Preface

EIGHT YEARS AGO I undertook to write a comprehensive history of the Indian National Congress. I had not long been at work on the subject when it became clear to me that the emergence of an organization like the Congress in a country of India's size and schisms represented a fairly advanced stage of political development. How was this stage reached? I decided to devote the opening chapter of my projected history of the Congress to answering this question. What was intended to be a chapter has grown into the present volume.

I have written conventional political history. All that I promise my readers is plenty of new facts and some new interpretations of facts already known. I regret the multiplicity and length of the quotations in the book, but I hope they have imparted an air of authenticity and contemporaneity to my account and may prove useful to those who do not have easy access to the sources which I have consulted. I have drawn heavily on the contemporary press and in the process become more and more convinced of the truth contained in Macaulay's remark: 'The only true history of a country is to be found in its newspapers.'

My greatest debt is to Professor C. H. Philips, Director of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, who first aroused my interest in the history of the Indian National Congress and has also kindly read this book in typescript and made several valuable suggestions. I would like to thank the staff of the following institutions for their help and courtesy: the India Office Library; the British Museum; the Public Record Offices in Belfast, Edinburgh and London; the National Library of Ireland, Dublin; the Cambridge University Library; the Bodleian and the Christ Church Library, Oxford; the Leeds Public Libraries Archives; the Church Missionary Society, London; the National Library and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta; the National Archives of India, New Delhi; the State Record Offices in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras; the Aligarh Muslim University Library; the Asiatic Society Library, Bombay; the Ferguson College Library, the Kesari-Mahratta Library, and the Servants of India Society's Library, Poona; the Theosophical Society Library, Adyar; the British Indian Association and the Indian Association, Calcutta; the Bombay Presidency Association; and the Madras Mahajana Sabha. My thanks are due also to the proprietors of the Amrita Bazar Patrika, the Hindu, and the Tribune for allowing me to consult the back files of their newspapers. For permission to use the papers of S. H. Chiplonkar, I am indebted to Mr. S. B. Bhat of Dhulia. I am grateful to Professor N. R. Phatak and Mr. B. N. Phatak of Bombay for nobly responding to my many calls for help. To my friends Mr. F. A. Eustis II and Dr. R. Suntharalingam, with whom I have discussed the numerous controversial issues of nineteenth-century Indian history over the years, my obligation is immense. I must record my grateful thanks to Mr. P. Addy, Mr. T. J. Byres, Dr. I. J. Catanach, Mr. B. R. Nanda, Dr. P. D. Reeves, and Mr. D. D. Taylor for making helpful suggestions, and to Mrs. Judy Ng and my wife for assisting me in preparing the work for press.

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CHAPTER ONE The Beginnings of Modern Politics in India

'I CONGRATULATE YOU, gentlemen, on the formation of the first society for political objects which has ever been organized by the natives of India with large and liberal views, without exclusiveness, and with ends and aims of extensive utility. I see in it the germ of great things and I am satisfied that the care and prudence which will be required to conduct these beginnings to fitting ends, will not be wanting.'1 The speaker was Theodore Dickens,2 an eminent British barrister and planter in India; the occasion the inauguration of the Landholders' Society at a public meeting held in the town hall of Calcutta on 19 March 1838. Almost eighty-one years had elapsed since the battle of Plassey in 1757 which made the British the de facto rulers of Bengal. Much had happened in India during the interval. All India from Cape Comorin to the eastern margin of the Indus plain and the Punjab had been brought directly or indirectly, under British
sway. The East India company had wound up its commercial side and become the sarkar of India, popularly known as the Company Bahadur. But the British parliament had intervened and assumed ultimate superintendence and of the Company's administrative system in India. The eyes of Indians were turned to the highest seat of authority in far-off Britain which recognized, at least in theory, their rights as equal subjects of the empire and to which they could appeal, if need be, against the decisions of their immediate rulers in India.

