1935. In most instances these divisions were based on administrative convenience and not necessarily on any grounds of historical tradition, strategic necessities or natural boundaries. Some provinces comprised elements disparate in language and earlier history.

British India was divided into eleven Provinces which enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy; there were also a number of small isolated areas directly administered by the central government. Among the autonomous Provinces the largest in population were Bengal, Madras, Bombay, the Punjab, the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, and Bihar. The less important Provinces were the Central Provinces, Assam, Orissa, Sind and the North-west Frontier. The subprovince of Berar had an anomalous status. Nominally belonging to the state of Hyderabad, it was administered as a part of British India and attached for this purpose to the Central Provinces. The areas under direct central rule included the city and environs of Delhi, the last capital of British India.

Uniformity of administration for a long period and the resultant closer contact of the inhabitants had given all the Provinces distinctive characters of their own and in each case a new provincial patriotism had been developed.

In the summer of 1947 the British Parliament passed legislation dividing British India into two 'Dominions', namely, the Union of India and Pakistan. Of the eleven provinces in British India enumerated above, Bengal has been split into two separate provinces, West Bengal with a Hindu majority, and Eastern Bengal with a Moslem majority. The district of Sylhet in the **old** province of Assam was inhabited mostly by Moslems and

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it has now been transferred to the adjoining province of East Bengal. Similarly two provinces have been created out of the old province of the Punjab, with Hindu and Moslem majorities respectively. The Sikhs who were distributed in both parts of the Punjab have not been assigned any distinctive area.

The "Union of India" consists of (1) East Punjab, (2) United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, (3) Bihar, (4) West Bengal, (5) Assam, (6) Orissa, (7) Central Provinces (and Berar), (8) Bombay and (9) Madras. To the dominion of Pakistan has been given (1) West Punjab, (2) Northwest Frontier, (3) Sind and (4) the distant province of East Bengal and also Baluchistan.

The transfer of power from the United Kingdom to the two Dominions took place on the 15th August. Delhi remains the capital of the Indian Union while the seaport of Karachi has been chosen as the capital of Pakistan. Calcutta is in West Bengal and Lahore is in West Punjab.

The British Crown has abandoned its title to be the Paramount Power over the Indian states many of which are now forming themselves into small or large federations. With the exception of Kashmir and Hyderabad all Indian states or federations of states have attached themselves to one or other of the two Dominions for certain common purposes such as defence and communications. The position of Kashmir and Hyderabad is still uncertain.

In both Dominions constituent assemblies are in session in order to discuss and promulgate new constitutions and the process is not yet complete. (September 1947)

Chapter II

Communities

T

HE earliest inhabitants of India were the tribes now living mostly in the remoter forests and fastnesses of the Vindhya or in the hills on the Assam frontier. Smaller pockets of these tribes are to be found in the Himalayan foothills and in the Nilgiris. It is not known where the tribes came from, and their affinities with primitive tribes in other parts of Asia and Australasia are uncertain. The Indian tribes may not all have the same origin for there is no close resemblance between those living on the north-eastern borderlands and those dwelling in and around the Vindhya. Their total number is now about twentyfive million and they constitute approximately six per cent of the Indian population. Twothirds of them belong to the Provinces (former British India) and the remaining third to the States.

These tribal peoples are often described as animists, but at the present moment this is not true of all of them. There was always a steady process of assimilation of the tribes into the two main communities of India, chiefly into the Hindu fold, and very occasionally into Islam. In recent decades the efforts of Christian missionaries have

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secured large numbers of converts among them. In the last census, they were counted according to their tribal origin and not according to the religious community to which they belonged or professed to belong. It is difficult to say what proportion of the tribal people are still animists and what proportion call themselves Hindus or Christians. *

The members of the tribes used to be primarily hunters and woodmen and some pursued primitive methods of agriculture. Contact with non-tribal inhabitants in their neighbourhood is gradually making them adopt the ordinary avocations of daily labour or the simpler forms of agriculture and industry. Their conversion to Christianity or assimilation into the Hindu community has usually the effect of a considerable change in their economic and social life. Christian missions in particular are making laudable endeavours to spread literacy among the converts and the example is being followed by Hindu social workers. The more backward tribes were accorded special recognition and protection in the 1935 constitution of the Provinces and the governments were charged with the duty of promoting their welfare and advance-

* See Census of India 1941 Vol. I p. 28. "The fact is of course that while between Islam or Christianity and other religions there exists as it were a definite wall or fence over which or through which the convert must go, there is nothing between what is usually though vaguely described as animism and the equally vague and embracing concept of Hinduism but a wide no man's land; and the process by which a tribesman is assimilated to a Hindu is not that of conversion or the acceptance of a particular creed or joining in a definitely marked out section of the population, but a more or less gradual traversing of this no man's land—No opinion has been expressed on whether the number returned as tribes should be considered as assimilated to Hindus or not."

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menu During the Japanese war members of tribes on the Assam frontier distinguished themselves by their bravery and resource and military units composed of some of the Vindhya tribes have also been highly spoken of. The tribesmen are now emerging from their isolation and it is hoped that within a measurable period of time their standard of life will not be inferior to that of the main communities of India.

The people or peoples who displaced the tribesmen in the plains and fertile regions of India are usually described as Dravidians. This is an ambiguous term for it is also used, as we shall see, later, for a group of languages spoken in the south of the country. The name has taken a wider application because it is now recognised that people of 'Dravidian' stock were in early times not confined to the south but were diffused all over India. Where the Dravidian race or races came from is also uncertain. In the last twentyfive years the remains have been found in the Indus Valley of a civilisation which flourished prior to 3000 B.C. and which it has been suggested bear marks of resemblance to the more authentic attributes of Dravidian culture. This and other facts have led some scholars to consider that the Dravidians had affinities with the earlier peoples of the river basins of Iraq.

It has been established that the Dravidians enjoyed a fairly high level of civilisation and their culture was not inferior to that of the Aryans who came to India through the mountain parses on the northwest. The Aryans migrated into India in the centuries following 3000 B.C. and unlike later immigrants they brought their families with them. Naturally their earliest settlements were in the Indus basin, but the fertile regions of the Ganges valley soon attracted them and gradually they secured domina-

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tion in those areas, though for some time the Vindhya and the tribal inhabitants thereof offered a formidable obstacle to progress towards the south. In the course of time many Aryans contracted marriages with Dravidians and this mixed race constitutes the great bulk of the Indian population. It is surmised that the present inhabitants of the Indus basin have the purest Aryan blood and there is less and less of it among the general populace as one travels further east and south.

Turning to the races who came to India after the Aryans, we have records of Persian and Greek invasions and though both these peoples for a time established their rule in parts of the Indus basin there was no racial settlement of any significance. Shortly before the commencement of the Christian era and for some centuries afterwards, there were fresh incursions through the northwestern passes of a number of nomadic tribes known as Sakas (or Scythians) and Huns. For a considerable period they became politically supreme in a large part of northern and western India but they had no cultural organisation of their own and they merged completely in the Indian population. It is no longer possible definitely to identify their descendants.

After the spread of Islam into Iran, a small number of the Zoroastrians of that country found shelter in Hindu States on the west coast. Though they largely adopted Indian customs and speech, they preserved their own distinctive religion and now they form the important though numerically small community of Parsees in the city and province of Bombay.

The followers of Islam began their invasion of India in the eighth century. For a time their position was localised in Sind, the part of the Indus basin bordering

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on the Arabian Sea. A much wider stream of immigration accompanied by territorial occupation started in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and was fitfully carried on right up to the early part of the eighteenth century. These newcomers were usually the followers of a Moslem military leader of the Turkish or Mogul race and they brought comparatively few women with them. As a rule they married in the country and wholesale conversions to Islam, mainly voluntary, took place in the Punjab and adjacent areas down to recent centuries. Many of the rulers of Moslem states in India and even of the Delhi Kingdom were either converts or the offspring of mixed marriages. The proportion of conversions in the region lying immediately to the east of the Punjab and in the south and west of India was comparatively small. The situation was different in Bengal and particularly in the eastern part of that area. Until the end of the eleventh century that province had been Buddhist in religion and social life and had then come under the rule of an orthodox Hindu dynasty from the south. These new rulers introduced all the rigours of the caste system. It is surmised that the peasants and labourers must have resented the new oppression and when in the thirteenth century the Moslems conquered the province many of the poorer classes embraced the religion of their new masters. The comparatively large proportion of Moslems in Assam was accounted for by the fact that the most populous district of the province was for a long time within the administrative limits of Bengal. In recent years there has also been much movement into the sparser areas of Assam from the congested Moslem districts of eastern Bengal.

With the exception of Kashmir (previous to the present regime) and Hyderabad, the great majority of the present

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Indian states have been throughout in the occupation of Hindu rulers and there were not many conversions in them to Islam. Kashmir came under the rule of a Moslem dynasty in the fourteenth century and it is believed that the majority of the population were forcibly converted to Islam during that regime. Threequarters of the Kashmir population profess the Moslem faith, though a Hindu prince is now the head of the state. * The position is reversed in Hyderabad where the ruler is a Moslem but over thirteen million of the inhabitants are Hindus and only two million are Moslems.

These facts explain the present distribution of Hindus and Moslems in the different regions of India. Taking the country as a whole two-thirds of the inhabitants are Hindus, a little less than a quarter are Moslems, six per cent are of tribal origin, the rest belonging to the minor communities. In the States the Moslems constitute about a seventh of the population and they are congregated, as might be expected, in Kashmir, Hyderabad and the Punjab States. In the three provinces of the Indus basin (Northwest Frontier, Sind and the Punjab) taken together, three-fifths of the people were Moslems. In Bengal the Moslem proportion was fiftyfive per cent and in Assam thirtyfive per cent. The proportion of Moslems in the remaining provinces is much smaller, ranging from a negligible fraction in Orissa to nearly twenty percent in Bombay.

After the Hindus and Moslems, and again excluding tribal persons, Christians form the most numerous community in India. It is claimed that some of them are descended from colonists settled in South India by the

* See page 13 ante.

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apostle Thomas. Christian missions have been active, particularly in the south, from the beginning of the sixteenth century and the Christian population is largely, though not entirely, composed of converts from the poorer classes who were resentful of their social position in the Hindu community, while many conversions are now taking place among the tribes. The total number of Indian Christians in the country at the last census was six million, divided equally between the Provinces and the States. They form a substantial proportion of the population of the progressive states of Travancore and Cochin in the south and there are over two million Christians in the province of Madras.

Sikhs constitute the most important of the smaller communities in India. Beginning at the end of the fifteenth century as a strictly monotheistic sect of Hindus, the persecutions suffered by them under certain Moslem rulers led them to organise themselves as a distinctive military body. In the early years of the nineteenth century a Sikh ruler was in virtual possession of the entire northern part of the Indus basin. This area came under British rule in the middle of the nineteenth century. There were over four million Sikhs in British India, practically all in the Punjab. About a million and a half live in the States, again mostly in the Punjab states. Accessions still take place into the community from among ordinary Hindus but not in large numbers.

In the census returns the Jains are recorded as a separate community with a total population of a million and a half. They are the followers of Mahavira, a contemporary of Buddha and like him a dissenter from the Hindu tenets of the sixth century before Christ. Even now they may be truly described as a dissenting sect of

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Hindus. Their main profession is commerce and they are mostly resident in Rajputana and western India.

It is well-known that for many centuries in the pre-Moslem era a considerable proportion of the Indian people professed the Buddhist faith which was originally preached as a dissenting form of Hinduism. In the course of time Indian Buddhists were reabsorbed into Hinduism. Now there are only about two hundred thousand Buddhists in India and most of them live in the districts contiguous to Burma or Tibet.

It remains to mention the Anglo-Indians, people of mixed descent, who number one hundred and forty thousand, the Europeans who are numerically slightly fewer than the Anglo-Indians, and the twenty thousand Jews, some of whom have been in India from very early times.

It has been explained how, leaving out persons of tribal origin, and with the exception of the very small numbers represented by the Parsees, the Europeans and an inconsiderable fraction of the Moslems, all communities in India owe their origin to the mixed Aryan and Dravidian race which constituted the main body of the Hindus. It is true that the people are now split up into a number of communities with different religions and in many cases different social ideas and customs, but it would be a mistake to imagine that they live in entirely separate and water-tight compartments. It has been seen that the tribes were in early times pressed back into the remoter and less fertile regions, but their gradual assimilation into Hindu and Christian society is in progress and there is an increasing infiltration of non-tribal men into the tribal areas. Although some missions have endeavoured to establish Christian villages in the

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north, the tendency everywhere is for Christians to live in close contact with their Hindu and Moslem neighbours. In the urban and rural localities all over India, it was practically impossible to say that any village or town was inhabited exclusively by Hindus or by Moslems, or that one portion of the cultivated village lands was marked out for the Moslem peasants and another portion for the Hindu peasants. In former times some Hindus avoided trades or professions such as tanning and shoemaking which were deemed to be unclean, but these inhibitions are now fast disappearing; both Hindus and Moslems are now to be found in every craft and trade.

When *in* the old days a Hindu embraced Islam he did not forsake the village to which he belonged and he, and his descendants after him, continued to take an active share in the secular life of the locality. Indeed in some cases one branch of a family remained Hindu while another became Moslem. The family bonds which are proverbially stronger in the east than in the west continued to be effective and such instances are still common after the lapse of several centuries. It is well-known that Moslem converts retained many of the family and social traditions of the Hindus and sometimes even their ceremonial practices. It is only in the last fifty years that endeavours have been made to persuade them to abjure customs and practices which are not sanctioned by strict Islamic injunctions.

Living together like this for many centuries, Hindus and Moslems had cultivated charity, forbearance and neighbourliness towards one another. They had shown a united front against all attempts to interfere with their common economic life. Disputes and misunderstandings of course arose, as they also arose between peoples

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belonging to different Hindu sects or to different Moslem denominations. But if the immense area and population of India are taken into consideration, breaches of the peace were few and far between.

Arising, however, out of the abnormal political situation that has prevailed in the last two or three years, there have been communal disorders of greater or less magnitude in certain parts of the country. The creation of the two Dominions of India and Pakistan, which had its basis in difference of religion, was followed by a large movement of population, particularly in the Punjab. Migrations on the scale that has occurred has inevitably been attended by disorders and distress. It is to be hoped that the present tension will pass and the peoples of the two Dominions will develop side by side in amity for the furtherance of the common interests of the sub-continent.

Chapter III

Religions

*

IN the preceding chapter it has been stated that two-thirds of the Indian population belong to the Hindu community, about one quarter are Moslems and six per cent are of tribal origin. The vast majority of Indian Moslems have been converted to that religion from the Hindu community and in their ideas and customs still bear notable traces of their Hindu origin. Of the persons of tribal origin the Census Commissioner has observed * that "one-twentieth fall within the Christians on a religious basis. The remainder can be regarded as in greater or less degree of assimilation towards the Hindu majority." In any account of the religions of India priority must be given to the characteristics of Hinduism.

Hinduism is a way of life and not a religion in the ordinary sense of the word. There is no 'creed'¹ accepted by every Hindu and there is no work possessing the same authority for all Hindus as the Bible for Christians and the Koran for Moslems. All Hindus would acknowledge the sanctity of the Vedas, a term which comprises both

* Census of India 1941. Vol. 1. p. 29.

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the ancient hymns composed by the Aryan immigrants and a large body of very early exegetical prose literature which grew up around the hymns. The bulk of this ancient prose literature consists of ritualistic and priestly treatises called *Brahmanas*. But only the latest development of this literature, the *Upanishads*, can be said to have become an integral and permanent part of the Hindu religion. The *Upanishads* are philosophical treatises which, like a few of the hymns, are the earliest expression of Indian philosophical thought and the basis of that monistic interpretation of ultimate reality, the Vedanta philosophy, which still dominates the Indian mind. This Vedic literature has a sanctity and an authority which few Hindus would question. The case is different with the later treatises called the *Sdstras* which have only the force of tradition. In theory they lay down *dharma*, the duty and way of life of the Hindu and current Hindu law has been considered to be based on the *Sdstras*. But the *Sdstras*, a generic name, are a voluminous mass of literature on every subject composed over many centuries. The doctrines enunciated in these various works are not of uniform tenour or pattern and being formulated in Sanskrit, a dead classical language, are not easily accessible to the ordinary Hindu. The learned may appeal to the *Sdstras*, but the religious ideals of the Hindu masses are founded in the main on the teaching embodied in the two great Sanskrit epics, the *Mahabhrata* and the *Ramayana*, the Iliad and the Odyssey of India, and more particularly in the versions of these epics current in the modern languages of the country.

The theme of the *Mahabharata* is the story of a war waged at a very early period in Indian history between the Kurus and the Pandus, two princely families who

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lived in the region lying between the Indus and Ganges basins. The *Ramayana* relates the adventures of Rama, a legendary prince of the Gangetic valley and of Sita, his devoted wife, their expedition to the south of India and their war with the ruler of Ceylon. The two epics existed in something like their present form two or three hundred years before Christ but have received many later additions and interpolations. Of the versions in the modern languages, which are not translations, the best known date back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the Christian era. One of them, the *Ramayana* of Tulasi Das, is as well-known and venerated among Hindus in north India as the Bible among Christians.

These two lengthy epics in their Sanskrit and modern versions contain a large number of episodes and a wealth of moral and spiritual precepts which may be truly said to have become the guiding principles of the life of a Hindu. Embedded in the *Mahabharata* is the *Bhagavad-gita* (the song of the Lord) in which Krishna, the spiritual hero of the epic, expounds to the military leader of the Pandu clan in clear and philosophic language the purpose of the world, the duties of man and the modes of attaining spiritual freedom. Krishna and Rama from being heroes have become deified and are now looked upon by Hindus as incarnations of the Godhead.

The lessons inculcated by the two epics and the *Bhagavadgita* (popularly known as the *Gita* or the Song) may be briefly describe!! as truth, charity, self-discipline and the faithful performance of the duties (*dharma*) imposed by social and family life. The doctrine of *Karma* (literally, action) forms an integral and fundamental part of this teaching. It is based on a belief in rebirths or the transmigration of souls. There may be countless rebirths

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and the condition of each birth is that when a person is newly born, he is endowed with the moral and spiritual attributes and is born into the circumstances that are the resultant of the actions of his previous lives. His future is not however predetermined by the past for he has freedom of action in the present life. His action in this life is added to the result of the actions of his past lives and the sum of the two determines how his new life will begin. Through these successive rebirths the soul is gradually ennobled, is freed from all its worldly attributes, loses its separate entity or individuality and finally becomes absorbed in Ultimate Reality. It has to be noted that "action" includes both thought and deed; consequently noble aspirations and evil desires affect the future no less than acts. Thus repentance and prayers, though they may not bring immediate salvation, have their efficacy in the end.

It is a mistake to describe *Karma* as a fatalistic belief. The *Gita* in particular "exalts an activistic ethic". Although the doctrine of *Karma* induces an attitude of mind persuading the individual to accept the situation into which he is born, it does not preclude efforts to improve his lot in this world. The Hindu, in spite of a profound belief in *Karma*, feels that he is free and can in practice exercise his freedom to better himself morally and materially. If the Hindu is charged with any want of energy in affairs he cannot lay the blame on the doctrine of *Karma*.

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A logical consequence of the Hindu belief in *Karma* is the toleration that a true Hindu must and ordinarily does extend to the adherents of all other religions. As will be seen later, an orthodox Hindu observes an attitude of social separation from a Christian or Moslem but he

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does not condemn those religions nor does he hold that ultimate salvation will be impossible for persons practising Christianity or Islam. It is this trait which has enabled Hindu States at different periods of history to give an asylum to Zoroastrians in western India, and to Moslems, Christians and Jews in South India. In modern times, apart perhaps from one sect of Hindus, Christian missionaries have met with no hostility from the Hindu communities among whom they have preached or worked.

The underlying tenets of the Hindu 'religion' are therefore a faith in a supreme God manifested in incarnations and acceptance of the doctrines of rebirths and *Karma*. The beliefs and practices of the Hindus have not however escaped the effects of the evolution of Hinduism from an admixture of the Aryan and Dravidian races and of the impact of persons of tribal origin, who have been and are still being gradually assimilated into its fold. To these circumstances must be attributed many practices which can fairly be called idolatrous and much of that polytheism which is so noticeable and puzzling to the stranger. When the animistic tribesman is gradually transformed into a Hindu, it is not easy for him to abjure all his older beliefs and the Hindu social system permits him to continue many of his former practices though others are slowly modified and eventually abandoned.

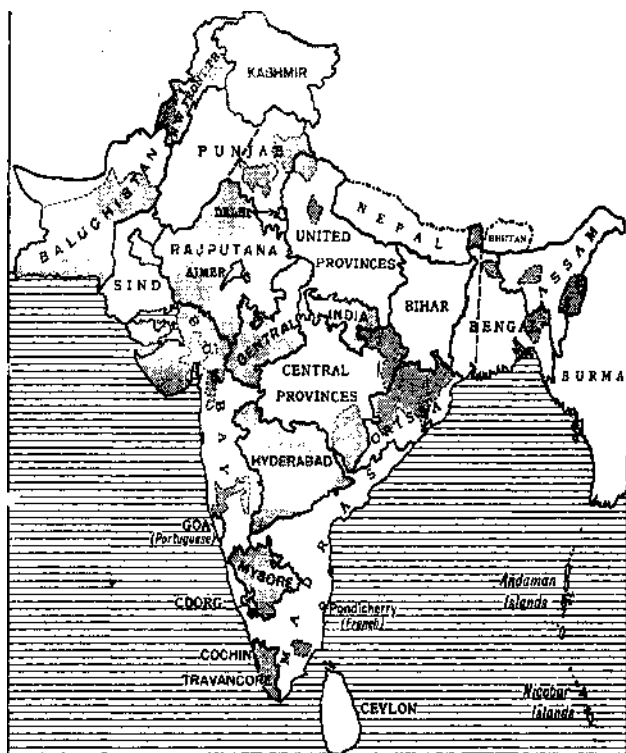
For an ordinary Hindu, in most cases, the image before which he worships is only a symbol and each person is free to choose the particular image which expresses the divine attributes to which he attaches special significance. Thus one person may find his conception of God embodied in an image representing *Vishnu*, typifying the protective and beneficent attributes of the Supreme Being, while

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another will substitute an image of *Siva* or of his feminine counterpart, *Durga* or *Kali*, as the symbol of one who punishes or vanquishes the evil doer. The material representation of the corporeal figure and its equipment serves to bring readily to the mind's eye of the worshipper the various attributes of the Godhead. There are of course gradations and degradations in this polytheism until we come to the worship of the material object as such, which is in truth a survival of the magic and the animistic beliefs of the tribal peoples. Underlying all these beliefs, however, is the inherent and acknowledged faith of most thinking Hindus in *Parameswar* or the Supreme God.

Parallel with the development of the religious faith of the ordinary Hindu which has been described above has been the growth of the Hindu philosophical systems. As already mentioned, the roots of these systems lie in the *Upanishads*, short aphoristic treatises, some of which were composed hardly later than the latest of the Vedic hymns, proclaiming the existence of an Absolute Reality and the Unity of the Universe. From these germs were developed the abstruse metaphysical speculations giving rise to diverse philosophical systems, some pantheistic, others strictly monotheistic and others again frankly agnostic or materialistic. A satisfactory account of these systems would be out of place here, but it has to be stated that these various theories have profoundly influenced the mind of the Hindu through all the ages.

These theories have been set forth in a vast number of philosophical and poetical treatises in Sanskrit and in the modern languages, and the substance and contents of these have been communicated in popular terms to the common man and woman by means of songs and ballads, metrical biographies of saints and heroes and the oral



INDIA Provinces and States

English Miles
0 100 200 300 400 500

 Indian States

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manifested in His Grace and man's love for God, manifested in his devotion." This doctrine of salvation by faith was a prominent phase of early Hinduism which was no doubt reinforced from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by the teachings of Islam. Two hundred years later, contemporaneously with the development of the modern languages and literatures of India, there was a wave of new spiritual ideas in the country and several social and religious reformers belonging to this period have left their impress on Hindu society. Some rejected the idea of incarnation in favour of a pure theism; among them was Nanak, who lived in the Punjab, and he became the founder of the sect of Sikhs (literally, disciples). The Sikh creed is based on the principles enunciated in the *Granth* (literally, book); it prohibits idolatry and does not recognise caste distinctions.* As previously stated, the Sikhs developed into a military body during the period of the collapse of the Mogul empire and now regard themselves as a separate community.

Other dissenting sects have been organised in later periods, on the basis of a repudiation of image worship and the caste system, but it will suffice to enumerate two of the more modern developments which have exercised considerable influence on Hindu thought and society. Early in the nineteenth century the Brahmo Samaj came into being in Bengal, mainly as a result of a revival of Sanskrit learning and the spread of English and Christian literature in that province. Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of this movement, was deeply versed in Hindu, Moslem and Christian theology and the adherents of the society organised by him were strictly theistic in religion, dis-

* The social and religious customs of the Hindus, such as the caste system, will be dealt with in a later chapter.

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liked caste and were ardent advocates of social reform. They were at first ostracised by strict Hindus and were tending to become a separate sect. The social reforms that have now been tacitly accepted by Hindu society in general have enabled Brahmos to be reconciled to the main body of Hinduism.

The Arya Samaj was founded in the latter half of the nineteenth century and in this case also the members profess monotheism and repudiate the caste system. They constitute a growing body in the Punjab and adjacent areas and are doing excellent service in the social and educational spheres. A strong nationalist sentiment is a characteristic of the members of the Arya Samaj.

It has been mentioned that the Jains who are classified in the Census returns as a separate community, contributing a million and a half to the Indian population, are essentially a dissenting sect of Hindus. The Jains believe in Karma and rebirths, and employ priests in domestic ceremonies. Their religion inculcates reverence for the deified saints (*tirthankaras*) of the sect, and they observe a very strict regard for the sanctity of all forms of life. They are distinguished by their charity and have established in the country many hospitals for the sick and for animals.