With the establishment of Pax Britannica, law and order, peace and security slowly returned to the long-distressed land. A new polity was gradually built up in the place of one which was in ruins. The days of conquistadores and shakers of the Pagoda tree were over. The framework of a well-organized administrative system had been created. It was operated by a public service which was efficient but alien, exclusive and remote. A new judicial system had been introduced. It was exotic, incomprehensible cumbersome and expensive, but it produced far-reaching political and sociological results by establishing the principle of equality before the law and creating a consciousness of positive rights. Its levelling and liberating effects soon manifested themselves. The old economic system

1 Bengal Hurkaru, 21 March 1838.

2 B at Calcutta 1799 educated at Cambridge and Lincoln's Inn; enrolled as advocate at calcutta supreme court 1824; connected with the firm of Fergusson, Brothers and Company; d. at London 1855.

India was, however, not content and British rule was far from being popular. The British had overturned too many interests and created too many enemies. Competent British observers noted that their government had 'no hold upon the attachment of the people' and that even those who did not long for the return of the old order considered it to be vastly superior in many respects to the present one.3

English education, first introduced as a result of private initiative but later aided by state action, had begun to spread in the larger towns. The knowledge of English, coupled with the impact of Christianity and of western ideas, aroused a new spirit of eager and restless questioning about the foundations of religious, social and political life in India. This was first discernible in Calcutta, which besides being the metropolis of the empire was the greatest centre of commercial and Christian missionary activity in India, where English education was first introduced and where a greater degree of intercourse between Europeans and Indians prevailed than elsewhere. It was at Calcutta that, inspired by the example of the societies formed for beneficial purposes by Europeans in the town, with which some of them were associated, 4 'the most intelligent, wealthy, and learned among the Hindoos' established on 16 February 1823 a society, named the Gaudiya Samaj, for the promotion of learning, social intercourse and general welfare. It was at Calcutta that the Brahma Sabha 6 (later called the Brahma Samaj) was founded in 1828 by
Rammohan Roy, who, stimulated by the new learning, endeavoured to reform Hinduism from within and to preserve its essential truths while freeing it from corruptions. Like Luther, who appealed to the Bible as an authority against mediaeval corruptions, Roy took his stand on the Vedas, in which he discovered a form of pure Hinduism, of which the basis was a belief in one God, which was not vitiated by idolatry, and which gave no sanction to distinctions of caste or such cruel practices as sati. It was at

3 See, for example, Friend of India, 24 September 1835; Lord William Bentinck, quoted in ibid., 22 February 1838; F. J. Shore, Notes on Indian Affairs (1837), vol. i, pp. 145-68; and C. E. Trevelyan, On the Education of the People of India (1838), pp. 198-9.

4 For example, the Asiatic Society of Bengal 1784; the Calcutta School Book Society 1817; the Calcutta School Society 1818; and the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India 1820.


7 Author, journalist and social reformer; b. 1772; in East India Company's service 1803-13; sailed for Britain November 1830; d. at Bristol 1833.

8 'The ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of opposition to Brahmanism, but to a perversion of it; and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmans was contrary to the practice of their ancestors, and the principles of the ancient books and authorities, which they profess to revere and obey.' Roy, quoted in [Kishorichandra Mitra], 'Rammohun Roy', Calcutta Review, 1845, vol. iv, no. 8, p. 375.

3

Calcutta that the students of the Hindu College, under the inspiring leadership of their Eurasian teacher, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, formed in 1828 the Academic Association — a debating club where they discussed 'free will, foreordination, fate, faith, the sacredness of truth, the high duty of cultivating virtue, and the meanness of vice, the nobility of patriotism, the attributes of God, and the arguments for and against the existence of the deity ...; the hollowness of idolatry, and the shams of the priesthood'. Young Bengal read Tom Paine, admired revolutionary France, hated the British Tories, wrote poems about the fallen state of the motherland and dreamt of a free and self-governing India in the future.11

If the schoolmaster was abroad in India, the journalist did not lag behind. Following in the footsteps of the British pioneers, Indians had begun to conduct their own newspapers, in English and in the vernaculars, early in the 1820s. They also had a controlling share in some of the Anglo-Indian newspapers. In 1835 the press in India had been freed by Sir Charles Metcalfe, the then acting governor-general. Until the end of the 1830s the circulation of Indian newspapers remained small and their influence limited mainly to the presidency towns, but what was
important was the fact that Indians had come to recognize the value of the press as an instrument to influence the public and the government and were increasingly making use of it for that purpose. Already in 1838, a Bengali weekly of Calcutta—the Prabodh Chandrodaya—had 800 subscribers. Writing about 'the Native Press'on 8 November 1838, the Friend of India remarked: '
... its influence has been greatly extended among the Native population; and ... it bids fair to become a powerful instrument of civilization. When a nation has been asleep for ages, the first stage of improvement consists in breaking its slumbers; and the Press appears more likely to produce this effect at the present, than at any preceding time.' 15

There flourished in India, especially at the metropolitan centres, a small but energetic community of non-official Britons — journalists, teachers, lawyers, missionaries, planters and traders — nicknamed the 'interlopers' by the Company's servants who cordially detested them and fought hard, but unsuccessfully, to restrict their entry into India. They brought their politics with them to India and behaved there almost exactly as Key would have done at home. They argued and quarrelled amongst themselves and with the authorities. They conducted

9 B. 1809; d. 1831.

10 T. Edwards, Henry Derozio, the Eurasian Poet, Teacher, and Journalist (1884), p. 32.

11 B. B. Majumdar, History of Indian Social and Political Ideas from Rammohun to Dayananda (1967), pp. 50-4.

12 For the early history of the press in India, see M. Barns, The Indian Press (1940).

13 B. 1785 East India Company's service 1801; member of governor-general's council 1827-34; governor of Agra 1834-5; acting governor-general of India 1835-6; lieutenant-governor of North-Western Provinces 1836-8; governor of Jamaica 1839-42; governor-general of Canada 1843-5; created baron 1845; d. 1846.

14 Friend of India, 8 November 1838.

15 Ibid.

4

their rival newspapers, founded schools and missions, and organized clubs, associations and societies of all sorts. They kept a close watch on the doings and sayings of the Company's officials. Whenever their interests were adversely affected by the decisions of the government, they raised a hue and cry in the press, organized protest meetings, sent in petitions, waited in deputation and even tried to influence Parliament and public opinion at home in their favour. It was the interlopers who by their exertions helped to transform British rule in India from an empire of the sword into an empire of opinion and who by their precept and example taught their Indian fellow-subjects the art of constitutional agitation. How well Indians had learnt the art of constitutional agitation was demonstrated during the controversy over the sati question in 1829-30.
when Lord William Bentinck made sati illegal in Bengal in December 1829, orthodox Hindus opposed his move as an interference with their religion, in contravention of the pledges given earlier by the British government. Their opposition, however, took a legal form. They made use of the press to ventilate their views and presented a petition to the governor-general. A protest meeting was held in Calcutta on 17 January 1830 and a society called the Dharma Sabha was established. Funds were raised and an English agent was deputed to England. An appeal, signed by thousands, was made to the Privy Council. Not only was the agitation against the prohibition of sati conducted on western lines, the Dharma Sabha, which was composed of the most orthodox Hindus and instituted for the express purpose of restoring an ancient religious rite, was organized exclusively upon a western model. As the Friend of India remarked a few years later: 'A President, Directors, a Committee, a Treasurer, and a Secretary were appointed, as much as though all the members of it had been Englishmen. All its meetings were conducted, and its business was transacted, upon a system totally foreign to the habits of the country. Another remarkable feature in the institution was, that the original Committee, appointed at the meeting to maintain, what they supposed to be, the integrity of Hindooism, did not contain a single Brahmun; while at the same time it embraced several Native gentlemen of wealth and intelligence, but of so low a caste, that according to the strict letter of Hindoo observance, their presence contaminated the meeting. Here was another innovation upon Hindoo customs; an adoption of the European notion, that property and intelligence, though unaccompanied with sacredness of birth, should exercise influence in society.'

The original objective of the Dharma Sabha was defeated. The Privy Council rejected its appeal in 1832. But the Sabha continued to exist. For some time it gave vent to its anger and frustration by excommunicating certain wealthy and respectable members of the Hindu community who had supported the action of Bentinck. The religious excitement raised by the abolition of sati, however, soon subsided. Early in 1835 prominent leaders of the Dharma Sabha joined hands with their erstwhile Hindu opponents in presenting a valedictory address to Bentinck. The Sabha held meetings from time to time. It discussed religious and social questions and also directed its attention to the promotion of Sanskrit and Bengali. It published an annual report of its proceedings. Its secretary, Bhawanicharan Banerji, was described by the Friend of India as 'one of the ablest men of the age'. At a meeting of the Sabha on 25 April 1836, one of its active and enlightened members, Ramkamal Sen, adverted to the dullness of its proceedings and proposed that subjects of real importance connected with agriculture and the interests of the zamindars and raiyats should be discussed at the meetings and that a branch society should be