The fundamental tenets of Islam, belief in the one and only God and in the teachings of Muhammad, his prophet, are the same all over the world and do not require elaboration here. In India as in other countries the two main sects are Sunnis and Shias. There are differences between the two sects in certain articles of belief and in personal law, which occasionally give rise to disputes and ill-feeling. The majority of Indian Moslems are Sunnis, though Shias predominate in some localities, and it is easy

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for an individual to pass from one sect to another. Many Moslems in India have been influenced by Sufi philosophy which interprets Islamic monotheism in terms of a religious mysticism approximating to the monism characteristic of certain branches of Hindu philosophy. In actual everyday life very large sections of Indian Moslems are differentiated from their non-Indian coreligionists by the adoration of saints and the veneration of living religious teachers. Visits to shrines and places of pilgrimage play almost as large a part in Moslem life as in Hindu life. Until recent years Indian Moslems have had, and in many localities even now retain, the same social customs as Hindus. In strict theory all Moslems are brothers and there should be no caste barriers, but in practice, more particularly among the poorer classes, many such distinctions still survive, and persons belonging to different sections of Moslems will not intermarry, and some of the later Moslem immigrants into India have kept themselves socially exclusive.

In the Islamic religion, congregational worship is an important element and its austere character forbids music and other incidents of a festive nature anywhere near a mosque or place of worship. On the other hand, music and processions through the streets and open spaces constitute an indispensable element in the religious festivals which delight Hindus. Disputes between the two communities arise mainly from a conflict on these points, usually in urban localities, or in villages and towns when Hindus object to the killing of cows by Moslems either for food or in pursuance of an injunction to sacrifice an animal on a religious occasion. Ordinarily the two communities arrive at a satisfactory compromise, but sometimes, when feeling is acute on political grounds, or when

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mischiefmakers are about, a serious situation has to be controlled by the respective leaders and the administrative authorities.

The Parsees in India are followers of the religion established in Persia (Iran) in pre-Moslem times by the great teacher Zoroaster (Zarathustra). It is not correct to call them fire-worshippers, for though they display a reverence for fire as one of the principal elements of the Universe, they believe in a Supreme Being and consider that the life of man is affected by a perpetual struggle between the spirits of good and evil. Man, who is free, must endeavour to lead a pure life of active virtue, for his future after death is the result of his life upon earth. Whether he will attain heaven or be cast into hell depends upon the balance between his good deeds and thoughts and his evil desires and acts. Conversions to the Parsee religion are very rare. The Parsees in India have distinguished themselves not only in trade, industry and the professions, but also by the foundation of many charitable and educational institutions.

The Christian religion has been known in India from ancient times. It is believed that the earliest Indian Christians were a branch of the Nestorian community, and their descendants, now practising Syrian rites, are still to be found in the southernmost districts of the province of Madras. Roman Catholics as well as all the principal denominations of the Protestant community are now represented in India. The Christian churches in the country have necessarily taken some colouring from their environment and at present a movement is in progress among the Protestant communities to become independent of the parent bodies in Europe and America by establishing a United Church of India.

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It is difficult to say when the Jews came to India and whether there was much conversion of people of Indian races to the Jewish religion. Small colonies of Jews are to be found in the city of Bombay and its neighbourhood and also in the south. Their beliefs and practices do not differ in any material particular from those of their coreligionists in other parts of the world.

Chapter IV

Social Customs

THE institution of caste is the feature of Hindu society which most strikes a western observer. Scholars are not agreed about the historical origin of caste, but the Hindu word for it denotes colour and it has been reasonably surmised that the institution sprang from the desire of the light coloured Aryan immigrants to distinguish themselves from the darker hued Dravidians and from the primitive tribesmen. In theory there are four main castes; Brahmans or priests and teachers, Kshatriyas or warriors and rulers, Vaisyas or peasants and traders, and Sudras or menials and persons of the servile classes. In practice at the present moment there are hundreds of subcastes which all claim to pertain to one or other of the four main castes. There are different names for the subcastes in the various regions of the country and even the subcastes are often split up into several branches.

The root idea is that a person belongs all his life to the caste of his parents. In theory he should follow the trade or profession assigned to the caste, while intimate social contacts such as eating and drinking together must be limited to the circle of the caste or subcaste. Another

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rule of considerable importance is that a person must not marry *outside* his own caste. It has also been the custom that he must not marry within a smaller circle inside his own caste. This last mentioned restriction was in theory an extension of the principle of forbidden degrees as known in the west.

All these caste rules have been changed, modified and developed from time to time. It is very doubtful whether the injunction that a person must adopt the profession assigned to his caste was ever followed in strict practice. Brahmans, who in the aggregate are believed to form the most numerous caste in India, are not restricted to the occupations of teaching and the priesthood and they are to be found in large numbers in the army and police, in the civil services, in the learned professions, in trades and crafts and among peasants and manual labourers. Kshatriyas, who are also popularly known as Rajputs, are as free as Brahmans to follow any calling they choose, though they have a predilection for martial and administrative occupations. Vaisyas, who include the trading and banking class known as Baniyas, have a natural aptitude for business, but like Brahmans and Kshatriyas adopt many other professions. Members of the numerous castes and subcastes included in the generic name of Sudras practise in many cases certain hereditary crafts or menial occupations, but there is nothing to prevent any individual from adopting any other calling. Many representatives of the Sudra community are now to be found in all the different trades and professions and have attained success and distinction in them. It is true that persons belonging to the three higher castes abstain from performing certain unclean services, such as those of sweepers and scavengers, but one may express a doubt whether this inhibition will

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persist in the stress of modern conditions which may also make it unnecessary to employ human beings on such duties. An overwhelming majority of the Hindu population are dependent on the pursuit of agriculture and allied occupations and members of all castes and subcastes are to be found among them.

The rule that the members of a caste or subcaste must not eat, drink or smoke with those of another caste or subcaste applied with different degrees of rigour in the various parts of the country. In these days of travel by rail or steamboat or motorbus it is difficult in practice to maintain these limitations, and a man working as a labourer or a factory hand hundreds of miles from his own home has no longer the apprehension that he will be detected and socially ostracised by his caste fellows. Although this rule is still observed by a great many Hindus, particularly in rural localities, it is becoming obsolescent and is openly defied by an increasing number.

The worst form of the tyranny of the caste rule was the attitude adopted by the higher castes towards persons belonging to the lowest ranks of Hindu society, persons who are generally described as the depressed classes or 'untouchables'. These people are believed to have originally belonged to the tribal classes, and following the 'unclean' trades and professions they suffered many disabilities, such as exclusion from temples and schools and also from the use of the village well. Their position was worse in the south than in the north, for in the north they had secured a status not inferior to that of many other Sudra castes. Until comparatively recent times these unfortunate people were accustomed to accept their position as natural. Christian missionaries devoted much attention to them and even where they did not convert,

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they inculcated among the 'untouchables' a spirit of self-help and a desire for improvement. Hindu social workers have followed the example of Christian missionaries, rightly deeming the system to be a slur on Hinduism, while the general political awakening of the country has helped to modify the attitude of the people in general to the 'untouchables'. In many areas, notably in the Hindu state of Travancore, the temples have been thrown open to them and the various Governments are insisting on their being allowed to use schools and wells. Members of the community now freely obtain employment in industries and in the public services. It is hoped that this reproach to the Hindu social system will soon be a thing of the past.

The caste rule about marriage had until recently not only the sanction of custom but also that of the personal law applicable to orthodox Hindus. The attitude of reforming communities such as the Sikhs, the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj, who have openly repudiated this rule, had naturally a marked influence on liberal elements in the orthodox community. It was a matter of complaint with many Hindus that the British Courts followed a strict interpretation of certain Sastric injunctions and declared the children of intercaste marriages to be illegitimate. The reformed legislature constituted under the Act of 1919 had altered the law and this disability no longer applies to the offspring of such marriages. But long tradition and conservative instincts, by no means peculiar to Hindus, still deter people from infringing the old custom. Other powerful influences are however at work which are bound to undermine its foundations. With the disappearance of *parda* (the seclusion of women), the gradual rise in the age of

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marriage, and the spread of education among girls, subjects which will be discussed below, young people of the two sexes belonging to different castes and sometimes to different communities are now pursuing together their studies, recreations and even professional work. It is impossible that the convention restricting intercaste marriage can long survive in a rigid form.

From what has been said above, it will be evident that the institution of caste has been useful in the past for the cultivation, within a precisely limited circle, of the virtues of friendship, charity and neighbourliness. Members of the same caste have felt a special obligation to help one another in distress and difficulties and also to act jointly for the protection of the privileges of their particular trade or calling. Owing to the existence of the institution of caste and of the joint family system (to be described below) there has been till now little need in India for any organised national system of poor relief. But the disadvantages of caste are obvious in the modern world when integration and unification instead of differentiation and particularism are necessary for social progress. That important sections of Hindus have always chafed under the restrictions and limitations of the caste system is proved by the rise of such movements as Buddhism and Jainism in the old days and of the more modern dissenting movements mentioned previously. A notable fact in this connection is that at the last Census (1941) nearly seven million persons, men and women, refused to return their caste * although they described themselves as Hindus. In these circumstances it may not perhaps be too optimistic

* Census of India 1941, Vol. 1. page 97. See also *ibid* p. 38.

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to express the hope that the caste system will **gradually** lose its present hold upon Hindu society.

No account of Hindu society can omit to mention the rites which mark every important occasion in the life of an orthodox Hindu. After the birth of a child, when a person is married, and again after his death, religious ceremonies are held at which a priest has to assist and a definite ritual has to be followed. Marriage is a sacrament among Hindus and not a mere civil contract. After the death of a person his children or other heirs have the duty of performing funeral rites and according to strict usage, not always followed these days, prayers should be offered annually for the spiritual benefit of the departed soul. On all these ceremonial occasions the practice is to entertain kinsmen and caste-fellows and to distribute gifts to priests, holy men, the learned and the poor. Among many sections of Hindus the custom also prevails of giving a dowry to the bride and in some cases to the bridegroom. These ceremonies and customs often entail expenditure beyond the means of the household and prove a serious financial burden. Social reformers have been endeavouring to effect a change in these customs, and economic pressure is also helping to curtail the expenditure.

The joint family system is another characteristic in which Hindu custom contrasts sharply with the practice in western countries. A young Hindu on marriage brings his bride to his parents' home, which then becomes also the home of the newly married couple and their children. In this way three or even more generations live **under** the same roof and all property is held in common, **the** expenses of the whole family being defrayed from **the** joint income of all the members. **Sooner or later a par-**

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tition takes place, the dwelling house and all other property are divided and new nuclei are started. The joint family system has certain obvious advantages, providing as it does for the care of widows, the infirm and the less capable members of the family and for the pooling of its moral and material resources. But its drawbacks in modern conditions are many. It encourages sloth and lack of enterprise in some members and unduly handicaps others. With the growing spirit of freedom among young people it generates a sense of irritation and frustration. The exigencies of the time drive members of a family to seek employment in different parts and they disperse, sometimes meeting only occasionally and sometimes not at all. The joint family system has no legal or social sanction and it is already breaking up. It can be confidently predicted that the system will disappear at no distant date.

Some other characteristics are commonly associated with Hindu society. It is often stated that the veneration of cows and the prohibition of the eating of animal flesh are essential to Hinduism. It is true that among the general body of Hindus there is a strong and definite repugnance to the eating of beef. This has been by no means always the case, for in the ancient literature there is direct evidence of the eating of the flesh of cows and oxen as well as of other animals. But Buddhism and Jainism, which were at one time widely prevalent in India, promulgated the doctrine of *ahimsa* or kindness to all sentient beings and Hindus did not escape the influence of this doctrine. In an agricultural country oxen were indispensable animals for the plough and all draught purposes, while milk and dairy products are a very valuable source of nutrition. The conservation of cattle

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became almost a religious necessity and the gradual prohibition of the eating of beef and the consideration shown to cows are therefore easily explained. Some of the lowest castes even now eat beef. As regards the flesh of other animals there is no universal prohibition. Anyone who has seen the conditions in which domestic pigs are reared in India would sympathise with the Hindu (and Moslem) abhorrence of its flesh. In many parts of India all classes of Hindus eat mutton and goats' flesh, while in others the higher castes are strict vegetarians.

Apart from the restrictions on intercaste marriage which have been dealt with above, it is necessary to discuss certain other marriage customs which have prevailed in India. One such custom was that which debarred widows from marrying again. About the middle of the nineteenth century, at the instance of Hindu reformers, the British Government legalised the remarriage of Hindu widows. There has never been a legal bar to the remarriage of Moslem widows, but the influence of environment led some upper class Moslems to copy the practice of their Hindu neighbours. Widow marriage has always been allowed among Hindus of inferior castes, but in spite of the reform of the law a hundred years ago social opinion among the higher castes for a time moved slowly in this respect. The gradual enlightenment of women generally and other modern tendencies, such as the wider spread of education among girls and the breakdown of the *parda* system, are effecting a more rapid change in Hindu social ideas in this matter and there is now a growing toleration of the remarriage of widows.

The custom prohibiting the remarriage of widows was

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the cause of much distress and suffering in classes among whom girls were married at an early age. This custom of early marriage was by no means universal in the case of men and even in the case of girls it did not prevail in all parts of the country. Where it did prevail the system was not confined to Hindus but was equally prevalent among Moslems and was not unknown even in such progressive communities as the Parsees. Early marriage resulted in early motherhood, and a gradual deterioration in the health and physique of the people was inevitable. Fortunately, laws passed by the reformed British Indian legislature about twenty years ago have fixed a minimum age of marriage for men at eighteen and for girls at fourteen and similar legislation is in force in some of the States. Statistics are not available, since the Census of 1941 was incomplete in this respect, but from general observation there can be no doubt that the age of marriage of girls has risen in the last two or three decades in a rapid and striking manner. Reference to this subject will occur again in the chapter on Population and Health.

Another feature of Indian society which strikes the observer is that polygamy is permitted to Hindus and within certain limits to Moslems. Economic reasons however have always confined the practice mainly to the ruling classes and wealthy individuals, and among Hindus there has always been some feeling against a man having more than one wife at a time if he already has a son to perform the usual family rites after his death. The feeling against polygamy, in no matter what circumstances, has steadily grown and the number of polygamous marriages is very few. Social opinion is now definitely arrayed against the practice. Women, both

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Hindu and Moslem, are at present leading the crusade against it and proposals are before the Indian legislatures for the prohibition of the practice.

Perhaps the most striking difference which a foreigner would observe between the India of thirty years ago and the India of to-day is in regard to the practice of *parda*, or the seclusion of Hindu and Moslem women of the higher and middle classes. The exact origin of the custom is obscure but in parts of the country which had been governed by Moslems the system obtained a very wide acceptance. In west and south India women led a sheltered life, but there was no system of strict seclusion. It is safe to say that the custom has now broken down and will probably become extinct in the course of another generation. The main causes of the change are the spread of education and increasing contacts between different parts of India and also with countries outside India. There will be occasion to discuss these factors in a later chapter.

The most encouraging sign of the times in India is the women's movement. Women of all creeds and political persuasions, whether from princely families or from the humble ranks of life, are now taking part in organisations spread over the whole country for the betterment of the conditions of life of their own sex and also of the entire population. They are bringing about good feeling and good understanding between different communities and it is a happy omen that men workers have been ready to welcome the help and co-operation of women workers.

Chapter V

Languages and Literatures

THE languages and literatures that were current in ancient and mediaeval times continue to exert a powerful influence on the life and thought of modern India and it is desirable to begin this chapter with a short account of the older languages and literatures before dealing with more recent developments.

The Aryan immigrants into India spoke an early form of the language which in its later literary form is called Sanskrit. * The earliest literary record of their speech, indeed of any Aryan speech, is to be found in the hymns of the Vedas, some of which are believed to have been composed prior to 1200 B.C.

The language of these hymns and the later hieratic language of the *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads* were gradually transformed into the literary language, now known as classical Sanskrit. The form of classical Sanskrit was

* It is not possible to say what language was used by the **people** who lived in the Indus valley prior to the advent of **the Aryans**. They had developed a civilisation the remains of which, including many objects with legends in a still undeciphered script, **have been** revealed only in the last twentyfive years.

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fixed by grammarians and has since undergone little change, although it was commonly used for literary composition and as a medium of intercourse among learned Hindus down to the end of the eighteenth century, and is still so used to a small extent. Classical Sanskrit is the language of the great epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, of the *Puranas*, which are legendary stories composed and frequently added to and altered during the course of nearly a thousand years, and of the *Sastras* which have been described in the chapter on Religions. The religious and devotional works of Buddhists and Jains, since they were intended to reach the ordinary man, were often compiled in the spoken dialects of the countryside, but early in the Christian era these writers too began to use Sanskrit as a literary vehicle for the spread of their religion and culture in northern India. Many Sanskrit Buddhist books were translated later into the Tibetan language while others have been preserved mainly through translations made into Chinese.

Apart from the works already mentioned, there are to be found, in earlier as well as in later Sanskrit literature, numerous technical studies on a large variety of subjects, such as phonetics, etymology, poetics, logic, medicine, mathematics and astronomy. Reference has been made in previous chapters to the different systems of metaphysics and philosophy set forth in works written in classical Sanskrit. The grammatical studies of the Hindus which commenced prior to 300 B.C. have been described as "one of the most signal triumphs of the Indian intellect, giving precision to their mental life and contributing greatly to the expansion of Indian culture." * With the

* F. W. Thomas in *The Legacy of India* — Oxford 1937.

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help of Sanskrit literature it is possible to frame a fairly complete picture of the social and religious life of the people as it was prior to the Moslem invasion. There is in this literature, however, a singular lack of historical and chronological material, and during the last hundred and fifty years scholars have been engaged in the task of recovering the facts of early Indian history from the accounts of foreign travellers, inscriptions and coins and from casual references in contemporary Indian literature.

Secular Sanskrit literature in the form of lyrical and epic poetry, drama, romances, fables and didactic tales can be dated back to a century or so before Christ, and works of real merit were composed down to the period of the advent of the Moslems. A very flourishing epoch of classical Sanskrit coincided with the time of the Gupta empire in the fourth and the two following centuries after Christ. It is believed that the greatest of all Indian poets lived during this period, Kalidasa, the author of the well-known drama, *Sakuntala*, a translation of which won the admiration of Goethe. His works include other plays as well as some beautiful lyrics and two fine epics. There were many other eminent writers in prose and verse whom it is not possible to enumerate here. It has been rightly observed that "in its richness and beauty of form and sound, Sanskrit presented a medium worthy of the highest flights to which any poet could soar." These masterpieces were unknown to Europe until the discovery of Sanskrit at the end of the eighteenth century, but a few fables and didactic tales originally composed in Sanskrit were rendered into Persian and Arabic and were freely used by the romantic writers of mediaeval Europe.

A marked decline characterises Sanskrit writings after

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the twelfth century. Formalism and scholasticism mar the works composed in later centuries, and the charm and vigour of Sanskrit authors of the earlier period passed to those who now began to write or compose in the languages spoken by the general body of the people.

Almost contemporaneously with the evolution of classical Sanskrit began the development of several local dialects which have the common appellation of *Prakrit*, and are chiefly distinguishable from Sanskrit by a simple grammar and easier pronunciation. A form of Prakrit, used as early as the third century B.C., has been preserved in the famous edicts of the great emperor Asoka inscribed on rocks and pillars in different parts of India. There can be little doubt that in those days literature for the common folk had to be composed in some form of Prakrit. The Buddhist canon is preserved in Pali, the form of Prakrit which is still regarded as their sacred language by two Buddhist countries, Burma and Ceylon. Some of the Prakrits were used for the purposes of secular literature and a collection of tales first written in Prakrit was the source of such Sanskrit collections as the wellknown "Ocean of Stories". Prakrit anthologies of beautiful lyrical poems as well as plays and epics have been handed down to later generations. Later and mediaeval Prakrit forms continued to be employed up to the eleventh century for the composition of religious treatises by Jains, and excellent grammars and dictionaries of these Prakrit languages have also survived.

In their later developments several of the local dialects assumed the shape of literary languages favoured by bards and poets. The earliest indications of the change are to be found in the compositions of court bards extolling the deeds of valour and recounting the lore

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stories of Hindu princes during the period of their struggle with the Moslem invaders of the country. The most famous of these patriotic poems is ascribed to Chand Bardai, who chronicled in archaic Hindi the tragic fight waged by the Rajput hero, Prithwiraj, against his Moslem antagonist at the end of the twelfth century.

This was the period of the disappearance of Buddhism and the decline of Jainism in India, and it coincided with the resurgence of the Bhakti or Vaishnava cults which treated Krishna and Rama as Personal Gods protecting and succouring their devotees. The Islamic creed of an omnipotent and merciful Creator, preached by Moslem missionaries, and also the philosophy of Sufi mystics, were not without influence on these movements. Soon after this time one notices the appearance of several eminent poets writing in the languages of the people, such as Kabir and Malik Muhammad Jaisi in the Gangetic valley, Namdev and the princess Mira Bai in western India, and Vidyapati and Chandidas in eastern India. Kabir and Malik Muhammad made a noble attempt to effect a synthesis of Hindu and Moslem beliefs, and Kabir's teachings largely influenced Nanak, the founder of the Sikh sect. Some verses included in the sacred *Granth* of the Sikhs are ascribed to Kabir. The songs and lyrics of the poets of this period, mostly devotional in character, have a wide currency even to-day among all classes of people. These were the pioneers of the modern literatures of north India. Almost simultaneously is to be dated the rise in the south of the Telugu and Malayalam literatures. The other two Dravidian languages, Tamil and Kanarese, have an older history which will be related below.

The Linguistic Survey of India furnishes the names of a large number of spoken languages, many of which are

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without any script or literature. A large proportion of tribesmen are now bilingual, speaking in addition to the tribal dialect the more progressive and literary language of the vicinity. Several other languages spoken on the northern fringe of the country also possess no literature and as the more important languages are penetrating into their areas, there is little likelihood that these tribal languages will develop a literature.

There are eight principal languages in northern India and four Dravidian languages in the south. In addition there are a few dialects, spoken by a comparatively small number of people, in which enthusiasts are making efforts to develop separate and distinctive literatures.

Bengali is spoken by practically the entire population of Bengal and of some districts in Assam and Bihar. In the northern districts of Assam there has survived an ancient dialect closely akin to old Bengali and a new literature is now being created there in a language very similar to modern Bengali. *Oriya* is the language of Orissa and some contiguous tracts. To the north-west of Bengal and Orissa there is an extensive stretch of country comprising practically the whole of Bihar, the United Provinces, large parts of the Punjab and the Central Provinces, and the States of Rajputana and Central India, where *Hindi* is the prevailing language. A language spoken over so large an area of course presents dialectical variations, but a common literary form has been developed. There is a rival language, *Urdu*, in this area and it will be necessary later to dwell on the differences between Hindi and Urdu. The *Punjabi* language which is very closely allied to Hindi is spoken in the Punjab and Sind has its own language *Sindhi*. *Gujarati* is spoken in the northern part of the Bombay province and adjacent

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states, while *Marathi* is the language of the central districts of the Bombay province, of Berar and of a part of the state of Hyderabad. *Marathi*, which is spoken over an area of a hundred thousand square miles, naturally presents local varieties, as does *Hindi*, but these differences are small.

In an earlier chapter attention has been drawn to the distinction between the Dravidian race or races and the Dravidian languages spoken in the south, and it has been stated above that two of these languages, *Tamil* and *Kanarese*, possess a literature almost as old as that of classical *Sanskrit*, while the literatures of *Telugu* and *Malayalam* commenced about the same time as those of the modern *Sanskritic* languages of the north. *Telugu* is the language of the northern portion of Madras province and of the eastern districts of the state of Hyderabad. *Kanarese* is spoken in Mysore, in the southern districts of Hyderabad, in the northwestern parts of Madras province and in the southernmost portion of Bombay province. *Malayalam*, which is a late offshoot of *Tamil*, is the language of the States of Travancore and Cochin and of the west coast areas of Madras province. *Tamil* is spoken in the southeastern districts of Madras province. The grammar, syntax and vocabulary of the Dravidian languages are distinctive and very different from those of the *Aryan* languages of the north, although all four languages have freely borrowed *Sanskrit* words and their scripts have the same origin as the scripts of the north.

The *Tamil* people had a very ancient civilisation and had contacts by sea with many western as well as eastern countries. It is believed that the Hebrew word for peacock, one of the gifts which King Solomon received from the east, is derived from *Tamil*. The most famous

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and venerated Tamil work, the *Kurral*, a long didactic poem, was written in the early centuries of the Christian era. In the Kanarese language there is still extant a considerable religious literature composed prior to the twelfth century, in verse or mixed prose and verse, and ascribed to Jain authors whose religion was predominant in that area in those early times. This was followed by Kanarese versions of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, which bear a definitely Jaina character, very different from that of the classical Sanskrit originals of these two epics.

The eight principal languages of northern India have developed directly from the various Prakrit dialects, but their vocabulary has been largely affected, though in different degrees, by the influence of Persian, which was the language of Moslem courts and administrations in India for many centuries. It was only in the first half of the nineteenth century that English and the spoken languages of the country came to be used in the British Indian courts of justice. Some Indian poets, notably Amir Khusrau in the 14th century, composed their verses in the Persian language, while Moslem and Hindu annalists wrote Persian works which have proved invaluable sources for the history of India during this period. Educated and professional men, both Hindu and Moslem, cultivated a knowledge of Persian, and Moslem rulers and grandees encouraged and patronised the translation of a considerable number of Sanskrit and other Hindu works into Persian and in a few cases into Arabic. There were also some instances of the rendering of Persian literary works into Indian languages. This interchange of the culture of the two countries exercised a profound influence at the time on the thought and ideas of Indians. It is worthy of note that the Persian language, as used

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in India, became fixed in the form extant in Persia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and is consequently slightly different in vocabulary and pronunciation from the present living language of Iran.

Although Persian was in those centuries the language of the court and of diplomacy, the general body of the people continued to use their own languages. But naturally a large number of words of Persian and Arabic origin made their way into current speech, as is already noticed even in the poems of Chand Bardai. This tendency was most marked in the country round Delhi, the Moslem capital, where the Hindus and Moslems, soldiers and civilians, found it necessary for mutual intercourse to develop the local Prakrit dialect into a mixed language to which was given in later years the name of Urdu (literally, the language of the camp). This language "retained its original and essential character in the grammar, idioms and a large number of Hindi words". Though recognised by Mogul rulers like Akbar the Great, it did not develop any true literature until the seventeenth century, when it began to be utilised for poetical composition in the Moslem kingdoms of the Deccan. * The foremost name in the new movement is that of Wall (1668—1744) who was a resident of the Deccan and visited Delhi early in the eighteenth century. The Urdu poems he took to Delhi inspired a new school of Urdu poets in the north, who adopted Persian prosody, followed Persian literary standards and used the Arabic script. As yet there was no Urdu prose literature of any significance.