16 B. 1774; governor of Madras 1803–7; governor-general of India 1828–35; d. 1839.

17 India Gazette, 18, 20 January 1830.

18 Ibid., 20 January, 8 February 1830.

19Friend of India, 7 May 1835.
formed for this purpose. The president of the Sabha, Raja Kalikrishna, approved of the proposition and suggested that there should be a separate place for the meetings of the branch society, and some appropriate denomination be given to it, and further that invitations from a select committee be sent to the zamindars, talukdars and patnidars residing in Calcutta and its vicinity. The proposal met with the concurrence of all the members of the Sabha, except one, and it was decided that a special meeting should be called for the purpose.

The Reformer, the organ of the liberal section of Hindus in Calcutta, hailed the move as a 'triumph of reason in the very citadel of superstition' and commended the efforts of Ramkamal Sen to 'turn this Indian court of inquisition into a useful political institution'. The Friend of India was pleased to mark 'the progress of enlightened feelings among the rich and powerful Natives' and attributed it to 'the friendly intercourse which is maintained between the Hindoo and European communities, and to the salutary influence of the public press'. It went on to add: 'Who will venture to despair of the regeneration of the country, when he beholds even this Dharma Subha, the citadel of bigotry, the stronghold of antiquated prejudices, yielding to the force of public opinion, and about to render its power subservient to the general welfare of India.'

Ramkamal Sen's proposal for the formation of a society to discuss questions affecting the public welfare, especially as regards land and agriculture, was

20 The meeting at which the address was presented was held at the Hindu College on 30 January 1835 and attended by 500-600 persons. It was probably the first large public gathering in the western style to be organized by Hindus on their own. See Friend of India, 29 January, 5 February 1835.

21 Editor of Samachar Chandrika; b. 1787; d. 1848.

22 Friend of India, 8 June 1848.

23 For the proceedings of the meeting, see Calcutta Courier, 26 April 1836 and Friend of India, 5 May 1836.

24 B.1783;rose from humble beginnings to be treasurer of Calcutta mint and of Bengal an ; clerk of Asiatic Society of Bengal and later its 'native secretary'; vice-president of Agricultural and Horticultural Society; d. 1844.

25 B. 1808; son of Raja Raikrishna of Shobhabazar and grandson of Maharaja Navakrishna, diwan of Clive; author; d. 1874.

26 Quoted in Asiatic Journal, October 1836, p. 68.

27 Friend of India, 5 May 1836.
made at a very opportune time, though the Dharma Sabha, already torn by internal dissensions, was hardly the body to take the lead in organizing such a society. The Bengal government had recently accelerated the process of resuming lands which had been rent-free for a long time but whose holders could not produce valid title-deeds. The resumption operation had caused widespread alarm and discontent in the presidency. Even the Friend of India, which generally supported the action of the government, was constrained to remark that 'no single measure has ever produced greater irritation in the Native mind than this; ... it has alienated from us the affections of the two most powerful classes, the landed and the sacerdotal aristocracy; and has given colour to the charge of violated faith'. The resumption of rent-free lands was in itself a disturbance of the permanent settlement instituted by Lord Cornwallis in 1793, it also gave rise to the apprehension — not entirely unreasonable or unfounded — that the government wanted to revoke that settlement.

The resumption of rent-free lands and the threatened cancellation of the permanent settlement were not the only questions agitating the public mind at the time. The reported intention of the government to abolish the Sanskrit College and the Madrassa at Calcutta had caused great dissatisfaction amongst local Hindus and Muslims and evoked monster petitions in protest. Nor was it the Indian community alone which was in a state of excitement. The non-official British community throughout India was equally excited over recent legislation which deprived it of the right it had hitherto enjoyed of appealing to the supreme court against the decisions of the Company's provincial tribunals in India. The Anglo-Indians in Calcutta took the lead in organizing a country-wide protest against the legislation, which they called 'the Black Act'. Their protest was supported by a few influential, English-educated Indians in Calcutta with whom they had close personal and professional contacts. The Reformer, edited by Prasannakumar Tagore, argued that it was not opposed to the equalization of laws but hated the process of levelling down and could not 'without a pang see the rights and liberties of British subjects trampled upon'. It called upon Indians to make common cause with their Anglo-Indian fellow-subjects not only as a matter of gratitude to the latter, for 'it was the British-born subjects residing in India who have been constantly asking Government to ameliorate