For a long time most of the literature in the other

* i.e. the tableland between the Central Provinces in the north and the province of Madras in the south.

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modern Indian languages was also in verse and the contents were practically restricted to religious topics or to popular versions of the Sanskrit epics and of the episodes in the Puranas. Notable names in this period are those of Tulasidas and Suradas in Hindi, Kirtibas and Mukundaram in Bengali, Tukaram in Marathi and Vemana in Telugu. Devotional songs and lyrics of high merit and permanent value, some by women, were also composed in all the languages at this time. A reason for the absence of any prose literature was possibly the fact that printing was unknown and it needed much care to preserve manuscripts in the Indian climate, care which was not likely to be given if no sanctity was attached to them and if they were not works in which the learned classes were interested. Popular literature had thus to be handed down by word of mouth and metrical compositions are easier to remember. Printing was first introduced in the south by Roman Catholic missionaries and came into general vogue through the efforts of British officials towards the end of the eighteenth century.* For administrative convenience these officials had to study the modern languages as well as Persian. Grammars and lexicons of these languages were compiled and Christian missionaries began to publish prose translations of the Bible. A college was established in Calcutta for the teaching of the spoken languages to British officials and prose text books were required for the purpose. Indians, learned in Sanskrit and Persian, were asked to prepare these text books and this was an important factor in the

* Lithography has been and is still largely used **for** Urdu **and** Persian publications.

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development of a prose literature in the modern languages.

Prose was the natural medium for the new era of close contact with the western world and once a start was made and printing became popular, progress was rapid everywhere. Religious polemics became popular and many books were translated from Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and English, while much valuable work was accomplished in the compilation of suitable text books. A newspaper press came into being in the various languages and they became the medium for works of fiction, history, philosophy and particularly secular poetry. By the end of the nineteenth century all the languages had a vigorous and growing literature. In this development there were at work two different influences — a revival of Sanskrit and Persian learning, and the impact of western, more particularly English, thought and literature. The former mainly affected the language, and the latter moulded the ideas embodied in the new literatures.

Unfortunately the earliest compositions, modelled on Sanskrit and Persian literature, were highly pedantic in style and vocabulary. These defects have since been largely corrected and in some languages hardly any trace remains of this deliberate Sanskritising or Persianising tendency. But the habit, practised by the writers of this period, of eschewing expressive words of Prakrit origin simply because they were in common oral use, has had one unwelcome result which has done lasting harm. It has helped to standardise and perpetuate the difference between Urdu and Hindi. The prose text books which were made, as stated above, for the instruction of British officials were translations in two different forms, some being in a highly Sanskritised style in the Nagari

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(Sanskrit) script, others in a highly Persianised style in the Arabic script. The former came to be regarded as models of Hindi, the latter of Urdu (at that time styled Hindostani). Both were very different from current speech. Efforts were made by later writers to develop a language more akin to what the ordinary people use in everyday life, and nowadays some of the best writers employ a vocabulary which all can understand and which can be written in either script. But the main tendency at the moment is towards the perpetuation of two different languages, current over practically the same area, one favoured mostly by Hindus and the other patronised mostly by Moslems and certain sections of Hindus who have a hereditary tradition of Persian culture. The situation creates a difficult problem for education, business and administration and is an obstacle to the popularisation of modern ideas in social and economic matters. A truly vigorous and virile national literature with an appeal to the masses is difficult in these conditions.

It has been stated above that the modern Indian languages have been vitally influenced by the revival of Sanskrit and Persian learning. A knowledge of Sanskrit is no longer confined to a small learned minority of the population but, like Latin in European countries, classical Sanskrit is taught as a humanistic study not only in the many Universities in all parts of India but also in the secondary schools. Similarly Moslem and many Hindu students in north India learn Persian of the classical period in schools and colleges, and the works of the great Persian poets, such as Firdausi, Sadi and Hafiz, are familiar to wide circles. As Arabic is the language of the Koran and of Moslem theology, it also has a vogue among

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certain sections of the population who are as a result brought into closer contact with the modern literatures and the politics of the Middle East.

The influence of European and particularly English thought and literature on works composed in India in the last hundred years has been immense. After the days of Chand Bardai and other bardic authors in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and until a century ago there was little evidence of any patriotic feeling or fervour in Indian songs and poems. Since then odes and songs extolling the virtue of patriotism have attained universal popularity and the literature, prose and verse, in all the languages displays a markedly nationalistic spirit. Fiction is another branch of literature in which Indians have been quick to follow developments in Europe, the example having been set in the middle of the nineteenth century by Bengali novelists who then adopted Sir Walter Scott as their model. Indian poets have introduced new metres reminiscent of western exemplars and they have adopted European forms for sonnets, elegies, satires and humorous verse while the modern Indian drama has assimilated many European features. Similar tendencies have become noticeable in *belles lettres*, critical and descriptive essays and works of travel. The influence of English diction can be traced even in the idioms used and the construction of sentences in modern Indian languages.

These languages have made great strides since the beginning of this Century. There is an immense output from the printing presses in every category — poetry, drama, short stories and novels, history, biography, politics, philosophy, economics, social reform, the sciences and of course religion. Indians are now studying modern European languages other than English and their influence

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is already noticeable particularly in poetry, fiction and political literature. Perhaps most progress has been made in Bengali, which received the earliest impact of European thought and literature; and the name of one Bengali writer, Rabindra Nath Tagore, is familiar all over the world. Translation from one Indian language into another is a very common feature, and Bengali novelists have a vogue in Gujarati and Hindi or in Tamil and Telugu no less than in Bengali.

New ways of writing and thinking may perhaps find their first expression in one language, but they spread rapidly to other languages and the new literature is a common possession of India in spite of the diversity of tongues. This diversity of languages is itself limited by the fact that Indian languages have much in common. The similarities between Hindi and Urdu have already been indicated, the grammars of all the different northern languages are closely related, and all the languages, excepting Urdu but including the Dravidian tongues, have assimilated a very large proportion of Sanskrit words, either pure or modified. It is therefore comparatively easy for an Indian to acquire the knowledge of a language spoken in a neighbouring or even in a distant province.

One manifestation of the nationalistic spirit that has been dominant in India is the demand from time to time for the adoption of a common speech or *lingua franca* for the whole of India. A simple mixed form of Hindi and Urdu which may be described as basic Hindostani is understood in most parts of India except in the extreme south. It has been suggested that this basic Hindostani should be taught in all schools in India, but objections have been raised to this proposal in different quarters.

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There are also advocates of the teaching of English everywhere as an optional language, and difficulties may arise in the competition between English and basic Hindostani.

It is not possible to discuss the languages of India without a reference to the position there of the English language as a medium of intercourse and communication. It is at present taught in all the secondary schools in the country, it is the language of the governmental system, of the legislatures and of the courts, of the railways and the Post Office and of all interprovincial trade and business. A substantial proportion of the population, especially *In* the urban areas, speak or understand English. Indians of different provinces now usually communicate with one another in English, and apart from Government publications, Indians use the English language for books and newspapers for which it is desired to secure an all-India circulation or a public outside India. In view of the position of English as a business language in the world and of the part which the study of English literature has played in shaping the culture of present day India, it seems very doubtful whether English will ever lose its vogue in India.

Whatever solution may ultimately be found of the problem of a common linguistic medium for India, or even if no generally acceptable solution can be found, modern India is fast developing and will continue to develop a common point of view and a common mode of expressing that point of view even in different languages. The unity of the literatures can co-exist with the diversity of languages as is already apparent.

The fact that so many languages are current in India is sometimes put forward in support of the view that

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there cannot be a common national sentiment in **the** country. It should however be remembered that there are many important states * in the world where more than one language is spoken and linguistic differences have not affected their claim to nationhood. The north Indian languages have a common origin and all Indian languages have a common underlying spirit; they are all subject to the same influences and they all now voice the same ideas and aspirations. The statesmen of to-day are striving for a United Europe and even for a United world and a United India cannot therefore be deemed to be a visionary or an impossible ideal.

Appendix

It may be useful to append a brief account of the scripts of the Indian languages. The scripts used for all the languages, other than Urdu, are derived from an early script known as *Brahmi*. This script has of course undergone changes at different periods and in different localities but in the case of north Indian languages all its modern descendants have a strong family resemblance to the parent alphabet. The alphabet represented in these scripts is probably the most scientific in the world, being ordered on a rational principle; and since each symbol stands for only one sound there should never be any doubt how a written word is to be pronounced or a spoken word is to be spelt. But in practice some modern languages, notably Bengali, have peculiarities in the

* Britain, Canada, South Africa, Belgium, Czecho-Slovakia, Russia, Switzerland (and even U.S.A. in some ways).

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pronunciation of certain vowels and consonants. The scripts used in the Dravidian languages of the south, though derived from Brahmi like the scripts of the north, are less easily recognisable as related. It has been suggested that the difficulties caused by the existence of these different scripts could be removed by the use of an identical script for all Indian languages and the employment of the Roman script with a modified alphabet has been advocated. The Roman script was in the war used for the instruction of Indian soldiers who come from different parts of the country and it might be worth while to extend its use to business transactions.

Chapter VI

Administration

THE political constitution of India has undergone several changes since 1858 when the Crown took over the direct government of the country. The constitution recently in force was enacted by the British Parliament in 1935 after prolonged consideration, but the march of events accelerated by the war has brought about radical political changes and new constitutions are now being framed. It is however desirable to give a brief summary of the legislatures and the executives that were functioning in the country before these changes took place.

The Act of 1935 envisaged a federal system for the whole of India of which the Provinces and the States were to be the component units, the federal government dealing with certain common functions, for example, defence and external affairs, coinage, customs, federal taxation, post office, railways and ports. The powers and constitutions of the Provincial governments were prescribed in detail, while the ruler of each state joining the federation was free to adopt for his state whatever constitution commended itself to him. The authority of the Crown as the Paramount Power was entrusted to

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a Crown Representative, as distinct from the Governor General (or Viceroy) who was head of the Government of India. In actual practice the two offices were held by the same person.

It was enacted that the federation was to come into being only when a sufficient number of states containing half the state population of India agreed to adhere to the federation. This did not happen and the federal part of the 1935 Act remained therefore in suspense. The central government of British India was being carried on under certain transitory provisions of the Act of 1935. "The Government of India" had no longer any authority over the states, which were in direct relationship with the Crown Representative. Associated with the Viceroy who was the head of the Government of India was an Executive Council consisting of the Commander-in-Chief and fourteen other members, the latter being appointed by the Crown on the nomination of the Viceroy. At the end, in addition to the Commander-in-Chief, three members were Englishmen, and the rest were Indians. Each member had charge of one or more departments of state, but all major questions of policy were discussed and decided by the whole Council under the presidency of the Viceroy, who had in special circumstances certain over-riding powers popularly known as his veto. The members were not responsible to the legislature, the government as a whole and the Viceroy having been subject to the control and superintendence of the Secretary of State for India. This latter official was always a minister of the Crown with a seat in the British Cabinet and was responsible to the British Parliament. He had a large staff under him in London.

The authority of the "Government of India" was

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limited by the Act to the subjects that were assigned to the contemplated federation, but in the course of the war Parliament authorised it to exercise if necessary certain other functions which were ordinarily within the purview of the Provinces. The central legislature was a bicameral body consisting partly of Government nominees and partly of members elected on a very restricted franchise. The Act prescribed lists of subjects which were within the power of the Central and Provincial legislatures respectively and there were certain subjects on which both could legislate. The Viceroy had the right to certify both legislation and taxation if the Government failed to secure the assent of the legislature.

The Constitution of 1935 allocated different sources of income to the centre and the provinces. Briefly, the centre was entitled to the entire income from railways, posts and telegraphs, customs, salt, corporation tax and excise on imported liquor. Income Tax was shared between the centre and the Provinces. Land revenue, excise on country liquor, revenue from stamp duties, irrigation and forest receipts and certain other minor sources of income belonged to the provinces.

The provincial executive under the 1935 Act consisted of a Governor appointed by the Crown and Ministers chosen by him from the Provincial legislature and responsible to it. The Governor had certain specified powers and responsibilities, otherwise all powers of legislation, taxation and final executive control rested with the legislature. Neither the Government of India nor the Secretary of State had ordinarily any authority in matters within provincial jurisdiction, though in respect of his personal powers the Governor was subject to the control of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State.

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When in 1909 formal elections to the legislatures were first introduced in India, Moslem leaders contended that in an electorate embracing all communities, Moslems would fail to secure the election of persons who would adequately represent the interests of their community. The British Government agreed to separate electorates for Moslems and also granted them weightage in the number of seats wherever they were in a minority. Under the 1935 Act there were separate electorates not only for Moslems but also for Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans, all with weightage. Even the Hindu electorate was divided into caste Hindus and scheduled castes, the latter designation including the "depressed classes". Separate electorates and reserved seats were also provided for women, landholders, labour, commerce and industry. The franchise was wider than for the central legislature and altogether thirty million persons were entitled to vote for the provincial legislatures.

This system of compartmental electorates was not calculated to develop a sense of democratic responsibility among the electors in general and it was not strange that the various political parties that had been organised in India were mostly based on communal or sectional interests and not on broad questions of social, economic or foreign policy. The only common aim in their programmes was the rapid if not the immediate elimination of the control exercised by the British Government over Indian affairs. The two largest and best organised parties were those of the National Congress and the Muslim League. The latter, led by Mr. M. A. Jinnah, was confined to Moslems and claimed to be the sole body representing all Indian Moslems, though this claim was disputed by other Moslem associations. The Congress party of which Mr.

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M. K. Gandhi was the virtual head consisted mainly of Hindus, but had also some Moslem adherents and a Moslem President. In the elections of 1937 the Congress secured a majority in the six provinces where the majority of the population were Hindus and also in the North-West Frontier, although practically the entire population of this province is Moslem. In Bengal and the Punjab the Moslems naturally secured a majority in the legislatures. After the 1937 elections a Unionist Government composed of Moslems, Hindus and Sikhs, based on an economic policy, had been continuously in power in the Punjab. In Bengal there had been successive coalitions of some Moslems and some Hindus, but a final breakdown took place in March 1945. In Sind, Assam, Orissa and the North-West Frontier, governments had sometimes functioned and sometimes no government could be formed. In the five larger provinces with a Hindu majority, the Congress party assumed power but excluded members of the Moslem League from the composition of the government. Complaints were rife that these governments displayed a definite bias against Moslems and similar complaints were voiced by Bengal Hindus against their coalition governments. The Governors had the power to inquire into these complaints but did not think it necessary to do so.

When the war broke out in September 1939 the Viceroy did not consult the central legislature or the provincial governments before declaring that India was in a state of war. The Congress governments in the provinces thereupon resigned, and as it did not seem likely that fresh general elections would secure any change in the views of the legislatures, the Governors utilised a safeguarding provision of the 1935 Act and themselves

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assumed the administration of these provinces. There were no ministers and no meetings of the legislatures. Executive as well as legislative authority was exercised solely by the Governor, who was subject only to the control of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State.

Various unsuccessful attempts were made to solve this deadlock and also to compose the growing differences between the Congress and the Muslim League. The latter body enunciated in 1940 the proposition that, as in its view there were two "nations" in India, Hindus and Moslems, British India should be partitioned. One portion, to be designated *Pakistan*, was to comprise the provinces with a Moslem majority, namely Bengal with Assam added to it, the Punjab, the North West Frontier and Sind, each of these components enjoying a certain degree of autonomy. The other portion was to be made up of the remaining six provinces in all of which there was a Hindu majority. It may be observed in parenthesis that under the proposed arrangement each of these two portions of India and each province were still to have a minority problem. The Hindus everywhere and the Sikhs in the Punjab declared themselves firmly opposed to the Muslim League proposal.

In the spring of 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps, a British minister, took to India a proposal that after the war was over there should be set up a body to frame a constitution for one or more unions in India, each with the status of the Dominions in the British Commonwealth, and with option to secede from the Commonwealth. Meanwhile, during the period of hostilities, the Viceroy was to carry on the government at the centre with an executive council composed of the leaders of the Indian political parties. The Cripps proposal was rejected by the

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Congress because the Viceroy was to retain his power of veto during the transitional period. The Muslim League rejected the proposal because the Pakistan scheme figured as only a secondary and remote issue. The British Government subsequently declared that the Cripps proposal remained open for acceptance by the Indian parties at any later date if they so chose.

In the summer of 1945, after the Labour party came into power in Great Britain, the central and provincial legislatures in India were dissolved and general elections were held. The parties with majorities in the provinces were asked to form governments and did so. A mission of the British Cabinet visited India for three months and discussions lasting a whole year took place between the British government and the leaders of the Indian parties. Finally the arrangements sketched on page 15 in the first chapter of this book were adopted in August 1947.

The system of district administration in India, as it prevailed at the time of the transfer of power, may now be described very briefly. It is not yet possible to say what changes will be introduced by the Constituent Assemblies of the two dominions (the Union of India and Pakistan), though it is likely that the system of district administration which was inherited by the British from older rulers will remain much the same as before.

The unit of administration in every province is the district, which corresponds to a county in England or department in France. There were over two hundred districts in British India, but their size and population varied greatly. Vizagapatam district in Madras has an

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area of over nine thousand square miles with a population of nearly four million. Mymensingh district in Bengal extends to over six thousand square miles and contains a population of more than six million. On the other hand, several districts in the United Provinces have a population of less than half a million. The areas of districts containing large cities such as Lucknow and Benares are small, but they have a dense population. The three seaport cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras are in a class by themselves and have an administrative organisation different from that of the ordinary districts.

At the head of each district is a "District Officer" who is called Magistrate and Collector in some provinces and Deputy Commissioner in others. In most of the provinces there are Commissioners who exercise supervision over a number of districts and act as intermediaries between the district officer and the provincial government. The district officer is the head of the magistrates in the district, most of whom are stipendiaries. He is also responsible for the collection of the land revenue and other items of provincial revenue realisable from his area and hence derives the designation of "collector". For these functions he is provided with a suitable staff. He is also expected to keep an eye over the police and in fact over every aspect of governmental or state activity in the area under his charge. At the same time it is his business to keep in close touch with all classes of the people, to assist them so far as possible in their difficulties, to adopt adequate measures against breaches of the public peace and against seasonal or other calamities like floods and famine.

Each department of government, such as police, public works, health, education and forests, has its own repre-

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sentative in every district, acting under the direction and control of the head of the department, who in his turn advises and carries out the instructions of the government. All these district representatives are expected to maintain contact with the "District Officer" and are entitled to ask for his help and advice in all non-technical matters.

Justice in civil cases is dispensed by judges of different grades posted in the district with a district judge at the head. Serious criminal cases, after a preliminary inquiry by a magistrate, are tried by the senior judges of the district. At the head of the provincial judiciary is a High Court consisting of several judges, who are either trained lawyers of the English or Indian Bar or have had experience as district judges. The independence of the High Court was secured by provisions in the constitution. In important cases appeal is permitted to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England. A federal court sat at Delhi, but its business was mainly confined to the adjudication of constitutional disputes.

The law is a very popular profession in India and there are many able and learned lawyers practising before the High Court and the subordinate courts. The criminal courts administer the Indian Penal Code, an admirably conceived and well planned codification on modern lines which has been also adopted in most Indian states and has proved a model for similar legislation in other eastern countries. Both civil and criminal courts are guided in matters of procedure by codes which are brought up to date from time to time.

On the civil justice side, codes have been enacted for the laws of evidence, contracts, transfer of property and mortgages, companies and other business transactions.

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The simplicity and certainty thus secured have been of immense value. There is little substance in the argument that the British Government had introduced an intricate and complex system of justice into India completely unsuited to the needs of the people. The fact that the British Indian system has been largely adopted by the rulers of the States, without any persuasion by the British Government, is ample proof to the contrary. There is more truth in the complaint that too many appeals are allowed and that there is often much delay in securing a final decision. But similar complaints are rife in other countries and the people in general in India have learnt to place a confident faith in the justice of the courts. In the view of the majority of Indians, including persons with strong nationalistic aspirations, the two outstanding benefits derived by India from the British connexion were the practical unification of the country and the system of evenhanded justice for all persons of Indian race.

In proceedings concerning marriage, inheritance and religious institutions the Courts in India apply the personal laws of Hindus and Moslems, as laid down in the Sastras or the Moslem legal treatises. Judicial interpretation in the course of a century has largely clarified the conflicting dicta in these works and it is also the rule that in the decision of these cases actual usage should have preference over ancient texts. Where neither written text nor usage is available the decision has to be in accordance with "justice, equity and good conscience".

There is now a strong feeling among Indians that many of the rules of personal law prescribed in the old texts are no longer suitable to modern conditions and seriously hinder social progress. So long as legislation was virtually

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controlled by the British authorities who were pledged to neutrality in socio-religious matters it was difficult to secure the necessary changes in this branch of law. One result of the much greater power recently enjoyed by Indians to initiate and pass legislation is that many reforms have been already carried out and others are in active contemplation.

The actual work of administration in the British provinces as described above was mainly performed by the members of organised "services". The principal officers in the secretariats at the centre and in the provinces, as well as the District Officers and district judges and their principal assistants, mostly belonged to the "Indian Civil Service", a carefully selected, fully trained and well paid corps of a thousand men, of whom latterly about half were English and half were Indians. On appointment they were assigned to the different provinces and some were later selected for a period of service with the central Government. There were similar all-India "services" for the police and for medical appointments. In addition each province had its own "services" for administrative and judicial work and for other duties such as police, agriculture, education, medical relief, forests, building and maintenance of roads and irrigation canals. There is no "service" organisation for the various technical appointments either at the centre or in the provinces for which no uniform qualifications can be prescribed.

The members of* the provincial services are recruited in India. The Indian Civil Service and many of the other superior services were for a long time appointed only in England and though Indians were eligible their numbers in these services were naturally very small. Growing pressure of public opinion had secured an arrangement

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under which an increasing number of Indians had been appointed to the all-Indian services in the last twenty-five years. "Indianisation" of the services was a principal item in the programme of Indian politicians.

Claims were put forward and accepted by the Government for a proportional distribution of all appointments in the public services among the various communities in India. Public Service Commissions had been set up at the Centre and in the Provinces to advise and guide the governments in regard to appointments, promotions and discipline in the services.

There is much need and ample scope for an extensive and efficient system of local government in India. At present elected municipal councils and district boards discharge these functions. Among the matters entrusted to them are elementary education, local roads, the smaller hospitals and dispensaries and the simpler sanitary measures. But their financial resources are slender and only limited grants from provincial funds have been placed at their disposal. Many political leaders in India have served their apprenticeship on these bodies and in many places there is a keen desire for civic service on them. The reform and strengthening of the local authorities are subjects that have received much attention in India in recent years and the provincial governments now seem willing to enhance their powers and to give them more adequate help. In several provinces, following the example of rural councils in Great Britain, villages are being grouped in Unions for the purpose of enlisting local effort and encouraging local responsibility, an experiment which will be watched with much hope and interest. In the larger cities the corporations have more adequate resources and have effected many improvements by

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opening out congested areas and undertaking much needed housing schemes.

Urban and rural areas in the States are run on lines similar to those in the British provinces. Many of the capital cities are provided with modern amenities and have handsome public buildings, parks, museums and playingfields. The district administration in the larger States is modelled on the system that prevailed in British Provinces and in some of them adequately paid "services"* have been organised. There is also in many of the larger States an efficient and independent judiciary with a high court at its head. Some of the smaller states are combining to organise joint high courts, judiciary and police. The laws in force and the procedure in the courts are similar to those in the Provinces with some modifications.

The position was however not so satisfactory in a large number of so-called States, which were far too small in size, population and resources to develop an efficient administration. The British government had for a long time urged them to combine and co-operate for administrative purposes in order that the inhabitants might enjoy the advantages of a modern system of government. In spite of these suggestions, in many of these minute states which cover in the aggregate a considerable area, particularly in Western India, little or no progress had been made and the Crown Representative with the approval of the British Parliament had lately initiated a scheme of "attaching" them to larger and properly administered neighbouring States. Though arrangements had been made to safeguard the rank and incomes of the heads of the "attached" States, the scheme was meeting with considerable opposition from them.

The great majority of the rulers of the larger States

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are fully alive to the changing circumstances of the time, of which a marked feature is the upsurge of democratic sentiment among the people of the States as in the rest of the country. With a very few exceptions the governments of the States were until recently autocratic, all executive, financial and legislative authority being concentrated in the hands of the ruler. In the federation scheme of 1935 the representatives of the States in the federal legislature were to be nominees of the rulers. Naturally this proposal was not welcome to the people in the Provinces and it was one of the reasons for the dislike evinced by the political parties for the federal scheme. The inhabitants of the States also, though loyal to their rulers, were anxious that they should not fall too far behind the Provinces in political advancement.

In most of the important States reforms were being introduced with a view to the progressive association of the people with the administration. This movement had made the greatest advance in the three South Indian states, Mysore, Travancore and Cochin, where legislatures containing a substantial elected element are now endowed with considerable power and influence. In states in other parts of India, too, there have been established legislative councils whose views are sought in the framing of laws and executive regulations and from whose members some of the ministers are chosen by the ruler. There can be little doubt that the reform movement in the States will gather increasing momentum and that the political relations between the rulers and their peoples will eventually be very different from what they were even a few years ago.

Since 1920 a Chamber of Princes had been in existence on which all the more important rulers were represented

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either personally or in groups. It was a consultative body dealing with questions concerning the rights and privileges of the Princes and had close contact with the Crown Representative, though it had not been invested with any executive functions or with authority over individual states.

As a consequence of the political changes that took place in August 1947, the Chamber of Princes was dissolved. As has been mentioned in earlier pages the smaller Indian States, with some exceptions, are forming themselves into federations and like most of the larger States are attaching themselves to one or other of the two new dominions for certain definite common purposes, retaining their own individuality for other administrative matters.

The exact position which the States will occupy in the India of the future is still uncertain, but it will vitally affect the peace and stability of the country and its place in the nations of the world.

Chapter VII

Defence

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THE second Great War and the development of aerial warfare have radically altered the nature of the defence problems of India. The uncertainties of the internal political situation and the complex and fluid character of international relationships make it exceedingly difficult to assess the future requirements of India's defence and how they may be met. All that can be attempted here is to describe briefly the position of the country at the beginning of hostilities and the many changes that took place during the course of the war. An endeavour will then be made to indicate some measures which the future governments of India must adopt for her defence.

At the end of the first World War the defence forces locally available, known as the Army in India, consisted of about one hundred and fifty thousand Indian soldiers, infantry and cavalry, of whom the officers were practically all British. In addition there were stationed in India less than a hundred thousand men and officers belonging to the British Army, made up of cavalry, infantry and artillery, together with a very small air contingent. For

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naval defence India relied entirely on the British Navy to which she made a trifling cash contribution. She did not possess any artillery or air force of her own. The Indian elements in the army were recruited almost entirely in the northern Provinces and States and the army included a few battalions of Gurkhas, inhabitants of Nepal, who were enlisted with the permission of the Nepalese Government. There were practically no Indians holding full commissioned rank and the Indian soldier had no prospect of rising to a position of leadership. A few factories were maintained by the government for the manufacture of the simpler kinds of munitions and a considerable part of the supplies for the army even in peacetime had to be imported from England.

No military danger was at the time apprehended from the countries to the north and east of the great barrier of the Himalayas. Burma had for many years been a part of the Indian Empire and the countries to the south and east of Burma were under British protection or under the surveillance of the British Navy. Vigilance was however needed on the north-western frontier. Land invasions of India in the past almost always came from that direction. Moreover, the Indian Government then exercised authority over a belt of country lying between the eastern borders of Afghanistan and the settled districts of the Indus valley. This territory, a kind of no-man's land of barren hills and arid valleys, without any industries and with very sparse agriculture, is inhabited by people who have in consequence been compelled from time immemorial to eke out their livelihood by frequent raids on the fertile Indus plain. In earlier days the Indian Government constantly sent costly punitive expeditions against these people, but latterly it had been the policy

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to open out the area by building roads, developing irrigation and agriculture and finding other employment for the inhabitants. This policy had proved fairly successful, but these Pathan tribes are still illiterate and fanatical and they become an additional source of anxiety whenever, as has happened more than once recently, there is serious disturbance in the internal situation of Afghanistan and that country becomes a centre of potential danger for India.

In the years following the first world war, the understanding with the British Government was that India was responsible for resisting aggression on the northwestern frontier and for the maintenance of internal security. The British Government was to come to her assistance should a great power attack her by sea or by land. The preparation for even these limited tasks absorbed a substantial portion of Indian revenues, leaving little money for urgent measures of social and economic advancement after the normal expenses of administration had been met.

The appropriation for defence of funds urgently needed for other purposes was in itself a grievance, but there were other aspects of the military policy of the government which contributed to general political unrest in the country, notably the restriction of military service to only a section of the population, the total lack of opportunities of service in the superior ranks, and the non-existence of an Indian navy, artillery or airforce. Steps were gradually taken by the British authorities to remove these causes of complaint. A small navy with mixed personnel and a rudimentary Air Force with entirely

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Indian personnel were brought into being in the early thirties and an Indian Artillery was also raised. A few selected young men were trained in England and granted commissions in the Indian Army and later a military academy was established in India.

With war clouds gathering everywhere, the British authorities realised that the Indian Army required complete reorganisation and, above all, mechanisation. In 1938 a technical committee, after careful review, made various recommendations and the British Government promised financial assistance for their execution, but the war came before any appreciable progress was achieved. The Indian Government was slow in taking active measures against the threatened danger. Though contingents of the Indian Army were despatched to Malaya, Aden and Somaliland to meet possible attacks in those quarters, recruitment for the necessary expansion of the army and the mechanisation of the existing elements were hampered by the lack of equipment and of officers to train the volunteers who came forward. The situation however gradually improved, volunteers were accepted from all parts of India and large numbers of Indians were granted commissions. The Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force were expanded. Government and private factories were established for the manufacture of munitions and other war requisites, and later India was able to contribute very substantially to supplies for the Allies in different parts of the world and more particularly in the Middle East, Africa and the Mediterranean region.

It is not possible within the scope of this work to give a full account of the part played by the Indian forces in the second world war, but it is desirable to mention some

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of the developments that took place in the country during its progress. These may provide an answer to the important question whether the new Dominions will possess the manpower and the material and technical resources that will be needed for their defence in the changing conditions of the world.

With a population of four hundred million the potential manpower of the two Dominions would be immense, but a comparatively large proportion of the people are handicapped by poor physique, insufficient nutrition and lack of education, topics which will be discussed in later chapters. In the second world war conscription was in force in India only for European British subjects resident in the country. Enlistment in the forces by Indian nationals was entirely voluntary, both in British India and in the Indian States. Before hostilities ended, the strength of the British Indian armed forces exceeded two million and a half, and more volunteers would have been forthcoming if needed. In addition large and well equipped contingents from the states served throughout the war along with the regular Indian Army. There was a great increase in the number of infantry regiments and of the Armoured Corps into which the old cavalry regiments were converted, the men being drawn from every community, so that the new formations embodied volunteers from many parts of the country where there had been no recruitment for several generations. It has been acknowledged that most of these new units, some of which included men belonging to the 'depressed classes' and the 'tribal communities', maintained the well-known traditions of the old Indian Army.

Many thousands of young and educated Indians applied for and were granted commissions in the Army, and when

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hostilities terminated about a third of the total number of officers were Indian nationals.. Most of these young officers justified their selection and some of them rose to high positions.

The technical branches of the fighting services were also adequately manned by Indians. Reference has been made above to the newly organised Armoured Corps. The young Indian Artillery did so well that it was granted the coveted title of 'Royal'. In the Army distinctive corps were raised of Indian engineers, electrical and mechanical engineers, signallers and Army Service men. The medical and nursing services were reorganised and a compact and efficient Army Medical Corps proved of great value.

These various elements of the Indian forces won distinction on all fronts from France and Italy in the west to Somaliland and Ethiopia in the south, and Burma, Siam, Malay and Hongkong in the east. In the Burma campaign, out of a total of a million troops engaged, over seven hundred thousand were provided by the Indian Army. Out of twentyseven Victoria Crosses awarded for the Burma campaign, twenty were granted to officers and men of the Indian Army.

Indian soldiers and officers fought side by side with British, Chinese, Americans, Africans and Burmese and won commendation for their bravery, resource and discipline from commanders of every nation under whom they served. The young Indian Navy, though small in size, earned repute in naval warfare from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and the newly formed air squadrons, in spite of many handicaps, proved worthy comrades of the Royal Air Force.

The zeal and efficiency of Indian men in the fighting

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services provided a fine example to the women of India in their recently awakened desire to render public and patriotic service. During the war they joined in surprising numbers the voluntary auxiliary services which assisted the combatant forces. Indian, Anglo-Indian and British women from all parts of the country serving together gave valuable help. In view of the increasing spread of education among Indian women, they will certainly constitute an important element in a future defence organisation.

From what has been said, it will be seen that should an emergency arise in future over a question which in Indian opinion involves the safety, honour or obligations of the country, there is every likelihood that the available manpower and auxiliary womanpower for the fighting services will be ample. What happened in the last war also leads to the inference that with timely organisation there will be no lack of the technical, material and financial resources needed for modern warfare.

The agricultural and industrial resources of India and her system of communications, all vital elements in any defence organisation, will be discussed in later chapters. It may be noted here that when the second world war began, India was fairly well equipped in a limited number of industries, had a well-run system of railways and a comparatively small mileage of trunk roads. She was also able to make use of a large variety of locally available raw materials for the manufacture of war supplies. But a vast expansion of all her industries and means of communication became imperative on account of the war. Her labour force had to be multiplied many times and ultimately amounted to several millions, while specialised training was needed for a substantial proportion of the

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newly recruited workers. All this was gradually accomplished and in the end remarkable progress was achieved in the range and quantity of the munitions of war manufactured in the country. In addition to supplying many of the needs of other theatres of war, India became self-sufficient for practically all her own requirements except certain articles for the manufacture of which she could not secure the requisite tools and technicians owing to the exigencies of the war. Many hitherto neglected resources of the country were exploited, and apart from the establishment of new industries many dead or decaying industries were revived. As an illustration may be cited the important industry of shipbuilding, which had been extensively practised in India in the days of the East India Company but had practically disappeared since then. As the result of war pressure it received a new life under different conditions. Several hundred ships were built in India during the war, covering a wide range from steel minesweepers and anti-submarine patrol boats to small dinghies. In addition, several thousand ships of the allied nations, representing a tonnage of nearly forty million, damaged by enemy action, were repaired in Indian yards, and six thousand tons of plastic armour were fitted on to merchant ships. These and similar facts give ground for the belief that, should the necessity arise, India will have at her command an ample potential of human and material resources for military needs.

How did India finance her war effort? Net defence expenditure which stood at fortysix crores of rupees (34.5 million sterling) in 1938-9 rose to nearly four hundred crores of rupees (three hundred million sterling) in 1944-45, and the estimate for the following year was still larger. This rapidly increasing financial out-

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lay was provided by steeply rising taxation and by borrowing in India. These figures exclude the heavy expenditure incurred by the States on their own armed contingents and on their contributions to various defence units in India and the Empire generally. In view of the low standard of living and the equally low estimated *per capita* income of the Indian people, these facts are not without their significance. *

The terms of India's financial arrangement with the British Government were that India was to bear the cost of such war measures as could be regarded as purely Indian liabilities by reason of their having been undertaken by India in her own interests. When it is remembered that India had to be ready to meet the threat from Germany on her western border and had actually to repel an invasion of the country on the east by the Japanese, the relatively heavy expenditure incurred by India is not astonishing. The so-called "sterling balances" now held in England by India represent not only the outlay incurred in India by the British Government on supplies purchased for use outside India but also the expenditure that had to be met by the British Government in consequence of using India as a base for the war in the east. The Reserve Bank of India paid for these expenses by issuing paper money in India for which Great Britain paid in sterling to its London branch. These "sterling balances" are held in England and are thus a

* The estimates of the *percapita* income of the Indian people vary between three pounds and ten pounds sterling per annum. Although India was able to meet her financial liabilities in the second great war without serious distress, it is clear that to meet the outlay that would be necessary in the future defence of the country, it will be absolutely necessary to increase the production *per capita* both in agriculture and in industry.

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debt owed by England to India. The creation of this paper money was one of the causes of the inflation that took place in Indian prices during the war. It may be noted in passing that this inflation of prices was aggravated by the great increase in paper and metallic currency owing to India's own war expenditure, particularly as for some considerable period after hostilities started there were no "rationing" and no adequate savings drives in the country.

Some incidental developments that took place during the second World War, although not strictly germane to the question of India's defence problems, may be briefly mentioned here as they are likely to affect her future external relations. In the first place the country became the most important base of allied operations in the east and large numbers of conscripted British soldiers with their officers were stationed there for several years. They were in most cases men of a type different from the small body of regular soldiers who formed in pre-war years the bulk of the British garrison in India. The United States also sent considerable contingents of soldiers, airmen and technicians for periods of service in India. In addition there were from time to time Chinese troops in different parts of the country. It is not relevant to discuss here the temporary economic consequences of this large influx of strangers into India, but it broke the comparative isolation from world forces that formerly characterised the Indian countryside, and close contact with the visitors has materially affected the attitude of the Indian masses to people of foreign countries as also to modern movements and aspirations. Similar consequences have naturally followed from the sojourn of Indian troops in foreign countries. It will be necessary to revert to these topics in

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a subsequent chapter. Secondly, events in Burma and Malaya have left a lasting mark on Indian opinion. The British conquest of Burma in the nineteenth century had been effected largely with the help of Indian troops, and its expenses had been defrayed from Indian revenues. The extension of British authority in the Malayan peninsula was also secured in the early part of the nineteenth century by expeditions sent out from India. In the course of the many decades during which Burma was a part of the Indian Empire large numbers of Indian emigrants found employment in Burma and contributed to the economic development of that country. Indian labourers constituted an important element in the working population of Malaya. When the Japanese occupied these two countries a very substantial number of Indians were transported by them from Malaya to Siam ostensibly for work on the Burma Siam railway, and it is reliably estimated that over a hundred and fifty thousand Indians, men, women and children, perished there from the inhuman and atrocious conduct of their captors. When Burma succumbed to the Japanese nearly a million Indians, who were living there either temporarily or permanently, had to find their way back to India in most difficult circumstances, and arrangements for their reception and relief were a serious embarrassment to the Indian Government at a time when the country was threatened with an invasion. These events made a deep impression on the Indian public and should be borne in mind in estimating the future relations between these countries.

In considering the problems of the near future it has to be remembered that, although the demobilisation of the Indian forces has made good progress, it will be difficult

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for some time to estimate the exact share of the two Dominions in the task of establishing and preserving peace either on their own borders or in other parts of the world. An Indian contingent was stationed in Japan and it was found necessary to despatch Indian troops to Malaya and Indonesia. But meanwhile the British government of India was engaged in considering arrangements for the less immediate future. It was clear to outside observers that the Navy and the Air Force would need expansion far beyond the limits reached during the war. A committee had been appointed by the Indian Government to report on the future organisation of the Army. It had been decided in agreement with the British Government that permanent commissions in the Indian Army and Navy should in future be granted only to persons belonging to British India or the Indian States. A similar rule had been in force in the Indian Air Force since its inception. Until such time as Indian officers were able to fill all grades in the cadre of the forces, officers were to be borrowed from the British services but their number was to be systematically and progressively reduced.

No definite plans for the future could be made until there was some settlement of the constitution of India in the years to come. Much was to depend on whether there would be an Indian federation including all the provinces and states or whether there would be two or more 'unions' in India as might have been possible under the Cripps proposals. The continued 'unity' of India would have made future plans for internal security comparatively simple while the division of British India into two or more unions together with a separate constitutional set-up for the states has rendered the position extremely complicated, if not full of dangerous possibilities.

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Turning now to the general conditions of external defence it will be noted that the protection afforded by the Himalayas has already diminished and will continue to diminish as a consequence of the development of aerial warfare. The new Dominions must also shoulder the burden of defending the extensive coast line even if they are not obliged to undertake a share in the task of guarding the outer seas and oceans. Further, unless the countries bordering on the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea and the states lying between the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the China Sea possess strong, stable and peaceloving governments, both Dominions must be ready and on the alert on all their frontiers. The largest share of responsibility for the maintenance of security in the region lying between the African continent and the Pacific Ocean will undoubtedly fall on them.

The transfer of power in August 1947 from the British Government to the two Dominions, the Union of India and Pakistan, has fundamentally altered the problems concerning the defence of the Indian Subcontinent. It is not however possible to forecast what developments will take place in the future and how the two Dominions and the Indian States will organize their separate and joint defence. The British army is being withdrawn from India while the Indian army, the Indian navy and the Indian Airforce have already been split up and the respective portions assigned to the two Dominions are now or will soon be under the complete control of their governments. How the defence of the Indian states will be fitted into this disposition is not yet clear.

A great improvement in the health, well being and moral discipline of the people will be the indispensable condition for the adequate defence of the country. To

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acres, approximately half is under cultivation, either sown in crops or left fallow, seventy million acres are forest and woodland, one hundred million acres are reckoned as culturable but not yet cultivated, while the remainder is described as being, for various reasons, completely unsuitable for cultivation. Detailed statistics are not available for the States but it is believed that, as they are often wilder and more mountainous than the (British) provinces, they contain a larger proportion of land totally unfit to be cultivated. In view of the great need at the present time of increased agricultural production in India, suggestions have been made that expansion of cultivation should be sought in the areas described as culturable but not yet cultivated. It is recognised that the greater part of such areas consists of very inferior land, lacking water or in need of drainage, infested with deep-rooted weeds or* harbouring malaria. At the same time preliminary surveys have in some cases indicated the possibilities of reclamation, though at considerable expense, by the provision of embankments or irrigation facilities, by the use of machine or tractor ploughing and by measures for the eradication of malaria. Schemes of this nature are being actively pursued in some of the provinces.

The soils of the cultivated and culturable areas are of several kinds. The most important and widespread type is the alluvial soil of the extensive northern plain, which is also found along the seacoasts and in the peninsula along the courses of the principal rivers. The alluvial soil is very suitable for irrigation and on account of its fertility yields good crops of many varieties. Next in value is the black soil of the greater part of the uplands of the peninsula, which is very retentive of moisture but

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does not always respond satisfactorily to artificial irrigation. Splendid crops of cotton and millets can be grown on it. There is a red soil in certain areas of the peninsula on which many different crops can be cultivated with the help of irrigation. Other kinds of soil occur only in limited areas.

It will be evident that agricultural operations in India are very largely dependent on the amount of water which can be made available. Much of the necessary irrigation is nowadays secured over large areas from wells and canals which will be described later. But even the underground reservoirs which feed the wells, and the rivers from which the canals derive their supply, would run dry in the Indian climate but for the seasonal rainfall known as the monsoons, to which allusion was made in the introductory chapter. Over the greater part of the country the prevailing seasonal current is the southwest monsoon coming across the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea and blowing from the beginning of June till the end of September, the rainy season of India. There is also the northeast monsoon, which brings a fair quantity of rain from the Bay of Bengal, between October and December, to the south-eastern areas of the peninsula. Rainfall in India is heaviest in the provinces of Bengal and Assam, in the submontane areas bordering on the Himalayas and in the coastal strip between the western Ghats and the sea. It is lightest in the Indus plain, which along with the western areas of the United Provinces also receives some falls of rain from the west during the months of the cold weather. Crop seasons are naturally regulated by the seasons of rainfall. Rice, jute and millets, for instance, which need plenty of water are grown during the rainy season in the middle of the year and are

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harvested at the outset of the winter. Wheat, barley, pulses, and some of the oilseeds are sown in the beginning of the colder season and are ready early in the spring. Sugar-cane, which needs a long period for maturing, is planted in the early spring and is ready for crushing in the middle of the following winter.

The Indian peasant is almost always a farmer with a very small holding. In the congested districts of Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces and Madras, the holdings are in a large proportion of cases as small as two or three acres. In the Punjab and in Bombay they are larger in size, but even there much smaller holdings are fairly common. The general tendency everywhere is for the size of the holdings to decrease from generation to generation. According to the personal law of both Hindus and Moslems all sons have an equal share in the father's estate and there is a feeling among the people that "the possession of land, however small, is an important element of social security". When the farm becomes too small for the subsistence of the occupier and his family, he works also for hire or loses his holding altogether through accumulated debt. Since the farms are so small in size, it is difficult to popularise improved agricultural methods or the use of modern types of agricultural implements. Far-reaching changes in social ideas and social legislation will be needed to remedy this growing evil of the division of holdings, and the necessary reforms can be effected only by a government firmly rooted in popular support.

Another serious obstacle in the path of agricultural progress is the "fragmentation" of the holdings. Instead of being a compact block, the plots that constitute a single farm are scattered all over the area of the village,

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separated one from another by plots in the possession of the farmer's neighbours. This system is obviously uneconomical from the point of view of introducing improvements such as embankments, irrigation from wells, the use of labour-saving machinery and the disposal of manure and fertilisers. Efforts are now being made in several provinces for the "consolidation" of holdings either by law or by voluntary agreement, and similar proposals are under consideration in other parts of the country.

In pursuance of ancient and continuous practice, Indian rulers have always realised a revenue from all cultivated land except in a very limited number of cases where assignment of a definite area has been made either for a life-time or permanently for some special reason. The land revenue is assessed and collected in different ways in different parts of the (British) provinces. In some instances the government deals with the individual peasants and in other cases it collects the revenue from intermediaries or landholders. The former practice, known as the *ryotwari* system, is applied in the provinces of Madras and Bombay, while the latter method, called the *zamindari* system, prevails practically all over north India. In Bengal, Bihar and a small adjacent portion of the United Provinces, that is to say in the areas where British authority was first established, the government did not possess at that time an accurate knowledge of local rights and usage and declared that the assessment then made on the landholders would remain permanent. There has since been no possibility of enhancing the land revenue in these areas in spite of the increasing value of the land and its produce and the much larger sums that the actual tenants now pay for their holdings. This has very seriously

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crippled the finances of the Governments of Bengal and Bihar and proposals are now being considered to break this "permanent settlement" and to introduce some other system. In the rest of northern India, "the main problem of assessing the land revenue was to determine the income which the landholder derived from the land. This consisted mainly of the rents paid by the peasants who had now become his tenants; and an effective statistical organisation was gradually elaborated, with the aid of which the true rental value of each estate can be ascertained with reasonable precision at each periodical assessment. These assessments, which in India are termed "settlements", recur at intervals of twenty or thirty years". * Under the Zamindari system, in the permanently settled as well as in the temporarily settled areas, the peasant is now a tenant and pays rent to the landholder, who in his turn is responsible for the payment of land revenue to the government. In many parts of the Punjab and in some villages of the United Provinces there are no landholders strictly so called and the settlement is made with the peasants of the village as an organised body.

The amount of the land revenue which each landholder pays in temporarily settled areas is, as stated above, based on the total income he derives from his estate and this consists mainly in rents paid by his tenants. Formerly the government used to demand approximately half of this sum, but latterly the proportion has been substantially reduced. Remissions and suspensions of revenue are granted whenever there is reasonable

* W. H. Moreland in *Modern India* —, Oxford University Press, 1932.

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ground and the landholder is bound to grant corresponding concessions to his tenants.

In the *ryotwari* areas, where the government deals directly with the peasants, elaborate inquiries are made and revenue rates are fixed per acre according to the quality and situation of the land, and there also the assessment is revised every twenty or thirty years. It has been estimated that in the *ryotwari* districts the government takes roughly between one eighth and one twelfth of the value of the gross produce. In the *zamindari* areas, it is calculated that the rent paid by the tenant to the landholder varies between one-fifth and one-tenth of the value of the gross produce.

In the States there are instances of large estates which pay varying rates of revenue, but the greater part of the land is settled in accordance with the *ryotwari* or some similar procedure. Rules about remissions and suspensions are usually less rigid than in the provinces.

In former times when easily culturable land was plentiful and the number of peasants was comparatively small, it was the recognised duty as well as the interest of the landholder to extend cultivation and to increase the prosperity of his tenantry. But by the middle of the nineteenth century all the good land had been brought under cultivation while the population had increased considerably. The decay of the indigenous cottage industries that took place at the same time, and the absence of new openings in the professions or in factory industries, brought about a great demand and competition for culturable land and the tenants naturally suffered from the unregulated exactions of the landholders. A further rapid increase of population has taken place in the last hundred years and without ameliorative measures

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the condition of the tenants would have been pitiful. But since 1859 and down to present times a long series of enactments has been passed by the legislatures for the protection of the tenants, regulating rent rates, securing safety of tenure and preventing unjust eviction. A very large proportion of tenants all over India now possess heritable and alienable rights in their land; their rents cannot be enhanced without sufficient cause and it is possible for them to effect improvements without let or hindrance.

But land hunger continues in the general community and the tenant has still many difficulties to contend with. Owing to the smallness of the holdings the peasant has little margin left over after the needs of his family have been satisfied, and a deficient or inadequately distributed monsoon, an epidemic of cattle disease or the collapse of world prices for agricultural produce, immediately proves disastrous to him. Even in ordinary times he has to borrow for his operations for the year and social customs, a marriage or a funeral in the family, add to his indebtedness. Very often he sublets a portion of his holding and himself becomes a small under-landholder, or he parts with his land altogether either to the moneylender or to a more fortunate neighbour. In several provinces laws have been passed preventing a "non-agriculturist" from acquiring the holding of an agriculturist. Reference will be made in a later chapter to measures which are being adopted to cope with the problem of agricultural indebtedness.

At the same time there are several compensatory features in the present position of the peasants. In peacetime India is now linked up with the world's markets in raw materials and there has been much development of

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communications inside the country. In a good year there is no longer a seasonal glut of agricultural products in different localities and a thrifty peasant is able to dispose of his surplus produce on better terms than formerly. The agricultural departments in India are making available to him better varieties of seed for his usual crops and he is learning to grow new crops of commercial value. The steady though slow progress of the co-operative movement is enabling the peasant to secure the finance he needs on easier terms. The spread of education is teaching him to reduce his unproductive expenditure and some of the younger members of his family can now find remunerative employment in the developing industries and commercial expansion of the country.

On the other hand the conditions of the landless agricultural labourers whose number is rapidly increasing give cause for anxiety. Most of them belong to the so-called "depressed classes" and they are needed in the villages to aid the more prosperous peasants or those who possess farms larger than can be worked by family labour. They usually live in miserable conditions, and are badly housed, insufficiently nourished, mostly illiterate and unable to voice their needs or disabilities. No laws have been passed to regulate their wages or hours of labour or to provide any system of "social security" for them. They constitute the class which suffers first or most from famine or scarcity.

For the betterment of the condition, not only of the landless labourers but of the peasant-tenants, the prime necessity is an increase in the gross production of the land. Much attention is now being devoted by world associations to the improvement of world foodsupply. In India the problem is important and urgent. The Famine

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Inquiry Commission appointed by the Indian Government reported in 1945 that "the present diet of the bulk of the population is deficient in quality and often in quantity, the supply of protective foods is grossly inadequate and the economic condition is such that they could not afford to purchase a good diet even if sufficient supplies of protective food were available". Recent happenings, particularly the famine in 1943 in Bengal and the acute food shortage that occurred at the same time in the southern regions of India, have naturally emphasised the urgency of the question. In considering the matter it is necessary to remember that the great majority of the Indian people are vegetarians in practice, though a substantial number eat fish. Only a small minority eat meat or can afford to do so. It is therefore appropriate to discuss in some detail the food crops now raised in India and their present outturn.

Among the food crops, wheat and rice are far the most important. Climatic conditions, a prolonged dry cold weather, and adequate facilities of controlled irrigation, permit the cultivation of wheat in the Indus plain and in a large part of the United Provinces, and according to recent statistics thirtyfour million acres sown in wheat in these regions yielded a crop of a little over ten million tons. This is barely sufficient for the consumption of the present wheat eating section of the Indian people and as wheat is the most nourishing cereal grown in the country, a larger gross outturn is of primary importance. Rice, the popular article of diet in most parts of India outside the Punjab, grows well on alluvial soil where there is sufficient rainfall. Approximately seventy million acres sown in rice yielded twenty eight million tons, a quantity definitely insufficient for the needs of the Indian rice

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consumers. In a normal year imports from other countries fill the gap, but during the war imports were not available from Burma or Siam, the countries which usually sent their surplus to India. The cereals next in importance are the millets, which, as stated earlier, do well on the black and red soils of the peninsula, and of which the production in a normal year is just adequate for internal consumption. Other food grains grown in the country are barley, maize, gram and different pulses, amounting altogether to an appreciable quantity. Though there has been some increase in recent years in the total volume of food grains produced in India in an average year, it is not sufficient even for present needs, and in view of the uncertainty of the rainfall and the probability of a continued increase in the population it is necessary that immediate measures should be adopted to step up internal production.

Increase is needed in the outturn not only of food grains but also of other crops. That this is feasible is illustrated by the remarkable improvement recently achieved in the cultivation of sugar cane. The word sugar is of Indian origin and sugar cane of an indigenous variety has been grown in India from very ancient times. But it was of a poor quality and up to fifteen years ago large quantities of sugar had to be imported from outside. A new and superior variety of cane has however been evolved by research and is now grown over extensive areas in Bihar and the United Provinces, so that India is now ordinarily selfsufficient for her present needs. It is both possible and desirable to increase considerably the production of many varieties of protective food, such as pulses, fruit and vegetables and oilseeds. The need for an increased production of milk and milk

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products, of poultry and eggs and for a better and larger supply of fish will be mentioned below.

For her own needs and for export a number of important commercial crops are cultivated in India. Foremost among these is cotton which flourishes in the black soil of the peninsular uplands and also in the Punjab, Sind and parts of the United Provinces. The agricultural authorities have been remarkably successful in replacing to a large extent the shortstaple variety grown hitherto by a good long-staple type suitable for the spinning of the finer qualities of yarn. About twenty-three million acres are sown in cotton and the total annual outturn for the whole of India amounts to nearly six million bales (of 400 lbs. each). Among commercial crops next in importance to cotton is jute in which India holds a world monopoly. This crop flourishes best in the damp deltaic regions of Bengal, and the area sown is dependent on world demand. In recent years the outturn has varied between five million and thirteen million bales (of 400 lbs. each). Several different kinds of oilseeds such as linseed, rape and mustard, sesamum, castor and ground nut are grown in the country. In their case the choice lies between export of uncrushed seed and of the oil after the seed has been pressed in the country. In the former alternative, India loses the benefit of the oil cake which is very valuable both as a manure and as cattle food. Owing to the shortage of pasture land comparatively large areas are under fodder crops. But here also the present outturn is poor and very inadequate for the number of cattle in the country. Research, demonstration and propaganda are necessary conditions of improvement.

Two important crops, tea and coffee, are grown not by the small farmer in his village but in large 'plantations'

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managed hitherto mostly by British firms, though Indians are now entering the business. Tea, which is one of the largest items of export from India and the consumption of which is rapidly increasing in the country itself, is grown in estates scattered all over Assam, the lower ranges and the foothills of the Himalayas and the Nilgiris in Madras. Much of the labour force required for the plantations in these sparsely populated areas has in the past been drawn from the backward or congested districts of Bihar, the Central Provinces and Madras, but the workers now show signs of settling down locally. During the war India produced annually between five and six hundred million pounds of tea and was the principal supplier of the world. The much smaller area under coffee is situated practically entirely in the Nilgiris and adjacent districts and the annual produce is approximately thirty million pounds. The quality of the coffee is good and it has an excellent reputation in the international market. Tobacco is another crop of which the area in India is steadily increasing. As the coarser varieties grown by the peasant mainly for rural consumption are not suitable for cigarettes or cigars, estates are being organised for the cultivation of superior types and an important industry in cigarette manufacture has already been established in India. In recent years, and particularly as a result of the war, efforts have been made to extend rubber cultivation in the south of India but progress, though satisfactory, has necessarily been slow.

The increase in gross agricultural outturn which is so urgent a need of India can be effected in several ways. Mention has already been made of the suggested extension of the cultivated area by means of reclamation schemes. Much can be done too in selected areas by double

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cropping. But the most obvious and effective method would be to increase the average outturn per acre which for most crops is much smaller in India than in many other agricultural countries.

The alluvial soil on which the majority of these crops are grown needs, in addition to the seasonal rainfall, plenty of artificial irrigation. This was provided in the old days from numerous temporary or permanent wells, from ponds, water-courses and shallow lakes and sometimes by lifting from rivers. These expensive and laborious methods are still in vogue, but a vast addition to irrigation facilities has been secured by new measures. Mechanically driven pumps are being used to lift water from deep wells and ponds, while in many tracts where expert investigation has given satisfactory results, tube wells have been sunk. A revolution has been effected in the agricultural possibilities of the country by the construction of extensive irrigation canals and huge storage reservoirs. Works of this nature had been constructed in India from very ancient times, but they had for the most part disappeared owing to lack of repair. During the last hundred years a network of canals has been constructed, utilising the water of the snowfed rivers or the flood effluents of rivers rising in the plains, and in suitable places dams and barrages have been erected to catch the surplus water of the monsoon rainfall. In this way vast tracts of country in the Indus plain which were little better than sandy deserts have been brought under cultivation and now support a sturdy peasantry. Similar improvements have been achieved in other provinces and states. Many areas where the crops were always precarious, on account of the nature of the soil or for other reasons, have been made secure at very little expense to

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the Government. Several new projects of great magnitude are at present under construction or under survey. In some instances falls in the canals or barrages have been utilised for hydro-electric installations, thus providing a cheap source of light and power to extensive areas.

Another means of increasing the quantity and value of the agricultural produce of the country is the introduction of newer varieties of the crops already grown and in demand, and of crops which have not been hitherto considered suitable or important. An example of the last-mentioned type is to be found in the large areas now sown in ground nut which has made a substantial contribution to the available food supply, and has also become an important commodity for export. The case of sugar cane has already been mentioned. About a quarter of the total areas of wheat and cotton now grow much improved varieties and satisfactory results have been obtained with new types of jute. Unfortunately progress in evolving and propagating new varieties of rice has been slow. With suitable demonstration, the provision of adequate measures for the distribution of the improved seed, and supervision of the crops during their growth, it is found that the farmers in spite of their natural conservatism are ready and willing to adopt the new varieties.

The sowing of improved varieties has however to be accompanied by measures calculated to enhance the fertility of the soil. The easiest method of securing this improvement is the judicious use of farmyard manure and artificial fertilisers. There is a great scarcity in India of chemical fertilisers and projects are now being actively pursued for establishing factories for their production in Travancore and in north India, but even with these in

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operation the supply is likely to be totally inadequate for a long time to come. Composting and green manuring have been recommended by experts and are being slowly adopted. There ought to be a good supply of bonemeal in view of the enormous number of cattle in the country, but much of it is exported and the rest is wasted in the barren areas where the cattle die. With organisation a plentiful supply of farmyard manure should be available in the country, but in the towns and villages there is a great scarcity of fuel for domestic purposes and half the quantity of cowdung that could be used as manure is at present burnt as fuel.

Mention has been made of the very large number of cattle in India. The total number of cows, oxen and buffaloes is reckoned to be one hundred and fifty million. They are used for ploughing and other agricultural operations, for draught purposes in villages as well as in towns and cities, and for the production of milk. As the result of the shortage of grazing lands and of green fodder Indian cattle are usually underfed and of very inferior capacity. The inborn feeling of the majority of Indians against taking life keeps the number of old and useless animals at a high level. Modern conditions are however compelling the small farmer to reduce the number of his cattle, and the use of motor traction, together with the improvement of the mileage and quality of the roads, will naturally diminish the number of draught cattle required. There are already some good breeds of cattle in different parts of India and steps are being taken to secure better breeds in other regions.

Milk and milk products are important as protective foods in a vegetarian land but most of the existing breeds of Indian cows give a very low milk yield. The supply

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of milk and milk products in the towns is particularly small in quantity and usually unreliable in quality. Mixed farming has been advocated as a means of providing a larger supply both of milk and of manure. It should also be possible by proper organisation to secure a considerable additional supply of milk from the very large number of goats in the country. Co-operative societies should be able to collect the surplus milk of the villages and effect its sale in the towns. There is scope for an expansion of poultry breeding and egg production in India. Enthusiasts are taking it up in some provinces but systematic research and organisation are needed.

Fish is another nutritive article of diet in much request in most parts of India and more particularly in the maritime provinces. There is an immense reservoir of the supply of both freshwater and seafish in the numerous rivers, streams, ponds and shallow lakes and along the extensive sea coast. In some provinces there is a very large number of fishermen but they are mostly illiterate, conservative and unorganised and the present methods of the industry everywhere have been rightly described as primitive and ineffective. Some improvement has however taken place recently. The organisation of the fishing and subsidiary industries has received attention on the west coast of Madras and in Travancore State. Deep sea fishing has been introduced, trawlers are used and a fish oil and fish curing industry has been set up. Shark liver oil is being manufactured as a useful substitute for cod liver oil. The Bombay Government has succeeded in securing a better fish supply for Bombay city, but in Bengal, where the opportunities as well as the need are greatest, desultory attempts made on various occasions to improve the supply have been abandoned, usually on

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the plea of financial stringency. These endeavours are now being renewed.

The diversity of climates, tropical, subtropical and temperate, in her different regions enables India to produce many different varieties of fruit and vegetables. The number of fruit orchards run on systematic and scientific lines is however very small and in the absence of adequate refrigerating arrangements for transport and storage there is little encouragement for enterprise. The demand for vegetables is rapidly increasing and the supply is insufficient. In the neighbourhood of the towns and cities market gardening is a profitable business, but it is handicapped by shortage of fertilisers and by the lack of a good marketing organisation.

The disabilities of the Indian farmer have latterly received much consideration from the public and the governments and something has been done. An elaborate survey of Indian agriculture was conducted by a Royal Commission in 1927-29 and since then the government organisation has been considerably strengthened and money has been spent on research, publicity and the development of a marketing organisation. Much remains to be done, and it must be done, since on the development of agriculture depends the standard of living of the bulk of the Indian people.

Allusion has been made in previous pages to the shortage of domestic fuel in the towns and villages of India. A stranger to India finds this difficult to understand in view of the large deposits of coal and the seventy million acres of land in the (British) provinces alone which are classified as forest and woodland. The explanation lies in the situation of the coalmines and the government forests. The main sources of coal are in the border

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country between Bengal and Bihar, some distance **from** any available sea or water transport and rail transport over long distances makes coal a prohibitively expensive fuel for domestic needs of the poorer classes. * Of the area described as forest and woodland, a substantial portion consists of scrub jungle or hill slopes not covered with trees, and much of it is in fact grassland frequented by wild animals and harbouring malaria. Large areas belong to private individuals who conserve them for timber for the market. The government-owned forests are in the majority of instances situated on inaccessible hills and mountains or in tracts remote from the **more** densely populated and cultivated districts. These wide forest areas do not adequately solve the fuel difficulty though some firewood from the forests finds its way to a few towns and cities. It has been suggested that wherever possible in the populated areas the authorities should establish plantations which would serve as fuel reserves. Many tracts in India, particularly along the rivers, are suffering from soil erosion which is gradually making severe inroads into cultivated and culturable land, and it has been found in practice that quick growing plantations check this evil at the same time providing a fuel reserve.

Conservation of forests is necessary in India as in **other** countries. In the past, on account of the indiscriminate destruction of the forests, large tracts of land lost **all** vegetation and became unfit for habitation or cultivation. Forest conservation has for nearly a century now **been**

* Although coal is cheaper in India than **in other countries**, it is usually too expensive for the **Indian peasant and labourer whose purchasing power is very low.**

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the concern of the Indian government. There have sometimes been complaints of the harshness of the forest regulations but on the whole the forests have proved a substantial and increasing source of revenue and the industries fostered by them have given employment to large numbers. The Indian forests contain many varieties of soft and hard wood, and with improved communications and transport they will be a valuable national asset.

It is not possible to conclude this chapter without saying something on the subject of famines. Stress has been laid above on the fact that Indian crops are singularly dependent on the seasonal rainfall, of which there is from time to time a shortage or maldistribution over parts of the country, though only seldom over all parts at once. This meant in the past that where the rains were inadequate or where there were floods or cyclones agricultural operations came practically to a standstill, there was unemployment among the peasants and labourers, leading to their uncontrolled migration in large numbers to unaffected areas, and the cattle suffered from lack of fodder. Before railways came and when roads were few serious mortality occurred among men and cattle, and even after the restoration of the normal routine of agriculture the people, owing to their debilitated condition, became susceptible to disease. The gradual development of communications rendering it possible to import food grains from more fortunate areas or from outside the country made the situation easier. After careful investigation following successive famines in the second half of the nineteenth century the government undertook the task of averting so far as possible the worst evils of a famine. The construction of protective canals and the development of other facilities for

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irrigation have been mentioned above. When danger is threatened in any area, cash advances are given to the people to enable them to continue their usual occupations, fodder is procured from favoured districts and distributed, poorhouses are opened for the needy and infirm and outdoor relief is granted. As soon as necessary, public works according to plans kept ready are started to give temporary employment to the people and precautions are adopted against the spread of epidemics. When the rains return, the people are able to resume their ordinary routine. It is the prescribed primary duty of the provincial and district administrations to be continuously on the watch for nature's warnings and to act without delay. This policy tided the country over two occasions in this century when there was failure of the rains over widespread areas.

Unfortunately a combination of circumstances during the recent war brought about in 1943 a very serious famine in Bengal and there was simultaneously an alarming food shortage in the provinces and states in South India. It has been seen that the production of wheat and millets in the country barely suffices for its needs while to feed the increasing population large quantities of rice have to be imported in normal years from abroad. In Bengal, which is the main rice producing province, there was short production of rice in 1942, and after the Japanese incursion into Burma and Siam there could be no imports from these countries. Crop diseases and floods rendered the Bengal rice crop of 1943 very much shorter still, while on account of the threat of a Japanese invasion the riverboats and other local means of transport were destroyed or rendered inaccessible, making it difficult to move local produce in that deltaic area.

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Neither the Bengal government nor the central government adopted in proper time adequate measures for the procurement of whatever supplies were available in different parts of the country or for a planned movement of such supplies. The situation was rendered even more intractable because floods and military requirements had disorganised the railway system, and shipping difficulties made it impossible to obtain food from abroad. Reference has been made in the previous chapter to the inflation of prices caused by war expenditure, the absence of rationing and the lack of a savings drive. As a result there was a rise of prices to abnormal levels — to five or six times the prices prevailing in the early months of 1942. This rise in prices "... could have been prevented by resolute action at the right time".* A serious famine followed with all the usual accompanying incidents. The Famine Commission's estimate is that "a million and a half deaths occurred as a direct result of the famine and the epidemics that followed in its train." The popular estimate is much higher.

This tragic episode illustrates the paramount importance of agriculture in India and the urgent necessity of safeguarding and increasing food production in the country.

* Famine Inquiry Commission's Report on Bengal 1945. P. 104.

Chapter IX

Industries

INDIA remembers the many industries that flourished in the country prior to their decay in the course of the nineteenth century, and all sections of Indian opinion are united in the desire for the rapid industrial development of the country. She was once industrially self-sufficient and in addition used to provide all the clothing requirements of the whole of South Asia and the Malayan archipelago. The European merchants who came to India in the sixteenth and the two succeeding centuries secured new markets for Indian cloth in the western countries of Europe and in different regions of Africa and America. But a change in the situation began when in the eighteenth century Great Britain prohibited the import of Indian cloth in order to protect her own domestic industry. Gradually the use of machinery and the establishment of power factories in Europe not only drove Indian cotton textiles from all external markets but made serious and increasing inroads into the internal markets of India in textiles as well as in many other classes of goods. At the time Indians had neither the training nor the resources to establish power factories. The British Government then in authority in India did not consider that it was called

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upon to adopt any measures to counter the steady decay and disappearance of Indian industries and indeed it would have been difficult to take any sufficiently effective steps until the Bengal coalfields were discovered and railways were built providing access to them.

The first power industries in India were established by British capitalists in the middle of the nineteenth century. Jute mills were started near Calcutta and cotton mills near Bombay, ample raw material being locally available. Indian industrialists gradually entered the cotton industry in Bombay and soon became prominent in it but the people of north and east India were less enterprising and the jute mills and most other new undertakings on the eastern side of India continued to be financed by British companies and managed by British technicians. The urge among Indians was, however, for industrial development based on indigenous capital and management, and this sentiment was further accentuated when at the end of the last century the British authorities in the interests of the Lancashire cotton industry compelled the Indian Government to impose an excise duty on cotton goods manufactured in India. The cotton industry was at the time the only progressive power industry in Indian hands and the excise duty naturally caused much dissatisfaction. It was not finally abolished until the Indian Government was granted control over its own fiscal policy after the first great war.

The fact that from the middle of the nineteenth century the country was suffering from excessive pressure on the land was realised by the governmental authorities in India perhaps sooner than by the people. The famines that occurred in India in the nineteenth century naturally drew the attention of the Government to the agricultural

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situation and the possibility of easing it by the revival of cottage industries and the encouragement of power industries. Very little was, however, done and when in the early years of this century some provincial governors proposed active measures the British Government at home decided that it was not the function of the State to take the initiative in developing industries and that the matter must be left to private enterprise. It was not realised that in a country like India, where technical education did not exist, where joint stock enterprise was unknown, and where frequent political disturbances in the past had made capital extremely shy, it would be impossible without state assistance to compete with the fully organised and highly developed industries of the west. Fortunately, in spite of the ruling from London, the Indian Government devised indirect means to encourage the inception by private Indian enterprise of an iron and steel industry in Bihar, associated with the name of its founder, Mr. Jamsetji Tata, which even in its early stages proved of great national and imperial value during the first world war.

The circumstances of that war, when far from being self-sufficient for wartime requirements in supplies and munitions, India was unable to secure from the usual outside sources many of the indispensable necessities of life, brought home to the Government the precariousness of her industrial situation. The population had continued to grow and although literary education was spreading among the middle classes, acute unemployment prevailed among young men leaving schools and colleges, since they had neither the advantage of any technical or vocational training nor were there any openings for them in factories and workshops. In 1916-17, an Industrial

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Commission under Sir Thomas Holland made a careful and judicious survey of the position and made practical recommendations. An attempt was at first made by the Government to give effect to these proposals, but it was soon abandoned on the plea of financial stringency. However, two important developments took place at this period in the industrial policy of the Government and they may be briefly described.

Among the constitutional reforms conceded to India after the first great war was the freedom granted to the Indian Government and legislature, if they agreed, to regulate the fiscal system of the country. As a result India adopted the policy of "discriminating protection". It was laid down that protection would be granted to a nascent industry if (i) it possessed natural advantages in regard to raw material, power, labour and a home market, (2) it was not likely to develop without protection and (3) it would be able eventually to dispense with protection. In the years between the two wars protection was granted in varying degrees to several industries, such as steel, cotton piece goods, cane sugar manufacture, matches and paper and they have all benefited considerably. During the second great war, shipping and other difficulties effectively prevented foreign competition, but though the protective duties may no longer be needed in all cases they have been retained pending a full consideration of future policy. Recent war conditions have naturally brought about the establishment or development of certain new industries. In order that they may not disappear under peace conditions the Indian Government had expressed its readiness to consider the grant of protection to them also if it be found that their continuance is desirable *in the national interest*.

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As distinct from the imposition of protective duties, the Indian Government adopted after the first great war another measure for the encouragement of national industries. In the old days the supplies required by the many departments of the State, including the army and the railways, were mostly purchased in Great Britain and the Continent. The new policy is to purchase such requirements in India, and preferably to purchase articles of local manufacture. This system, combined with the imperative necessity of securing local supply during the stress of the second great war, has given a great impetus to the establishment of a number, of important industries in the country.

Before examining the development that has taken place in the power industries, it will be useful to make a rapid survey of the cottage and hand industries that have survived.

Among these, hand-loom weaving is the most important and widespread. It is estimated that there are nearly three million hand-loom in India and the annual output of cloth is approximately two thousand million yards. The total number of workers with their dependants, many of whom take an active share in the work, must exceed ten million persons. The weavers use mill-made yarn and they are able to compete with the power factories in certain ranges of cloth because they have little or no overhead expenses. Moreover, for the coarser varieties of cloth used by agricultural workers handwoven cloth is reputed to be more durable, while for artistic and elaborate garments the handweaver can provide a larger variety of design. In recent years much patriotic interest has been evinced by the people in the hand industry and assistance has been granted by the Governments. The

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flyshuttle loom and other simple modern appliances have been adopted in many localities and a few small hand-loom factories have been established.

Among cottage industries closely allied to hand weaving may be mentioned calico printing, which caters for markets both inside and outside the country. The silk industry, which is found in Kashmir, Mysore and the eastern provinces of Bengal and Assam, had been severely hit by the imports of raw silk and silk fabrics from China and Japan and of rayon from western countries; during the last war, in order to stimulate the manufacture of parachute silk, cocoons were imported from Iran and some revival took place. A few power factories have now been established for the weaving of silk fabrics. The beautiful brocades and gold and silver embroidered cloths made in Benares, Ahmedabad and other centres continue to enjoy a vogue sufficient for the employment of a number of highly skilled artisans. Carpets are made on hand-loom in Kashmir and Gwalior, at Amritsar in the Punjab and at Mirzapur and other places in the United Provinces. Wool of different grades is obtained from the immense number of sheep reared in the drier regions of India, and the inferior qualities are woven in the villages into coarse blankets for the use of the working classes. A few power mills, of which mention will be made later, utilise the available supply of superior wool with the addition of imported wool.

There is still an extensive cottage industry in different parts of India for the manufacture of domestic utensils of brass, copper and aluminium from imported sheets, but power factories are gradually encroaching into this trade. A very large market for the glass bangles worn by Indian women is supplied by a flourishing cottage

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industry mainly concentrated in the western districts of the United Provinces.

Mention should be made of an industry which provides employment for a substantial number of rural workers. India has a virtual monopoly in lac, which is a resinous product of certain insects found on the twigs of trees in woods and forests in Bihar and adjacent provinces. After being prepared for the market in cottages and a few workshops, the shellac is exported for use in the manufacture of gramophone records, paints, varnishes and electrical appliances. Another cottage industry of some importance for the export trade, as well as for the internal market, is the manufacture on the south-western coast of yarn, mats and other articles made of coir, which is a fibre obtained from the husk of the coconut fruit.

Among unorganised industries, perhaps the most important are the different branches of the building trades, in which a very large number of skilled and unskilled labourers are employed. India must, in the near future, embark on an extensive programme of housing in towns and villages, and the number of persons employed in the building trades is bound to increase. Similarly, large projects are already being undertaken for the construction of roads, railways, irrigation canals and hydro-electric installations, and these also are likely to absorb an increasing number of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labourers, thereby relieving the excessive pressure on the land.

Reference has been made in the previous chapter to the craftsmen found in all villages, such as potters, tanners, carpenters and smiths. In urban localities there are furniture makers, confectioners, jewellers and a number of persons engaged in the production of various

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artistic objects such as glazed pottery, inlaid brass **and** copper ware, inlaid stone and wood carving. Some of these artistic trades had been in a depressed condition, but there is now a marked revival of local demand among the wealthier classes and improvements are being made in design and workmanship.

This account of the cottage and unorganised industries does not purport to be either full or exhaustive, but it may be observed that in many cases their position and prospects cannot be pronounced to be satisfactory. It is difficult to make suitable arrangements for financing the workers, providing them with raw material and marketing their products. In most cottage industries, the men, women and children work in ill-ventilated and badly lighted rooms and sheds for long hours and small remuneration. There is little to choose between the unhygienic conditions prevailing in the villages and the insanitary and congested slums in the factory towns, except that the village artisan lives among friends and relations, is not separated from his wife and children as is so often the case with factory workers, and has easier access to the fresh air and open spaces of the countryside.

Turning now to a consideration of the factory industries, it is hardly necessary to point out that their development has been limited by the availability of power at a reasonable cost within a suitable distance of the raw materials. The usual sources of power in **most** countries are coal, petroleum, hydro-electricity **and** alcohol. There is small likelihood in the near future of India being able to use industrial alcohol on an appreciable scale as a source of power, although there would seem to be a supply of molasses available in the sugar factories which could be converted **into** alcohol. **Until**

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recently coal was the usual motive power used in the country. The principal coalfields in India are in the wild and hilly country between Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and there are less extensive deposits in the Central Provinces, Hyderabad and Assam. The total reserves of workable coal have been estimated to be twenty thousand million tons, a quarter of this amount being described as good coal, while only fifteen hundred million tons are considered to be suitable for metallurgical coke. Coal began to be utilised for the railways and power industries of India about the middle of the nineteenth century, and a great development has taken place since the beginning of this century. Seams in the coalfields are generally thicker than in England, and in some instances shafts have been sunk to depths of fifteen hundred feet. Unfortunately some of the best metallurgical coal is at present utilised on railway locomotives. Coal-cutting machines and electrical machinery are used in some mines. Approximately a quarter of a million persons are employed in the industry and the annual production for the whole of India varies between twentyfive and thirty million tons. The obvious difficulty in regard to the use of coal as a motive power in Indian industries is that most of the coalfields are inaccessible for water transport. The mills within a comparatively short distance can be supplied by rail, but carnage of coal to more distant parts of the country is uneconomic and inconvenient. For many years the industries in Bombay depended on coal imported from Great Britain and South Africa, but they are now run by hydro-electric power.

The chief sources of petroleum in India are in the northeastern corner of Assam and in the northwestern corner of the Punjab. The output of the petroleum fields

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is increasing, but is at present less than a hundred million gallons per annum.

In view of the difficulties of utilising coal as a motive power and the comparative smallness of the amount of petroleum locally produced, the development of her hydro-electric resources has become a matter of prime importance for India. A measure of progress in this respect has already been achieved by the harnessing of the falls in some of the rivers in the Himalayas and in the peninsula, and this has been combined with the construction of immense artificial reservoirs. As stated above, the industries in and around Bombay, and some of the railways in that province, are now served by hydro-electric power, while there are several other notable installations already in operation in north India, Madras and Mysore. It has been indicated in the chapter on agriculture that a number of new projects are at present under survey or construction with the object of serving the multiple purpose of regulating the flow of the rivers, of providing water for irrigating crops and of providing power. When these projects have been completed and are in operation there is likely to be sufficient power available in India for industries, for railway and other traction and for domestic consumption, wherever it is too expensive to use coal.

In describing the power industries already established in India, it will be convenient to begin with those that are designed to facilitate the processing of agricultural products. Power-driven rice and flour mills are now to be found everywhere and are fast displacing the older methods of treating these important cereals. Oil mills are superseding the bullock-driven village oil-presses and a new industry has come into being in the manufacture

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of *vanaspati*, a vegetable product resembling margarine, which is now often used as a substitute for *ghee* or clarified butter, and large numbers of persons find seasonal employment in the numerous gins and presses which prepare cotton and jute for the mills or for export.

Textile industries are among the most important in the country and employ more than a million operatives. The jute mills which are concentrated in close proximity to Calcutta were until recently owned and managed almost entirely by British firms, but now there are several Indian managed concerns and a large portion of the capital of the British managed mills has passed into Indian hands. The volume of jute manufactures, including twist and yarn, approximates a million and a quarter tons. The earliest cotton mills were established in the city and province of Bombay, but they have since been erected in all cotton-growing provinces and even in Bengal where coal is easily available and there is a large internal market. The cotton textile industry, branches of which have received a measure of "discriminating protection", has prospered during the two great wars. The mills had previously to import the finer varieties of cotton used for the manufacture of the better qualities of cloth, but the gradual substitution of long staple for short staple cotton in Indian agriculture is now removing this drawback. Only a few British firms remain financially interested in this industry, most of the mills being now owned and managed by Indians. In the course of the second Great "War the output of the Indian cotton mills rose to nearly 1,700 million lbs. of yarn and 5,000 million yards of piece goods, to which must be added nearly 1,200 million lbs. of other textiles including knitted goods.

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Woollen mills are steadily growing into importance in India. They use the superior varieties of locally produced wool in addition to wool imported from Australia, and they manufacture woollen carpets, shawls and hosiery, in addition to different varieties of woollen cloth. The internal demand for woollen goods has rapidly increased and will develop further if the standard of living of the rural population can be raised. The majority of the mills are under European management.

Mention has been made in the previous chapter of the improvement in the quality of the sugar cane grown in India. Protection was given to the manufacture of sugar from cane and as a result the industry has made very remarkable progress. India has become the largest producer of sugar in the world, the quantity of refined white sugar produced having risen to over 23 million cwts. There are more than a hundred and fifty factories employing one hundred and twenty thousand workers in addition to the many millions engaged in growing the cane. To prevent overproduction a system of control combined with an excise duty has been introduced.

Other articles manufactured from locally produced raw material, which have benefited from protective duties, are paper and matches. In the case of the latter a substantial revenue is now derived from an excise duty. The paper industry had a small beginning several decades back, using at first wild grasses with the addition later of imported wood pulp. After protection was granted twenty years ago, it began to use the pulp made from bamboos, of which unlimited quantities are locally available. Good qualities of different varieties of paper are now made in India and the number of mills and their output are increasing. It has not yet been possible to

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manufacture newsprint from indigenous material and all requirements have still to be imported.

Hides and skins constitute a raw material of which increasing use is being made in the country. In view of the immense number of cattle, sheep and goats in India, a very large supply should be available. The majority of the cattle, however, die a natural death in an emaciated or diseased condition and only a fraction of the hides are of commercial value. About half the available hides and skins are exported either cured or half-tanned. The requirements of the rural population are still largely met by the village tanner who uses primitive methods. Tanneries run on modern lines have now been set up in many localities and they produce good leather, which is worked up into different grades of shoes and other goods in well organised and scientifically run factories.

Among the mineral resources of India, coal and petroleum have been already mentioned. In both the petroleum fields, which are located in Assam and the Punjab, there are well-equipped refineries producing the usual by-products besides petrol. The petroleum industry is owned by British capitalists, but a substantial number of Indian technicians are employed. A number of the collieries, more particularly the smaller ones, are owned by Indians.

Apart from iron, to which a later section of this chapter will be devoted, the mineral next in importance to coal is manganese. The mines are situated mostly in the Central Provinces and in adjacent tracts, and are as a rule quarries or open cast workings. Ferro-manganese has been manufactured in India during the last thirty years by iron and steel companies, but a large proportion of India's output of manganese ore is exported. The

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prosperity of the industry is dependent on the world's demand for steel, and the output of the Indian mines has been in recent years affected by the competition of South African and Russian mines. During the second Great War shipping difficulties and the shortage of labour have also contributed to the decline of Indian production from a million tons to half that quantity.

A valuable cement industry with some novel and interesting features has recently been founded in India. It is based on the extraction of mineral limestone, which is obtainable in large quantities in different parts of India. The first modern factory was established forty years ago, but the industry was unable to compete with the imported article until a protective duty was imposed. Since then there has been a rapid expansion in production, which is now sufficient for the internal needs of the country with some balance for export. The manufacturers have entered into a closely knit combine and claim to have thereby reduced the cost of production and the price charged to consumers. Post-war development is likely greatly to increase the demand for cement. The industry employs mostly unskilled labour and much of the machinery can be locally manufactured.

India has been for a long time the world's largest producer of mica, and the industry proved to be of great strategic importance during the second Great War. Mica is needed for the manufacture of electrical goods, automobiles and aeroplanes. The outturn increased rapidly during the war, mainly to meet export requirements, but it is feared that the industry will meet with increasing competition from other sources of supply and from substitutes. The principal mines are located in a small area in Bihar, although more limited sources of supply

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exist in the province of Madras and in Rajputana. After extraction, the mica is converted into splittings as a cottage industry and is later prepared for the market in factories which do not employ power. Labour conditions as well as marketing practices call for improvement.

In the old days copper ores were smelted in different regions of India by primitive methods, but the industry was unable to compete with the imported metal and practically disappeared until modern methods of extracting the mineral were adopted about thirty years ago by British-managed companies. The copper belt where extraction now takes place is situated in the border country between Bihar and Orissa, and the amount of ore extracted varies between three and four hundred thousand tons. After smelting the copper is converted into sheets and circles and finds a ready market in India.

The amount of lead, zinc, tin and silver ores found or worked in India is insignificant.

Gold has been mined in India from very ancient times, but modern processes were effectively introduced only sixty years ago. The mines are situated in eastern Mysore and are worked by a combine of English companies on concessions granted by the Mysore government, which at present derives an annual income of a million and a half sterling from the royalties. The quantity of gold produced varies between three and four hundred thousand ounces. The industry is well organised and employs twenty-thousand workers.

Salt is a necessity of life for human beings and cattle, and the small duty that was levied by the Government on all salt consumed in the country has often been the subject of political controversy. The supply needed for **the** country is obtained in several ways. A pure rock salt

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is extracted from government managed mines in the Salt range in the Punjab. Salt is also collected by processes of evaporation from certain lakes in Rajputana. These sources too are managed by the Government. All along the seacoasts of Bombay and Madras salt is collected by private agency under government supervision. Lastly, a certain quantity is imported from Aden and Port Said, replacing imports that formerly came from England.

From the point of view of an all round economic development of the country, the manufacture of iron and steel may be deemed to be the most important industry of India. Abundant deposits of iron ore occur in many parts of the country and remains of small workings have been found in most hilly regions. That the art had made great progress in ancient times is witnessed by the famous iron pillar close to Delhi, made of solid wrought iron, weighing six tons and set up about 400 A.D. The well-known Damascus swords are believed to have been made of Indian steel, and even in the seventeenth century iron and steel goods made in India were exported by Dutch merchants to Batavia. Gradually however the use of locally made iron was displaced by imported articles. After several unsuccessful attempts by European industrialists "to graft European methods on to the native processes", iron smelting with coke made from coal was started on a small scale towards the end of the nineteenth century by Messrs. Burn & Co. in the Bengal coalfield, in close proximity to some ironstone shales found there. But the industry owes its present outstanding position to the discovery, early in this century, of immense deposits of iron ore in the southeastern corner of Bihar and the adjacent states, a region conveniently near the principal coalfields. The Tata Iron & Steel

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Company, which has been mentioned earlier, was organised in 1907 and established its works at Jamshedpur, within easy distance of these mines and not too far from Calcutta. The capital was largely Indian and the carefully planned scheme was executed with the help of western technicians, who have since been replaced by trained Indians. Production commenced in 1912, and immediately proved of value during the first World War and the works are now of great magnitude. In later years the industry has received help from the policy of discriminating protection. Messrs. Burn & Co.'s works were further developed along modern lines and a third company has been established in the coalfield. The Mysore Government started a blast furnace in 1923, in conjunction with a wood distillation plant, the wood being obtained from neighbouring forests. Other deposits of iron ore, occurring in the Central Provinces, Madras and elsewhere have not yet been utilised owing to the difficulty of locally obtaining suitable power for smelting.

The iron and steel industry has made remarkable progress in the last twenty-five years. The production of iron ore has increased nearly fourfold and practically all the extracted ore is used in the country. More than two million tons of pig iron is now annually manufactured, while the production of steel ingots has approached a million and a half tons and of finished steel nearly one million tons. The industry made a magnificent contribution to victory in the second Great War. In the stress of the war it has turned out a vast number of articles of inestimable value for military equipment, the production of which called for high technical and manipulative skill, which it had been thought would be beyond the resources

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and the capacity of the Indian works for many years to come.

It is not possible to enumerate all the varied consequences of the rapid development of this great basic industry. It made possible the revival and development of shipbuilding which has been already described. But there is no industrial activity which is not, in greater or less degree, dependent upon iron and steel.

A natural result of the progress in the iron and steel industry has been a great increase in the number of engineering factories and workshops, of all types and sizes and employing altogether nearly three hundred thousand operatives. Work of very high grade is executed in the railway workshops, including the building of wagons, passenger coaches and locomotives. A privately run wagon industry has now been established and arrangements are in progress for a considerable expansion of the manufacture of locomotives and boilers. Indian industrialists are recently reported to have combined with a well-known British firm for the manufacture in India of motor vehicles, naturally beginning with the simpler processes of the industry. The Indian government has decided to start a 'national' aircraft industry based on the maintenance factory that existed at Bangalore (Mysore) during the war. A comparatively modest beginning is the present objective.

A detailed account need not be given here of the utilisation of a number of minerals which occur only in small quantities in the country, such as chromite, magnesite, ilmenite and monazite. Substantial deposits of bauxite have been found and some quarries in the Central Provinces have been worked, but the absence of cheap electrical power near the mines had prevented progress

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in the extraction of aluminium from the ore. Within the last two or three years, however, factories have been established in Travancore and in Bengal, and one is nearing completion in Bihar.

In recent years several new industries have been established in India, concerned with such requirements as glass, soap, paints and drugs, in spite of difficulties in securing some of the necessary raw materials. The manufacture of heavy chemicals has so far been handicapped by the fact that only small deposits of sulphur have been traced in the country, and the war has affected the import of sulphur from abroad. There are plans for the manufacture on a substantial scale of chemicals and dye-stuffs. The proposal to establish machinery for the making of fertilisers has been mentioned in the chapter on agriculture.

Much credit is due to the Geological Survey of India for the very valuable work it has accomplished in surveying and locating the mineral resources of the country. The work of the Survey has been of a very high standard, but its staff has always been too small for a full and detailed survey of a country of the size of India. The Government has now decided to employ a much larger complement of fully trained scientific officers for this work and, if they can be secured, important results may be looked for from their investigations.

It will have been noticed that the power industries of India, when they were first established, tended to be concentrated in or near the ports of Calcutta and Bombay. This happened because raw materials such as jute and cotton were easily available and coal could be obtained by rail or by sea. But labour had to be imported, congestion and slums followed and an unsatisfactory

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situation developed. Since then factories have been located in other large cities, closer to the sources of labour supply, raw materials and large market centres. But with the growing industrialisation of the country the need is urgent for a better distribution of the industries over the countryside; the development of communications and hydro-electric power should make it easier to effect the change. The Indian Governments are planning to deal with these problems.

Another subject which is engaging the attention of the Central and Provincial Governments is that concerning the nationalisation of industries. The plan as at present formulated by the Indian Governments is that the field of public utilities will be the preserve of government or municipal authorities, and industries outside that field will be left to private enterprise. If, however, sufficient capital is not forthcoming for an industry essential in the national interest the Governments will develop it either by themselves or in co-operation with private enterprise. It has been made known that a shipbuilding yard for the construction of merchant ships and naval vessels has been contemplated. As mentioned above a factory to build aircraft for civil aviation and for the Indian Air Force is also being started.

Labour problems arising from industrialisation will be discussed in a later chapter.

Chapter X

Commerce and Communications

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T

than one change in the external trade of India. At the beginning of this period the value of her exports much exceeded that of her imports, and the reasons for this may be briefly stated. From time to time India had borrowed large sums in London for the expenditure incurred by the Government for development and for military purposes. Many of the railways had been financed with British capital and most of the supplies needed for the army and the railways were obtained from England or the Continent of Europe. Moreover the machinery and other capital goods required for the industries of the country had to be purchased abroad. The pensionary and leave emoluments of British officers employed in India had also to be paid in England. These different liabilities were discharged by the export of raw materials and other produce exceeding in value the imports which in their turn mostly consisted of finished

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goods. There was however a net balance in favour of India for which she received gold and silver which, according to the traditional practice of the country, was either hoarded or used for the jewellery of the womenfolk.

A change in this situation came about in 1932, when there was a world collapse in agricultural prices. The raw materials exported by India no longer sufficed to pay for her imports in addition to the discharge of her other external liabilities, and much of the gold hoarded in India had therefore to be exported in the succeeding years.

Since then other changes have taken place as the result partly of the growing industrialisation of India, and partly of the second Great War, with the attendant circumstances. The rapid development of the older industries, and the establishment of new ones, have naturally lessened the Indian demand for many varieties of finished goods from abroad. Thus, a striking decline is to be noted in the imports of such articles as iron and steel, cotton textiles, paper, matches, soap, paints, sugar and cement. The requirements of the Army, railways and other departments are now largely met in India. The shortage of shipping and other war factors have still further helped to reduce imports. For example, though Indians are at present anxious to import machinery and other capital goods, they were until recently unable to do so in sufficient quantities. The increase in population, together with drought and crop failures, created in past war years a demand for substantial imports of food grains, but adequate supplies were not available from abroad.

Changes are also noticeable in the volume and nature of the export trade. Prior to the second Great War,

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India's exports had in part to balance her indebtedness abroad, but owing to the heavy war expenditure of Great Britain in India, and the consequent accumulation of a large sterling balance in England, to which attention was drawn in the chapter on Defence, India is no longer a debtor country and she has not now to export produce to balance her indebtedness. There has thus been a decrease in the volume of her exports of raw materials, but on the other hand, owing to the development of her industries, her exports of manufactured goods have considerably increased and she now imports a substantial quantity of raw material to be converted into finished articles in her factories. These changes are an index of the industrial progress of the country.

Interesting differences are also to be observed in the "direction" of India's external trade. The longstanding political and commercial connection between India and Great Britain had naturally given the latter country an important position in the import markets of India, and in the years immediately following the first Great War as much as threefifths of India's imports came from the United Kingdom. The raw materials, which at that time constituted the main items of India's exports, could not, however, all be absorbed by Great Britain, and such produce as raw jute, cotton and oilseeds had to find additional outlets in foreign countries, notably the United States, Germany and Japan. When, in 1932, Great Britain adopted the policy of imperial preference, India found it necessary, in order to preserve her share of the market in that country, to reciprocate in the new policy. But non-British countries, and more particularly Japan, adopted active measures to cultivate the Indian market and for a time there followed a great increase in imports

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from them into India. During the second Great War, Germany and Japan went out of the picture; the United Kingdom was compelled to reduce her exports, and by the end of the war she supplied less than a quarter of India's imports. The share of the United States in these imports remained fairly constant and the countries of the British Commonwealth and Empire, as well as India's neighbours, owing to their geographical position, secured much larger shares of the imports as well as the exports of India.

What the trend of India's external commerce will be, when normal conditions are restored in the world, cannot be forecast with any certainty. Much will depend on the extent to which the existing tariff and exchange barriers are removed and on the rate of economic recovery of the countries with which India traded in the past. It can, however, be safely predicted that, if the efforts to raise the standard of living in India prove even partially successful, there will be a much enhanced demand for many classes of articles of foreign manufacture for which the necessary raw materials are not available in the country.

The internal trade of India has also undergone important changes. The volume of such trade in iron and steel articles, cotton piece goods and sugar shows a large increase compared with the position twentyfive years ago. At that time a large proportion of goods needed for consumption in the country had to be imported from abroad and shifted from the ports to the distribution centres. These centres are now situated at comparatively short distances from the Indian mills and factories, and the railways no longer have to arrange for long haulages. Similarly much of the raw produce which had to be taken

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long distances to the seaports is now converted in nearby-factories into manufactured goods and the necessity for sending it to distant ports no longer exists.

The fact that there are no internal customs barriers in the whole of India (except in the case of a few Indian states) has been of enormous advantage to the internal trade of India. It would be a very serious check on the economy of the country if in the new political constitution the component provinces or states or groups of them felt inclined to levy customs duties at their frontiers.

The internal commerce of the country is practically entirely in the hands of Indians, but a number of European firms, mainly British, still enjoy a share in the external trade. Indians are now displaying much enterprise in external trade too and are establishing agencies and branches in all parts of the world. The Indian Government had deputed trade commissioners to various countries with the object of stimulating the export trade of India and of assisting business men in India.

Within comparatively recent times there has been a remarkable development in banking. The shyness of Indian capital in the early days of British rule has been referred to in a previous chapter. The habit of hoarding savings in the form of jewellery for the womenfolk, or in unmanufactured gold or silver, which is a concomitant of the lack of banking facilities, had been accentuated by the political uncertainties of the past. Nor was there sufficient mutual trust for the development of co-operative enterprise. Indigenous business was conducted on an individual or family basis. A fairly well organised internal banking system, but on a small scale, existed, but it also was founded on a family basis though the

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exchange transactions embraced the whole of India, and there was in this matter at any rate mutual trust and close contact between bankers in different cities. In the smaller towns and villages the petty moneylender was in fact a trader, advancing seed grain or raw material to the peasant and craftsman and purchasing his outturn for sale to larger distributors.

Joint stock banks were initiated by British capitalists, who established in the larger commercial centres a small number of "Exchange banks", with head offices outside India, which still flourish and finance European business firms or are mainly concerned with foreign exchange transactions. Official transactions on the other hand were served by three large "Presidency Banks", amalgamated after the first great war into the "Imperial Bank of India". About fifteen years ago, under governmental authority, a central bank, called the Reserve Bank of India, was established to carry out such currency and financial transactions as usually appertain to a state Bank and to exercise a certain degree of supervision over the banking system of the country. The Imperial Bank of India is now mainly engaged in ordinary banking, but in co-operation with the Reserve Bank still transacts a mass of government business in a number of towns.

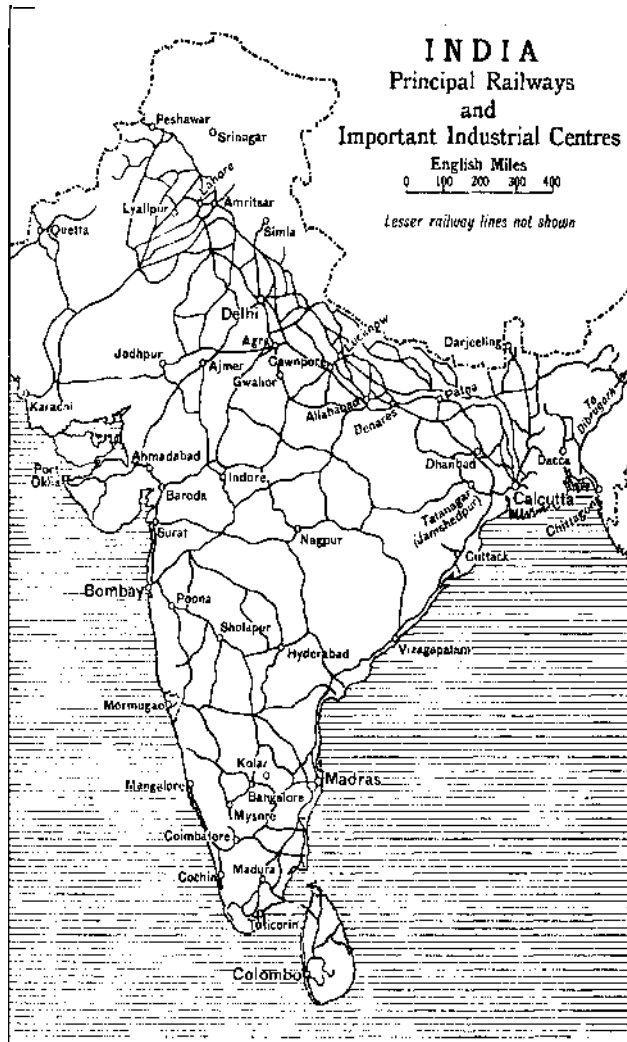
In the last few decades, and more particularly in the last quarter of a century, an increasing number of joint stock banks have been established with Indian capital and management. In their earlier history inefficient or dishonest management occasionally led to a failure and sometimes there was a crisis caused by a war or famine, but the legislature has now imposed controlling and restrictive regulations. The number of major banks is nearly two hundred with rapidly increasing capital,

INDIA

Principal Railways and Important Industrial Centres

English Miles
0 100 200 300 400

Lesser railway lines not shown



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reserves and deposits. In addition nearly two thousand smaller banking and loan offices are scattered all over the country, each with a comparatively small capital and a limited range of operations.

With a view to encouraging thrift and the saving habit among the masses, the Indian Post Office established many years ago a system of postal savings banks. These have developed very satisfactorily, although they had a set-back during the panicky conditions that prevailed among the uninformed classes at the outbreak of the second great war. During the course of the war the saving habit was further stimulated by the flotation of a number of Government loans to meet defence expenditure. Although the rate of interest allowed is small for a country with India's history, there has been an excellent response from the public, and for some years now it has not been necessary to borrow from abroad.

Early in this century the Indian Government decided to inaugurate a system of co-operative credit societies on the lines of those which had been successful on the continent of Europe. The object was to provide a satisfactory method of financing the peasants and to inculcate a spirit of co-operation and self-help among them. Mistakes were inevitable in the earlier stages of the movement, and unfortunately these societies are peculiarly susceptible to trade depression and to fluctuations in the agricultural prosperity of their respective regions. Progress has therefore been slow and has varied from province to province, and the movement suffered a severe check when in the thirties of this century agricultural prices collapsed. On the whole, however, there is ground for hope that with the development of education among the masses and the reduction of price variation for

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agricultural produce the co-operative movement will progress satisfactorily and will play an increasingly useful part in the agricultural economy of the country.

Indebtedness among the peasants is endemic all over India, and as yet the co-operative societies have been able to touch only the fringe of the problem. It has been the general impression in India that the village moneylender, with his high rates of interest and unsatisfactory accounting methods, was the source of much mischief in the countryside. In the last few decades various devices have been adopted in different provinces to free the peasant from the 'incubus' of the moneylender. In some provinces a non-agriculturist moneylender is prevented from acquiring the land of an agriculturist in satisfaction of a debt. In others a system of compulsory scaling down of the debts owed to moneylenders has been adopted. But until better methods of cultivation are popularised and education is more widespread, it is doubtful whether these measures will not make it even more difficult for the peasant to secure the finance he must have to carry on his business from season to season.

The foregoing paragraphs make it clear that the proverbial shyness of capital and the distrust of joint enterprise, which for a long time hampered the growth of commercial business in India, are now fast disappearing. This view is confirmed by the particulars available concerning the development of joint stock companies. The number of such companies in British India rose from a little over four thousand in 1921 to nearly twelve thousand in 1943, and their paid up capital had more than doubled in the same interval. In the Indian states there has been equally striking progress. These companies are concerned with all types of business, such

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as banking, transport, manufactures, mines, hotels and entertainments.

A few words may be said about a system of company management peculiar to India. In the early days of private British business in India, the capital was raised in Great Britain, where the head office of the company was located. The management in India was entrusted to a British firm of "managing agents", who acquired a vested interest in the business, not always in complete harmony with the interests of the shareholders. This system has become very popular now with Indian entrepreneurs and the legislature has endeavoured to prevent its abuse. It is satisfactory to observe that the ordinary methods of direct management are now being adopted by many Indian jointstock companies.

What has been stated above about the gradual entry of Indians into the present day stream of business life is borne out by the remarkable growth in recent years of insurance companies with indigenous capital and management. There are now nearly two hundred Indian companies doing life business, and over forty engaged in other types of insurance work. British and other foreign insurance offices had conducted business in India for many years both in life policies and in policies against fire, marine and other risks. They still carry on an extensive business in fire and marine risks, but in life business they have been outstripped by Indian concerns.

It is hardly necessary to point out the close connexion that exists between commercial progress in a country of India's size and the development of her external and internal communications. On glancing at the map of India it is obvious that the lofty mountain ranges which constitute her land frontiers do not permit easy access to

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and from adjacent countries. Some trade is, however, carried on with Afghanistan and Iran through the passes on the north-west frontier, and there is a much smaller trickle of trade through the Himalayas with Tibet and Central Asia. No railway has yet pierced the barriers between India and Burma and the Indo-Burma trade is entirely seaborne.

Along the coasts of the Indian peninsula the ports of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta were established in the early days of British rule and are well found in docks and other facilities. More recently, well-equipped harbours for large ocean going vessels have been constructed at Karachi and Cochin on the western side, and at Vizagapatam and Chittagong on the eastern side. Mormugao, in Portuguese territory on the south-western coast, is also a busy port. In addition there are smaller ports on both sides of the peninsula, some of which are prosperous and are growing in size and equipment, while others are decaying because the deeper draught modern steamers experience difficulty in entering them, or because the railways running along the coast are encroaching on their traffic.

Until recent years most of the ocean borne traffic to and from Indian ports was carried in British and other foreign vessels, which also had a large and increasing share in the coastal traffic. At least one Indian concern has now entered the ocean-borne trade, and for some years there has been an agitation in India for the complete or partial reservation of the coastal trade for ships registered in India.

By virtue of her geographical situation India is a country of much importance in the matter of international air traffic. Before the second Great War British,

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French and Dutch air lines traversed the Indian continent in journeys between Europe and far eastern countries. The United States and other countries have now entered the field and it is probable that, apart from the carriage of passengers and mail, the air liners will also secure a share in the carriage of goods of special value or of comparatively light weight. It is impossible to predict the future in this respect. Some companies with Indian capital and management have already started internal air services in India and there is every sign of a large and rapid expansion of their traffic. The policy of the Indian Governments appears to be to leave the operation of air services in India to private enterprise under license and supervision, and to guard against outside competition in the internal traffic. During the course of the war, there has been a remarkable development in the number of aerodromes and ancillary services in the country and large numbers of Indians are being trained for ground and air work.

Turning from aviation, which is the newest form of communication, to roads which are the oldest methods of transport, it may be observed that in recent years progress in road development has not kept pace with the requirements of the country. At present many roads in India are unmetalled dirt tracks which become unfit for wheeled traffic during the rainy season. Before the second Great War, the total length in the British provinces of these unmetalled roads was approximately two hundred and fifty thousand miles, while at that time there were only eightyfive thousand miles of metalled roads. The available road communications were obviously utterly inadequate, particularly if it be borne in mind that in most instances, owing to the scarcity of stone in many

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parts of India, the surfaces of the, metalled roads were far from suitable for motor traffic. Consequently the number of motor vehicles in use in India was much less than was needed, although the demand has been very keen as is evidenced by the rapid growth of passenger as well as goods traffic carried in motor buses or lorries. The authorities in India are now alive to the necessity of progress and already, owing to the exigencies of the war, many new roads have been constructed in several provinces. In all parts of the country research is being carried on in methods of road construction, and extensive projects have been formulated for a rapid increase in the mileage of adequately surfaced roads and for the removal of existing difficulties in the matter of width, grading and bridges. Until now the construction and maintenance of roads were entrusted to provincial and local authorities though grants were made by the central government from the proceeds of a petrol tax. A new system of national highways is now contemplated, which will traverse provincial and state boundaries, the entire cost of building and maintenance being borne by the central governments. The social and economic prosperity of the rural areas of India is so dependent on the improvement of communications that the execution of the road programme admits of no delay.

As in other countries, the growth of motor traffic along the roads has to a certain extent affected the traffic on the railways in India. It has been difficult to secure co-ordination between road and rail as the railways were the concern of the central government and hitherto the roads have been in the charge of the provinces or of local authorities. The railways were built partly by the central government directly, and partly by companies with

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capital raised in England. The Indian Government had lately acquired all the company railways, and the entire system, with the exception of a few sections belonging to the states, was managed by the centre as a national enterprise giving employment to a million persons. The railways earn a substantial revenue, but the deterioration that naturally took place during the war, when repairs and replacement of equipment were limited,, will involve heavy outlay in rehabilitation. The total length of the railways stood at about forty-one thousand miles for several years, there having been little new construction for a period, while during the second Great War five-hundred miles of railway lines in India were dismantled and set up in Persia and the Middle East. It is now realised that in order to keep in step with progress in other directions there should be several new railway lines connecting important nodal centres and these projects are under preparation. A serious handicap for the Indian railway system is the existence of two different gauges. It was originally believed that many comparatively undeveloped parts of the country would not offer sufficient goods and passenger traffic to justify the construction of railways on the broad or normal gauge. This apprehension has been largely belied and much inconvenience now arises from the break of gauge and the necessity of transshipment, especially of bulky goods. The railways carry a very large passenger traffic of the working classes and are much congested at times of festivals and pilgrimage.

There is a considerable amount of inland river traffic in some parts of India, more particularly in Bengal and Assam. In the old days traffic by boats over long distances on the Ganges and the Indus and their tributaries

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was a common feature of Indian life, but this has now declined almost to vanishing point as a consequence of the competition of roads and railways. In the eastern-most provinces, however, owing to the deltaic and low-lying nature of the country, the roads have few bridges across the numerous rivers and the railways are fewer than in other provinces. The rivers there still carry much steamer and country boat traffic. Attention is being directed to the conservation of the river channels and the maintenance of other necessary facilities.

The post-office constitutes an important element in Indian communications, and is a very well managed department of government. It has more than a century's history behind it and has been the world pioneer in several forms of enterprise now associated with the postal organisation in other countries. For a country of India's size a uniform low charge for internal letters and post-cards was a distinct achievement when first introduced, and it has been largely instrumental in unifying the country and in encouraging workers to seek employment at long distances from their homes without the fear of losing touch with their families and relations. There are over twentyfive thousand post offices in India and in an average year nearly fourteen hundred million postal articles are handled. Extensive business is also transacted in money orders, postal orders and the collection of money in payment for goods despatched by tradesmen on cash on delivery system. The mileages of telegraph and telephone lines are increasing at a rapid rate. In addition to its many services to Indian business and social economy, the postal department also brings in a revenue to the state.

Cable connection between India and Great Britain and

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other parts of the world has existed for a long time. Comparatively early in the history of wireless a "Beam" station was erected in India, and the country is now fully linked up with the telecommunications system of the world

Chapter XI

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communications sketched in the preceding chapters has brought into prominence questions concerning the protection and welfare of the workers engaged in them. The two great wars, and the general political awakening of the country, have added to the urgency and the difficulties of the problems that have arisen.

The labour that was required for the construction of roads, canals and railways in the early days was mostly obtained locally in the districts concerned. In the coal-fields also, the miners were recruited from the population residing in the neighbourhood. But the workers in the mills and factories in Calcutta, Bombay and other large industrial centres came from distant congested rural areas, attracted by the prospect of better earnings, specially during those parts of the year when there was not much employment available in agriculture. "Plantations", described in the chapter on agriculture, were located in comparatively sparsely populated tracts and labour for them had to be recruited from the tribal areas in Bihar, the Central Provinces and Madras.

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Since then large colonies of emigrant labour have been established at or near the ports and industrial centres. Even now in many cases these men do not bring their wives and children with them and they return to their distant homes at intervals or when their working life is over. They come from different parts and speak different languages, and until a generation ago they found it difficult to form combinations or to ventilate their needs and grievances. No effort was made by the state or municipal authorities, and very little by the employers, to provide housing or other amenities for them.

It was only very slowly that the state realised its responsibilities for the protection and welfare of these workers in industry and transport. A considerable proportion of the labour in the textile industry, which was making rapid progress towards the end of the nineteenth century, consisted of women and children, and the attention of the Government was naturally directed at first to the correction of manifest abuses in their employment. The first step taken in labour legislation in India was the fixing in 1881 of the minimum age of employment of children at seven years. This was raised to nine years in 1891, and the opportunity was taken at the same time to fix a daily limit for the work of women and to prohibit their employment at night. Twenty years later, the maximum daily hours of work in textile factories was fixed at twelve hours. At the time of the first Great War this was the farthest extent of labour legislation in the country.

The importance of improving the conditions under which industrial operatives lived and worked was stressed by the Industrial Commission (1916-17), who declared that, on moral grounds as well as for economic reasons,

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it was essential that early measures should be adopted for their amelioration. The great war that was raging at the time also brought about a notable change in the conditions prevailing in industry and focussed public attention on the subject. Prices had risen rapidly and substantially and employers were making unusually large profits, but as wages rose much more slowly, acute discontent was rife among the workers. There was an epidemic of strikes and much dislocation of business followed as a consequence.

Before these difficulties in the national economy could be surmounted, Indian delegates were called upon to take part in the first conference, held at Washington, of the International Labour Organisation, where labour conditions in India received much attention. The Indian Government was now confronted with organised world opinion on labour questions and recognised the necessity of putting its house in order. The constitutional reforms of 1919-20 came into effect at the same time. The reformed central legislature was empowered to legislate on labour questions, though the administration of the laws thus passed was entrusted to the provinces. Among the elected members of the new legislature were men keenly interested in the betterment of the conditions of the working classes.

The combination of these three factors, namely, the industrial strife prevailing in the country, the impact of the International Labour Organisation and the welcome support of the legislature, enabled the government to enact during the next few years several important labour measures. The Royal Commission on Labour in India (1929-1931), presided over by Mr. Whitley, formerly Speaker in the British House of Commons, observed in

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its Report that "nearly the whole of the present labour code of India dates from 1922 or later". The recommendations of this Commission have been largely instrumental in shaping subsequent labour legislation in India.

The constitution of 1935 introduced important changes in the powers of the Centre and the provinces regarding labour. The regulation of mines and oilfields continued to be in the sole charge of the Centre, but on all other labour questions the Centre and provinces had concurrent legislative jurisdiction. It was further laid down that if the Centre passed a law which it became the duty of the provinces to administer, the Centre was bound to grant adequate financial aid to the provinces for this purpose. As a consequence, in recent labour legislation passed by the central legislature, it was in general left to the provinces to enforce the new laws *if they so desired*. It was thus possible that some provinces would enforce a new law while others would not.

The central and provincial governments have endeavoured jointly to get over this serious difficulty by the establishment of an all-India Labour Conference on the lines of the International Labour Conference. The meetings of the Conference and its committees are attended by accredited delegates of the central and provincial governments, and of the larger states, as well as from the various organisations of employers and workers. Legislative proposals are discussed in detail and they are placed before the legislature only after a large degree of unanimity has been secured.

It is plain that in a country like India there should be, so far as possible, uniformity in labour legislation in all provinces and states. The workers constantly migrate from one province to another, there is much interprovin-

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cial business and it would be both unfair and embarrassing if the employers or workers of one area enjoyed advantages or suffered disabilities not shared by those in other areas. It may be remarked in this connexion that although not obliged to do so, most of the important Indian states have endeavoured to keep in step with British India in the matter of labour legislation and administration.

The interest in labour questions displayed by the public and the legislatures in India has been markedly stimulated by the proceedings of the International Labour Organisation. From the very foundation of this institution, the Indian Government has sent to its conferences competent delegations representing the government, employers and workers who have taken part in its meetings and have often exercised great influence over its policy and its decisions. India has been recognised as one of the chief industrial countries of the world and has a permanent seat on the governing body of the organisation. An Indian has filled the presidential chair at its annual conferences and has also been president of its governing body. The draft conventions adopted by the Organisation are carefully considered by the Indian legislature and even when a convention is not ratified by India, it materially influences opinion in the country and the course of subsequent legislation on the subject.

Workers in India have therefore found it necessary to secure and maintain contact with the International Labour Organisation through properly constituted unions and federations, and this circumstance has contributed to the growth and development of the trade union movement in the country. Railway and postal employees, who were able to produce leaders from among their own

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ranks, founded the earliest and most stable unions in India. A large number of so-called "unions came into existence during the period of industrial unrest that followed the termination of the first Great War, but many of them were mere strike committees and disappeared as soon as the wages or other dispute which gave rise to them had been settled. The less ephemeral organisations at first met with much discouragement and even opposition from shortsighted employers and for several years the government found it necessary to create and elicit public opinion on the subject of trade union legislation. An Act passed in 1926 conferred various privileges on registered trade unions and proposals are at present under consideration for the granting of statutory recognition to unions which satisfy certain specified conditions. The number of registered unions is rapidly increasing and the members are now producing capable leaders from among themselves. Unions in India when properly run are helpful in ventilating the grievances of the workers and in conducting negotiations with the employers and governmental authorities, but they have not interested themselves in evolving mutual schemes for sickness or other benefits. Unfortunately the movement is at present suffering from internal dissensions and two different federations claim allegiance from existing unions.

The frequency of industrial strife after the close of the first Great War led the Indian Government to pass a Trade Dispute Act in 1929, prohibiting lightning strikes or lockouts in certain public utility services and prescribing the reference of disputes to *ad hoc* courts of inquiry or boards of conciliation. In Bombay the provincial government has proceeded further by passing

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legislation which provides machinery for the appointment of conciliators with large powers, and if disputes are not settled by conciliation they are subject to compulsory arbitration by an industrial court. These measures have proved successful in the settlement of a large number of cases in the important industries of the province.

It has been mentioned earlier that the protection and welfare of the rapidly increasing industrial population of the country were at first secured only by slow and halting legislation. The last twenty-five years have witnessed a notable extension and liberalisation of these laws.

The term 'factory' in British Indian legislation has now a wide meaning. It applies ordinarily to premises where twenty or more persons are employed and power is used, but a provincial government can apply the law to premises where ten or more persons are employed, whether or not power is used. By recent legislation some of the provisions of the Factories Act can also be extended to certain small establishments employing less than ten persons, provided a child is employed on the premises.

Women have always received special protection in the Indian law. Night work is prohibited for them, reasonable rest periods are prescribed, and in the majority of provinces maternity benefits are granted. Underground work in the mines was completely prohibited for women some years ago; a temporary relaxation of the rule was permitted on account of the shortage of male labour during the later stages of the second Great War, but the prohibition has now been happily reintroduced.

The minimum age of employment of children in factories is now twelve years and a medical certificate of fitness is required. Special provisions exist for their

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hours of work and rest periods. A class of adolescents has been created for persons between the ages of fifteen and seventeen years. In the mines, in the transport industry and in public works children under fifteen years cannot be employed. In a wide range of unregulated workshops the minimum age of employment of children is now fixed at twelve years.

For adults, maximum daily and weekly limits in all factories were first introduced in 1922. By a law passed in 1946, the maximum weekly hours have been reduced to forty-eight in perennial factories and fifty in seasonal factories. Similar improvements are now in force regarding the hours of work of miners. The law requires regulations to be framed on the subject of the adequacy and structural safety of the factory buildings, artificial cooling and the limits of humidification, the fencing of machinery and other safety devices, sanitary and welfare arrangements, rest intervals, weekly holidays and overtime rates. Laws have been enacted securing the payment of wages without delay and restricting the abuse of the system of fines. More recently the legislature has been considering the question of holidays with pay.

New ground was broken by the passing in 1923 of a Workmen's Compensation Act. On the death or disablement of a worker caused by accident or specified occupational disease, fixed amounts of compensation are payable to him or to his representative. Disputes are settled by tribunals which follow the American model. Amending Acts have enlarged the scope of the measure and it now applies to twelve million industrial workers. The Act has greatly stimulated the adoption of safety precautions in mills and factories.

Until a few years ago the protection and privileges

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described above were enjoyed only by workers in industry and transport, but a start has now been made in extending the law to workers in shops and commercial establishments. In several provinces legislation has been enacted fixing for this class of workers a minimum age of employment of children, weekly holidays, overtime rates and, most important of all, hours of work.

It has been stated above that labour in the coalfields is usually recruited from local inhabitants belonging to tribal communities, who are often not in a position to look after their own interests or to enforce their demands. The conditions of health, housing and general welfare in the coal mines urgently called for improvement, and it is satisfactory to record that, with the proceeds of a cess levied on the industry, the government has instituted a coal mines welfare fund administered by a representative body.

Another class of labourers needing special treatment is to be found among the workers in the tea 'plantations'* in Assam and northern Bengal. Their number is estimated to be three-quarters of a million, and they also are mostly recruited from the tribal communities, located sometimes at considerable distances from the plantations. There have been complaints in the past regarding the methods of their recruitment and the conditions of their work. The Whitley commission made many recommendations on the subject and a law passed in 1932 granted to the emigrants and their families a right of repatriation. Unfortunately many of the important suggestions of the Commission have not yet been carried out. In particular, the housing provided for the workers in the garden enclosures is in most cases very unsatisfactory. There is no limitation of age for the employment of children, wages are calculated

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on the basis of the earnings of the whole family and the concessions granted by way of free allowances of graine are reported to be inadequate. In many plantations sanitation is completely neglected and the medical facilities are poor. In a few instances, but not in all, the employers have arranged for the education of the children of the workers. It is practically impossible for these labourers to form trade unions and the fixation of wages, in particular, needs the urgent attention of the State.

The agricultural population of India is increasing at a rapid rate and a large proportion of this population now consists of labourers who own little or no land of their own. This is the reservoir from which the unskilled as well as the skilled industrial labour of the country is drawn, and the men drawn from this great reservoir of manpower have proved of the utmost value during the second Great War, not only as members of the armed forces, but in the construction of roads, airfields and other operational tasks. Nothing has so far been done to prescribe suitable conditions of labour in ordinary times for the landless agricultural workers of the country. The great majority of these people belong to the so-called depressed classes, are mostly illiterate and are unable to form unions or combinations. In view of this excess supply of rural workers a substantial rise in the standard of living of the urban workers is not possible unless there is a corresponding rise in the condition of the rural workers.

Although most of the labour laws in India were enacted by the Central legislature, under the constitution in force their administration and enforcement were delegated to the provincial governments. Until recently the financial resources of the provinces were very

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limited, while the demands on them, both for the maintenance of law and order and for social and economic development, were extensive. As a consequence the laws for the protection of the working classes have been as a rule very ineffectively enforced. The inspection staff is too small and not always well trained. This very serious deficiency in labour administration should be remedied at the earliest opportunity.

Reference must be made to the question of the housing of industrial workers in India, The deplorable situation that has existed in this respect has long been a matter of comment and concern. Almost desperate congestion is to be observed in most industrial centres in spite of isolated efforts made by some employers and local authorities. The latest pronouncement on the subject is that of the Indian Government Health Survey and Development Committee who in Vol. IV para. 192 of their Report (1946) state: "Housing conditions in India present a deplorable picture. The impressions that we gained during our tours indicate. ... in particular, appalling conditions of over-crowding in industrial centres". It will be impossible to secure any real progress in this matter until it is recognised that the housing of industrial workers is the responsibility of the State and not that of either the employers or the local authorities, and it is satisfactory to note that this important subject was engaging the attention of the Indian government.

Unemployment among industrial workers has not been in the past as constant a source of anxiety in India as in some western countries, partly because the rapid growth of industries has created a demand for skilled artisans often in excess of the supply, and partly because when the demand has been slack the workers have dispersed to

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their native villages. At the same time there have been different occasions when acute unemployment prevailed, causing serious distress, since there was no system of unemployment benefit. During the second Great War abnormally large numbers of men and women were needed for munitions and other industries which closed down on the cessation of hostilities. In order to deal with the resettlement and re-employment of persons whose services would thus be dispensed with the government has wisely organised an unemployment exchange scheme which may later develop into a permanent unemployment service.

So far little has been accomplished in India in the way of providing 'social security' either for industrial or for agricultural workers. Machinery for fixing minimum wages in different industries has been under discussion for some time while a scheme for compulsory health insurance for industrial workers has been prepared and published for opinion and criticism. It is not yet settled whether this scheme will also cover unemployment risks.

A very serious difficulty in the preparation and discussion of progressive measures for the benefit of the working classes in India is the practically complete absence of data and statistics on which proposals can be based. Suggestions in this regard were under consideration by the Indian Government a quarter of a century ago, but had to be shelved on financial grounds. In the province of Bombay efforts have been made to secure a certain measure of statistical information. The Indian Governments have resumed consideration of the matter and it is hoped that this reproach will now disappear from the administration of the country.

Chapter XII

Population and Health

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PROBLEMS of population and health are inseparable in India and must be treated together. The striking increase of population in the last quarter of a century can not fail to arrest attention while the conditions of public health and medical relief in the country have at the same time caused great and growing concern. The interrelation of these two problems is manifest, and taken together they confront the governments and people with a task, the great magnitude and complexity of which require no emphasis.

Proposals for reforms must of course be based on careful study of the available figures relating to vital statistics, to the occupation of the inhabitants and their means of subsistence, to the incidence of prevailing diseases and existing means for prevention and cure. Unfortunately the statistical material is notoriously defective both in quantity and quality. There is no permanent organisation of any value for the collection and registration of any branch of the indispensable data. The recording of births and deaths in the urban areas, compulsory in theory, is in practice inefficient and unreliable, and the position is

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worse in rural districts, where the duty is entrusted to ignorant and illpaid village watchmen. Neither Hindus nor Moslems are obliged to register marriages or their dissolution. There is no complete census of production and in several provinces the estimates of annual agricultural, outturn are far from accurate. A population census has been taken every ten years since 1881, and though ordinarily the enumeration was carried out satisfactorily, some of the recorded information, for instance about age and marriage, was admittedly defective. Owing to war exigencies, the major part of the statistics collected during the 1941 census has not been either tabulated or published. The establishment of an adequate organisation for the continuous collection and publication of important data relating to the social and economic condition of the people is a basic need. The need is admitted and measures are in contemplation to meet it.

The most striking fact that emerges from the decennial census statistics, is the very rapid rise in the population figures since 1921. During the nineteenth century experienced official observers noted an ever-increasing pressure on the land despite the simultaneous operation of "positive checks" on the growth of population, such as periodical famines and the ravages of pestilence. All through that century and up to the termination of the first Great War, malaria, small-pox and cholera took a regular toll while for a number of years after 1896 the country suffered in addition from a widespread epidemic of bubonic plague. This was followed in 1918-19 by an extraordinarily virulent outbreak of influenza which swept through the whole country, and is estimated to have caused fourteen million deaths. Nevertheless, in the thirty years between 1891 and 1921, the population rose

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from 280 millions to 306 millions, a total increase **of** almost ten per cent. But the positive checks have been much less in evidence since then and in 1941 a total population of 389 millions was recorded. The annual increase in more recent years cannot have been less than five millions, and it is now expected that in another quarter of a century the population may exceed five hundred millions.

Such an increase must make the task of raising the standard of life and health of the people, formidable as it already is, far more difficult and intractable. Various methods of slowing down the growth of population have been considered. In other overpopulated countries large scale emigration has relieved the situation, but the past experience of India in this respect has not been happy. In the second half of the nineteenth century there was a demand for emigrants from India for development purposes in the West Indies and in South Africa. The requirements of the West Indies are now satisfied and the unfortunate position of Indian settlers in South Africa has been the cause of acute resentment in India and constantly recurring misunderstanding between the two countries. There has naturally been some movement of labourers from south India to Ceylon and Malaya. Relations with Ceylon are far from satisfactory on account of the recent attitude in Ceylon towards Indian immigrants, while the position in Malaya is at present uncertain. Reference has been made in an earlier chapter * to the subject of Indian emigration to Burma. **The** situation of the Indians who have gone to East Africa is also a source of anxiety to the Indian Govern-

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ments. In other parts of the British Commonwealth and Empire there is little or no disposition to encourage immigrants from India. Altogether it is recognised in India that large scale emigration cannot afford even a partial solution of the problem of over-population.

The census statistics indicate remarkable variations in the density of population in different parts of India and it might be thought that internal migration would help to adjust the social and economic difficulties that are now apparent. In 1941 the density per square mile in the British provinces was 341 while that in the states was only 130. In other comparisons, too, the figures sometimes display great differences. For instance, in two rural districts in the heavily congested area of eastern Bengal, the population exceeds fifteen hundred per square mile, but in Sind the recorded density is only 94. Cochin and Travancore, both preponderatingly rural states, have a density of 953 and 792 respectively while extensive areas in Kashmir and Rajputana are very thinly peopled. But in these instances the differences find their explanation in the arid or mountainous character of the sparsely populated regions. Although in some parts of India there has been voluntary emigration by the people to adjoining districts where the construction of roads, canals and other facilities have opened up new areas suitable for agriculture, it is recognised that there is no possibility of organising internal transfers of population on any large scale in order to solve social and economic problems.

It has been suggested that the rate of increase in an urban population is usually smaller than is the case in rural districts and that the trend towards urbanisation noticeable in India in recent years will be a factor *in* slowing down the present rate of increase in the total

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population. This is however very doubtful, and in any event unregulated urbanisation in its turn creates many serious evils. Certainly the census returns make it plain that the development of industries, commerce and communications, which was described in earlier chapters, is having the effect of increasing the number of towns and cities and also raising the proportion of the urban population. The number of cities with more than a hundred thousand inhabitants was 35 in 1931 and rose to 58 ten years later. In some cities the number of inhabitants very nearly doubled itself during this short period, and a similar change is taking place in the smaller towns. Town-planning is as yet hardly known in the country, as will have been gathered from references in the preceding chapters to the overcrowding of the industrial centres and the very inadequate measures adopted for the housing of the inhabitants. Not all the increase in the urban population has however been caused by industrial development. The ordinary amenities of life are almost non-existent in the rural areas and the villager cannot easily seek them outside; the fewness of the roads linking the villages with the towns which makes communications difficult, particularly during the rainy season, renders the villages even less attractive. On the other hand town-dwellers enjoy much better facilities for the education of their children and easier access to doctors and hospitals, apart from such amenities as shops and entertainments.

While it is true that the so-called "positive checks" on population have been less active in India in the years between 1921 and 1941, a serious famine in Bengal in 1943 caused heavy mortality, and an even more widespread famine was feared in 1947 in the provinces and

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states in the south. On the other hand some action has already been taken in the provinces and states for the prevention of serious epidemics and for the treatment of the sick. Inadequate as these measures admittedly are, they have undoubtedly exercised some beneficial influence on the health and vitality of the people. In the last few years while the crude birth-rate in the British provinces has been fairly constant at about 35 per thousand, the estimated mortality rate has decreased from 32 to 22 per thousand, though it is still much higher than in practically every other civilised country. The infantile mortality rate has also gone down, but it too is far higher than in most other countries. In India nearly half the total number of deaths, it is believed, takes place among children under ten years, while in England only one tenth of the total mortality occurs in the first ten years of life. The expectation of life at birth in India is only twentyseven years, compared with fifty-nine years in England and the United States. In fact, as much as half of the total population of India is under twenty years of age. The very large proportion of immature persons in the population of the country, many of whom have in their early childhood suffered from debilitating ailments, accounts in a large measure for the present low average level of per capita agricultural and industrial production. These deplorable facts insistently demand that there shall be no delay in the adoption of the additional measures for the prevention and cure of disease which are now being planned.

There is very little chance, however, of an increase in the near future of food production in India commensurate with the anticipated increase in population, and the under-nourishment from which the majority of **the**

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population suffers at* present is likely to be progressively-worsened. The problem therefore remains of slowing down the rate of increase of the population if the hope of raising the standard of life of the masses is not to be frustrated. A solution which has been effective in some western countries is the deliberate limitation of the size of families. According to competent observers there is evidence that this tendency is already noticeable among the more prosperous and educated classes in India, but while conditions remain unchanged there is little likelihood of its spreading within a reasonable period to the poorer classes of the community. An authoritative Health Committee in a recent report to the Indian Government has discussed the use of artificial means of prevention as distinguished from voluntary restraint, and has set out weighty objections to any official encouragement of the general use of contraceptives. It has however expressed the view that, "in cases where childbearing is likely to result in injury to mother or infant, there is every justification for the practice and it should be the responsibility of governments to provide necessary instruction" in appropriate centres.

A more immediately effective and less controversial means of reducing the birth rate in India would be to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls. It is of course true that a measure of this nature would at the same time lower the present excessive rates of maternal and infantile mortality and would to a certain extent offset the effect of later marriages in checking the growth of population. But the children who will survive will have better health and physique and will grow into more efficient citizens than is the case at present. This will raise their production per person and consequently the

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standard of living, and as an ultimate result there is likely to be a deliberate limitation and spacing of families in a widening circle of the community. Public opinion is already moving in favour of the raising of the age of marriage of girls, and a British Indian law passed in 1929 penalised their marriage below the age of fourteen years. The Health Committee, while holding the view that there are strong physiological reasons for raising the minimum age to sixteen, seventeen or even eighteen, has cautiously refrained from a definite recommendation because the question is intimately bound up with social custom and tradition. The advancement of the country largely depends on an early solution of this problem and a national government should not hesitate to adopt a courageous policy and raise the minimum age of marriage of girls to at least sixteen years.

The existing situation in India in health matters is best summed up in the language of the Health Committee: "The present low state of public health in India is reflected in the wide prevalence of disease and the consequential high rates of mortality.... It is considered that at least fifty per cent of the existing mortality.... is preventible and should be prevented.... Environmental sanitation is at a low level in most parts of the country, malnutrition and under-nutrition reduce the power of resistance of an appreciable section of the population, and the existing health services are altogether inadequate to meet the needs of the people".

Among the diseases that prevail in India, malaria is the most important. It has been estimated that in **the** (British) provinces alone, one million deaths occur annually from the endemic form of this malady and an epidemic naturally increases the death roll. An indirect effect of

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malaria is to lower the power of resistance of the patient to other diseases. The circumstances favouring the breeding of malaria-carrying mosquitos are now well-known, but the efforts made to combat the disease have been spasmodic and utterly inadequate. Tuberculosis, though not previously unknown, has now become a serious menace in urban areas and owing to modern conditions is rapidly infecting the rural areas also. A long term programme to check the spread of this disease would entail an improvement in the general standard of living including housing, nutrition and environmental sanitation, but more adequate provision than at present available is immediately needed for treatment at home and in clinics and hospitals.

The country suffers at different times from epidemics of small-pox, cholera and plague. Fortunately plague has not been severe in recent years, but the conditions are always present for an outbreak and constant vigilance is necessary. Cholera, as well as diseases such as dysentery, is transmitted through impure food and water and can be checked by the adoption of measures for the improvement of rural and urban water-supply and general sanitation. A considerable decrease has already been effected in the incidence of small-pox, and it is believed that the epidemics that still occur could be prevented by a more vigorous campaign for the vaccination of children and adults.

Little need be added here to what has already been said in the chapter on agriculture on the subject of under-nutrition and malnutrition which are fundamental characteristics of the present state of public health in India. All authorities are agreed that what India needs above everything else is greatly to increase the production of the

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more nutritive and protective foods — foodgrains, fruit and vegetables, fish and dairy produce — and to make them available to every class.

As regards environmental hygiene, reference has been made in the chapter on industries to the conditions which prevail in the industrial towns and cities and it has been indicated that the position in the villages is not much better. In towns and villages alike improvement in housing conditions is urgently needed. To quote again from the Health Committee's report: "In rural areas there has been up to date, no planning and no control of housing. In municipal areas legal provision exists for enforcing desirable standards of housing, but these powers are not being used satisfactorily.... All available evidence seems to point to the growth of population having far outstripped the development of new housing accommodation."

Only a comparatively small number of towns and cities enjoy any system of protected water supplies, and even in them it is often inadequate or inefficient. Water supply in the rural areas is a subject which received little attention until recently, but now an effort is being made in some provinces to organise a better supply by means of tube wells and other expedients. The method of collection and disposal of refuse and excreta is still most inefficient in the majority of urban areas; in the rural districts there is no system at all. Something like a revolution in these matters is needed if the public health of the country is to be raised above its present low level.

In most countries the preventive aspects of a health organisation are a comparatively recent development and in India preventive measures began only two or three decades ago.

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The Health Committee has recorded the opinion that "the existing staffs Are altogether too small to provide adequate service to the large populations entrusted to their charge .. . (They) are mainly engaged on measures for the control of epidemic diseases and they are unable to cope adequately even with such measures".

The facilities available for curative treatment on modern scientific lines are also extremely limited in quantity and inferior in quality. Two indigenous systems of medicine are still practised in India and the great majority of the population of the countryside are able to secure treatment only from the practitioners of these systems. The Ayurvedic system is reputed to be nearly as ancient as the Vedas and in the mediaeval period various text writers embodied its principles in a series of treatises. The Unani (literally Greek) system is based on Arabic and Persian medical works which were composed in the middle ages on the basis of the Greek tradition. There has been no scientific advancement in recent years in either of these systems and neither of them professes to undertake anything deserving the name of surgical treatment. But the people and more particularly the poorer classes resort to the Ayurvedic and Unani practitioners, partly because they are less expensive and more easily accessible in the countryside and partly because there is a feeling that their treatment though empirical is more efficacious in tropical or chronic diseases than that of physicians practising the western scientific system.

At the same time it is true that there is very little prejudice against western medicine in the towns and villages, and the people are glad to avail themselves of it whenever it can be brought within their reach. Unfortunately the number of qualified medical practitio-

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ners in India is far too small. In the whole of British India there are less than 48,000 doctors, which works out at one doctor to more than six thousand persons, and further it has been estimated that three quarters of the number practise in urban areas. It will thus be clear how difficult it is for the rural population to receive attention from a doctor with modern qualifications. Similar deficiencies are to be noted in the number of hospitals and dispensaries, particularly in the rural areas, and in the accommodation or equipment provided in them. It is hardly necessary to add that the number of dentists, nurses and qualified midwives available is infinitesimally small for a country of India's size and population. The paucity of medical personnel in India is not due to any reluctance on the part of Indians to enter the profession or distaste for the practice of it. Ever since the thirties of the nineteenth century when the first medical colleges were established, the number of young men eager to join them has been larger than the accommodation available. Many Indians have secured instruction at institutions in Great Britain and other foreign countries, and a large number have reached eminence in different branches of the profession and allied subjects of research. There are at present nineteen medical colleges and about the same number of lower grade medical schools in India and the annual intake is about two thousand. Not only is the accommodation in these institutions far too small for the requirements of the country, but in the case of many of them there is considerable room for improvement in staff, equipment and clinical and laboratory facilities. Institutions for post graduate education and research are being developed though rather slowly and councils have been established for the prescription and maintenance of pro-

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fessional standards and discipline. A very welcome sign is the increasing number of Indian women who are now seeking medical qualifications. They are freely admitted into all existing institutions and a college intended solely for them has been established in Delhi.

The Health Committee to which reference has been made above have made an exhaustive survey of the entire field of health problems in India. Among their valuable recommendations are a wide expansion of medical education and research as well as a considerable development of the health services of the country. The Committee have sketched out a short term programme to which effect could be given in the first ten years, and they have also laid down the lines of approach for a long term programme. The recommendations are of the utmost importance for the well-being of the Indian people and should receive urgent consideration.

Before leaving the subject of public health in India something may be said on the use of alcohol and narcotic drugs in the country. The habit of drinking is discouraged among large classes of orthodox Hindus, especially in the higher castes, and it is forbidden to all pious Moslems. But in the urban areas and among some of the depressed and tribal communities, public opinion on the subject is lax and in the larger towns and cities the drinking habit is believed to be on the increase among industrial and other workers. A movement is developing in the country for total prohibition, and a few years ago it was tried in certain limited areas in different provinces, but was abandoned owing to political changes before any definite conclusions could be drawn. * There can be little doubt

* Total prohibition is again being introduced in parts of some provinces.

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that the growth of the drinking habit is causing substantial social and economic injury to the working classes in urban areas and measures need to be adopted for the strict control of the sale of alcohol simultaneously with the provision of facilities for healthy recreation and social intercourse.

The poppy is grown in certain parts of India under strict governmental supervision and the manufacture of opium is also a government monopoly. At one time the Indian Government derived a substantial revenue from the export and sale of crude opium to China and other eastern countries, but opium exports have now been completely discontinued, except for medical purposes on the request of a few specified governments. In India the smoking of opium is strictly prohibited in many parts, and as the habit is condemned by all sections of Indian society, in all probability the prohibition will soon be extended to the whole country. The sale of opium is carefully regulated and individuals are permitted to have only very small quantities in their possession. Owing to the present shortage of qualified doctors in the rural areas, opium eating as distinguished from opium smoking cannot yet be restricted to medically certified occasions as it is used in cases of sickness as an antidote to pain. Some hemp drugs are manufactured in India from plants grown in the country and others are imported from Central Asia. The cultivation and trade are under strict control and the use of the drugs in small quantities is permitted under the regulations. But the habit, though confined to a very minute fraction of the population, has seriously harmful effects on the addicts and is reprobated by an overwhelming majority of the people. Immediate measures are required for its total prohibition.

Chapter XIII

Education

T

HE social and economic level of a country cannot rise above the educational level of the masses of her people. Improvements in public health cannot be secured without the whole-hearted co-operation of the general public. Increase in the productive capacity of agriculture, development of industries, progress in commerce and communications, must go hand in hand with a system of widespread education which enables the common man to appreciate and adopt modern methods and to contribute his share to the advancement of the country. A democratic system of government requires that the citizens should have a knowledge of the issues determining the policy and action of the government and the legislature, and this is not possible where the bulk of the people are ignorant or illiterate.

The position in India in this respect at the beginning of the century was far from promising. In the 1901 census only about five per cent of the total population of the Indian empire were returned as literate, one person out of every ten among the males and one out of 144 among **the** women. These figures included Burma which was at

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that time a part of the Indian empire and where owing to a system of indigenous free education imparted at the Buddhist monasteries, two-fifths of the men and one-eleventh of the women were able to read and write. The proportions in India excluding Burma were therefore even smaller than has been indicated. Indians were, however, becoming increasingly aware of this reproach of illiteracy, and there was a growing movement to secure a rapid improvement of the situation.

No system of primary education organised or controlled by the government existed in pre-British India. Schools in towns and villages where boys and girls received elementary instruction were maintained by a local notable or were supported by the parents who paid fees in kind to the teacher. Among Moslems ability to read and recite the Koran in Arabic was a coveted qualification, but was acquired by very few. Instruction in Sanskrit or Persian studies was obtainable from individual teachers, who were sometimes attached to the temples and mosques, or were assisted by philanthropists and religious-minded persons. Youths seeking employment in the administrative services had to learn Persian, which was the official language, and with the change of government in the nineteenth century a demand naturally arose for instruction in English, which gradually became the language of the superior administration. In many parts of the country schools were established for the teaching of English, sometimes by the people themselves with or without the aid of the government, and sometimes by Christian missionaries.

In the thirties of the nineteenth century Bentinck, who was then Governor General, decided on the advice of the historian Macaulay, one of his councillors, that the

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government should introduce a system of higher education in the English language, and a fair number of schools and colleges were founded in different parts of the country. It was recognised however that primary education for the masses could be imparted only in their own languages and it was hoped that Indians after receiving higher education in English would themselves organise a system of elementary schools for their countrymen. Little was done by the government itself in this regard until in 1854 the authorities in England laid down a co-ordinated policy for elementary education in the Indian languages, together with a system of higher education in English, it being understood that a large share of the expenses would be defrayed out of public funds. The developments that followed in secondary and university education will be described below. The progress of primary education for the masses, however, continued to be slow and erratic. There was no uniform or consistent system in the different provinces, the funds allocated were totally inadequate and local authorities to whom the duty of promoting primary education was entrusted had neither the means nor the experience which might have enabled them satisfactorily to discharge their obligations. The result was the deplorable situation as regards literacy disclosed by the 1901 census. Expression was given to the growing popular feeling on the subject by the late Mr. Gokhale, a liberal educationalist and statesman of high standing, when in 1910 he proposed legislation with a view to securing gradual progress towards the goal of making elementary education free and compulsory. His proposals were opposed and rejected by the government, mainly on the ground that the time was not ripe for compulsion, and that sufficient efforts had not been made to extend

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primary education on a voluntary basis. No substantial change in the existing system was introduced though larger funds were made available from government revenues. By 1921 there were about six million scholars in the primary schools in British India and the number of literate persons in the whole country, *aged five years or more*, had risen to over fourteen per cent among males and slightly over two per cent among females.

The constitutional reforms of 1919-20 had then been recently introduced, and it was a matter of speculation how far this act of faith would prove successful in a country where primary education was in such a backward state. Under the reforms, education became a "provincial subject" entrusted to ministers, responsible to the legislatures, who were pledged to a definite advance in this respect. But they were handicapped because they had not complete control over the finances of the provinces. Nevertheless they succeeded in the next twenty years in very nearly doubling the number of scholars in the primary schools. The 1941 census statistics of literacy are not exactly comparable with those of 1921, since they give only total figures and percentages of the total population. The census commissioner pertinently observes that "children under five years should be excluded in any effective discussion of literacy. The contracted tabulation in 1941 caused by war exigencies had defeated such a purpose". Taking the figures as they are, the total number of literates in British India in 1941 was over thirty-seven million, compared with fifteen million in 1921, and in the States the number was over ten million in 1941, as against four million in 1921. More than one-fifth of the male population could be reckoned in 1941 as literate, but the proportion among women was still as low as one in

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twenty. The census commissioner has furnished some further particulars: The general tale is of pronounced increase, amounting in the case of India as a whole to 70 per cent over 1931 for the whole population. Of this the male increase is 60 and the female 150. There was of course an enormous field for improvement of female literacy. For the provinces the increase is 80 and for the states 70 with the sex components more or less the same." *

Various causes have contributed to this very satisfactory improvement in the general situation. Compulsion was introduced in certain limited areas in towns and villages without arousing the opposition of parents which had been predicted at the time of Mr. Gokhale's proposed legislation. Vigorous measures were adopted in most provinces and in many states to establish schools, to recruit teachers and to strengthen the inspecting staff. Over and above everything else was the powerful and pervading influence of the political awakening of the country which was the main characteristic of the period.

As a part of their post-war reconstruction plan the Indian Government had published a far reaching scheme of universal compulsory and free education for all boys and girls between the ages of six and fourteen. In recognition of the difficulty of recruiting the necessary number of trained teachers and of providing funds, it is conceded that it will take forty years for the scheme to become fully operative. Suggestions have also been made for the introduction of pre-primary instruction in the form of nursery schools or classes in urban as well as rural areas.

* Census of India 1941. Vol. I p. 31.

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Formidable problems will confront the governments in giving effect to this scheme. Its critics have suggested that the cost of the scheme would be prohibitive, but the answer to this objection is that there will be only a graduated increase in the financial burden, and that the recurring cost, even when the scheme is in full operation, will be far less in proportion than the projected outlay on education in other progressive countries. It is hardly necessary to mention that the scheme, if successful, would greatly enhance the productive capacity of Indian workers, and the augmented national income would provide the government with a much larger source of revenue.

An argument often advanced against compulsion is that it would fail for economic reasons. It is contended that it is the children's labour which makes the difference for the family between starvation and a mere subsistence. This is a belated echo of the theory under which until comparatively recent times nine years was the minimum age of employment of children in Indian industry. It is true that in rural areas boys and girls are at present employed either in tending cattle or to assist their elders during the busiest months of agricultural work, such as the seasons of sowing and harvesting. In many countries primary schools have a vacation during these periods of pressure, and it will be quite feasible to adopt a similar system in India. With the gradual introduction of labour-saving methods in Indian agriculture, the necessity of utilising the labour of young children, at the sacrifice of their education, is bound to disappear as it has done in other countries. It is pertinent to observe that for elementary education the enforcement of compulsion will prove to be a real economy for under the present system,

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boys and girls are apt to leave school before they are properly grounded and they easily lapse back into illiteracy with the result that there is a great wastage of time, labour and money.

In the execution of the new scheme put forward by the Indian government, there is likely to be serious difficulty in the recruitment of capable trained teachers. The emoluments of primary school teachers in India have been so low that comparatively few men desire to enter the profession, and social customs have prevented women from coming forward in adequate numbers. A change is happily in progress in the latter respect, and in one province a beginning has already been made in employing women teachers in mixed schools for boys and girls. The Indian Government fully recognised that the pay and prospects of both men and women teachers must be vastly improved before its scheme would function satisfactorily.

Steps must also be taken to strengthen very considerably the inspecting staff in numbers as well as in quality, and to adjust satisfactorily the relations between the local authorities and the provincial government. The interest and support of local residents will be essential for the success of any scheme of elementary education, but the provincial or central government must make itself responsible as the main source of funds and should be in a position at the same time to ensure that they are properly utilised.

There has been much recent discussion on the curriculum of the elementary schools. A scheme of "basic education", associated with the name of Mr. Gandhi, has been put forward which it is suggested should centre round a craft or occupation suitable to the locality. There is nothing fundamentally novel in this proposal. Educa-

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tion for the masses should obviously meet the particular requirements of the people concerned, and the contents of the curriculum must be changed from time to time by the method of trial and error. The matter is in fact receiving attention in all provinces and states, and necessary alterations are being made.

A welcome feature of the interest that is being displayed in the education of the masses is the new movement for adult education. It is realised that a literate child will soon revert to illiteracy in an illiterate home, and that from the political point of view it is not desirable that for many decades to come the bulk of India's citizens should remain unable to read and write. The reconstruction plans of the Indian Government included a comprehensive scheme, not only for the removal of the stigma of illiteracy from the huge masses of the adult population, but also for the provision for them of a form of education in the full sense of the term. Meanwhile provincial and state authorities as well as a number of voluntary organisations have started a vigorous anti-illiteracy drive in various parts of the country. Their efforts are being aided by the existing political ferment and by the rapid development of broadcasting. Universities are also coming into the picture by starting 'settlements' in industrial centres and by the inception of a system of extension lectures. The active interest taken by the army authorities during the second great war in encouraging education among the soldiers serving in the forces has also materially contributed to the breaking down of ignorance and illiteracy. The facts justify the observation of the Census Commissioner: "The diminution in illiteracy revealed in 1941 will be continued at future censuses and at an accelerating rate".

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The scheme put forward by the British authorities in 1854 was far more successful in the department of secondary education than in that of primary education. From the very beginning English was taught in the great majority of the secondary schools, and the demand for English education was large and insistent. This was mainly because a knowledge of English had become essential for employment in the administrative services as well as in the superior grades of commerce and transport. The government founded and maintained only a limited number of these institutions, but gave grants in aid to many private schools. In some of the secondary schools in the northern provinces English is not included in the curriculum, and the students have to seek a career as teachers in the primary schools or in the lower grades of the administrative and commercial services. These avenues will of course become much wider with the contemplated development of elementary education for the masses and the general progress of the country. Under modern conditions, and in view of the vast strides that are being made in Indian industry and commerce, it is desirable that a large proportion of young Indians should be diverted to technical and vocational education. Some knowledge of English is almost essential for studies of this character and it would be a mistake to deprive students in any type of secondary school in India of the opportunity of learning English.

The total number of secondary schools and scholars was more than doubled in 1941 compared with 1921. Here again the increase is more striking in the case of girls than in the case of boys. At one time English was in theory the medium of instruction in the secondary schools, but the mother tongue is now used almost every -

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where. Until recently lack of openings in industries **and** commerce led most secondary schools to prepare their students for the matriculation examinations of the universities, which consequently became congested. Measures have been adopted in some provinces to establish School Leaving examinations with some practical courses, thus relieving the universities of the burden of conducting unnecessary tests for an increasing number of students who will never qualify for a degree. The post-war economic development of the country demands that there should be a careful investigation and a complete overhaul of the entire system of secondary education in each province, in order that the relations between these schools and the universities, the technical and technological institutions and the professional colleges, may be harmonised and co-ordinated. A stimulating and exhaustive inquiry of this nature was made nearly thirty years ago by a commission, under the chairmanship of Sir Michael Sadler, which had been charged with the primary duty of examining the circumstances of the University of Calcutta. The report of the commission had an important influence at the time on higher secondary education in most parts of the country and on the aims and constitutions of some of the Universities. But the intervening years, the Second War and the economic and political transformation of India have so altered the situation that another independent investigation seems to be overdue.

Soon after the comprehensive scheme of 1854 had been propounded, Universities were established at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras as examining bodies without any organic connection, either with the schools or with **the** colleges where the teaching was conducted. **Gradually** newer Universities were founded, and now **there are**

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altogether nineteen in the country, and one or two more are projected. The constitution and functions of most of the newer Universities follow the recommendations of the Sadler Commission, but some of the older Universities still adhere largely to their old form. In these latter institutions the teaching continues mainly to be conducted in external colleges, affiliated to the University and scattered over a large area, though the Universities themselves have also post graduate departments for teaching and research. The newer or 'unitary' type of Indian Universities is concentrated in one city and the whole of the teaching is under its own control. The number of colleges affiliated to the old type Universities and the number of students studying in them are in several cases far too large and the standard of education imparted is bound to suffer. It is very desirable that these, unwieldy institutions should be gradually broken up into more manageable units, which would then succeed in establishing a truly organic connexion with their component colleges. The total number of scholars in the Universities and affiliated colleges exceeded one hundred and twenty-five thousand in 1941 and is still rapidly increasing. At present in the great majority of Universities and Colleges English is the medium of instruction, and examinations are conducted in that language, but there is a movement for the substitution of a modern Indian language in the place of English, which will then be treated as a compulsory second language.

In spite of their many and obvious defects, the Universities are rendering important and valuable services. The political advancement of the country would have been impossible but for their work. They have provided the country with a large body of public servants

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of acknowledged efficiency and integrity. They have been powerful agencies in reviving the growth of the modern Indian literatures, and they have imparted a stimulus to the critical study of ancient languages both in their own institutions and in the older centres of such learning. They are mainly responsible for the new spirit of research in letters and in science. Some of the Universities and research institutions have received munificent bequests from enlightened and public-spirited benefactors, but they are in need of further encouragement in this way from the landed and business magnates in the country.

The urgent need of developing technical and vocational instruction in India has already been stressed. In the past the chief difficulty was that there was very little opening for trained students in the limited ranges of industries, transport and commerce that existed in the country. But as has been shown in previous chapters, the position is very different at present and it is now realised that the full utilisation of the indigenous resources of India depends on an adequate supply of capable and skilled technicians of all grades. Measures are being adopted in the provinces and states to meet this need and new institutions have been established or are projected. These foundations must operate in close contact with mills and factories, in order that the students may acquire the needed practical knowledge. According to competent authorities, the students passing out of these new institutions have already proved that they are as willing as youths of other countries to undertake manual work and to go through the routine of duties in a factory.

The number of higher technological institutions is still too few in India, but the governments contemplate im-

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portant developments and have already considerably increased the number of young Indians annually sent abroad for further and specialised training in different industries. At the same time attention is being given to the need of encouraging research in the applied sciences, and funds have been allocated for the establishment of high grade laboratories for this purpose.

Ever since western education was introduced in India, an increasing number of young Indians have followed courses of instruction in educational institutions in Great Britain, and to a smaller extent in the United States and on the continent of Europe. Formerly, when the higher administrative and scientific services of India were recruited entirely in England, many of these students came to Great Britain to study for the respective examinations, but latterly their principal objective has been to secure higher qualifications and specialised instruction in letters and science and in law, medicine, engineering and other professional studies. With the establishment of an adequate number of higher educational institutions in India, it should not be necessary in future for young Indians to seek a training in foreign countries except in a limited number of cases.

A reproach incurred by the prevailing systems of education in India in the past was that not enough attention was devoted to the instruction of girls and young women and that, as a result, there was unequal balance and development both in family life and in society. From what has been said in this and earlier chapters it is clear that happily the position in this respect is being rapidly transformed. Funds are being liberally provided now for the education of girls at all stages, and women are taking an active and useful part

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in the entire educational movement with profit to both sexes.

Independently of scholastic institutions of different grades, the general education of the people, boys and girls as well as adult men and women, is being fostered and encouraged by such modern agencies as broadcasting, village libraries and reading clubs, the newspaper and periodical press, new literature in the different modern languages and the ubiquitous cinema. Mention should also be made of such movements as those of boy scouts and girl guides. All these are contributing to increase the knowledge and broaden the outlook of the rising generation and of their seniors. And there are other educative and cultural influences at work. There has been, for example, a remarkable development among the young* people of all classes of a taste and aptitude for outdoor games and sports of different kinds. To the indigenous forms of physical recreation which were popular have now been added western games such as association football, hockey, cricket and lawn tennis, both as an integral part of school and college life and in less organised forms as practised in the open areas in towns and villages. It is a sign of the times that Indian teams have played a worthy part in Olympic Association contests and have conducted successful tours abroad.

Another notable symptom of new forces and a new spirit has been a welcome revival of artistic and cultural interests. The art of painting which flourished in India in the pre-British period had languished during the nineteenth century, but new schools of painting developed in the present century in different parts of India are now attracting both local patronage and the attention of connoisseurs in Europe and America. Efforts too are being

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made to revive the folk arts. Music, drama and dancing which had been relegated to an inferior status, since they were for sometime mostly practised by persons of doubtful morals, are now regaining their rightful position, and are helping to raise the general cultural level. Conservation of the ancient monuments of the country and archaeological discoveries have helped to create a new interest in sculpture and architecture. Pilgrimages to places of religious interest were always a notable feature of Indian life and now it is becoming the fashion for all classes of the people to visit places of architectural interest or archaeological fame.

All these are manifestations of a change of attitude, partly the result of formal education and partly of other educative influences, which augurs well for the social and economic uplift of the country.

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