28 See J. Crawfurd, An Appeal from the Inhabitants of British India to the Justice of the People of England ... (1839).

29 Friend of India, 24 September 1835; also 1 October 1835, 7 January 1836, 30 November 1837.

30 Charles Cornwallis, first marquis (1738-1805). Viceroy of Ireland 1798-1801; governor-general of India 1786-93 and 1805.

31 Act no. xi of 1836, of the legislative council of India, purporting to repeal the 107th section of the 53d. Geo. 3d. c. 155.

32 Throughout this work the term Anglo-Indians is used in the nineteenth-century sense of British persons residing or having resided in India.
the condition of the natives', but also as a matter of self-preservation, for if the government were to be allowed to deprive British-born subjects, who were far superior to them in education and influence, of their rights and privileges, the few rights and privileges that Indians enjoyed could not be safe.34 When non-official Anglo-Indians in Calcutta called a public meeting in the town hall on 18 June 1836 to concert measures against 'the Black Act',35 it was attended by about a dozen influential Indians, headed by Dwarkanath Tagore,36 who, speaking on the occasion, recalled the great debt of gratitude which Indians owed to the so-called interlopers. Twenty years ago, he said, the Company treated Indians as slaves and government servants, with a few honourable exceptions, took no interest in improving their condition. It was merchants, lawyers and other independent British settlers in India who first raised them from that state. It was they who first encouraged, them to take to English education and to claim their rights and liberties.37

Referring to the paunty of Indians in the audience, he remarked that the vast majority of his countrymen were afraid to come forward in asserting their rights. 'They fear that those who rule them will be displeased and would ruin them by a stroke of the pen; but, gentlemen, the fear is not without a cause for numbers of them have suffered for no other crime than displeasing a civil servant or unintentionally omitting to make a salaam when they were passing on the road. This is the character of the generality of them—the few exceptions are confined to those who, like myself, have been spoilt by the interlopers/The majority of my countrymen say: "If I have lost one eye let me take care of the other" and thus they keep themselves back from public meetings and are tardy in the assertion of their rights .... But a time will come when the case will be quite different. Let the Hindoo College go on, as it has gone on, for three or four years more, and you will have a meeting like this attended by four times your number of Natives.'38

Anglo-Indian speakers at the meeting bitterly denounced the Company's 'despotic' government for attempting to deprive them of their birthright. The meeting approved of a petition to be presented to the British Parliament which not only demanded the repeal of 'the Black Act', but also a legislative council for India sitting with open doors and containing non-official members. A committee was appointed to maintain communications with the other presidencies, to raise funds and to arrange for sending an agent to England.39 I The agitation against 'the Black Act' in 1836-8 was probably not the first instance of an all-India agitation organized by the non-official Anglo-Indian community. It was certainly not the first instance of British-Indian collaboration

34Reformer, 15 May 1836, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 16 May 1836.

35For the proceedings of the meeting, see Bengal Hurkaru, 21 June 1836.

36B. 1794; landlord and merchant; close associate of Rammohan Roy; visited Britain 1842 and 1845-6; d. at London 1846.

37For similar sentiments expressed by Dwarkanath Tagore at another public meeting held in Calcutta, 24 November 1838, see Bengal Hurkaru, 28 November 1838. ™
in public agitation. But in the circumstances of the time it acquired a special significance. It encouraged Dwarkanath Tagore and his Indian associates, who were already contemplating an agitation against the resumption of rent-free lands, to attempt something far more systematic and extensive than the merely sporadic and local protests they had hitherto attempted, and it assured them of the support of the non-official Anglo-Indian community in their own undertaking, almost as a quid pro quo. In fact, it was the leader of the agitation against 'the Black Act' in Calcutta, Theodore Dickens, who 'originally suggested, and was very instrumental in organizing the Landholders' Society'.

Acting on the advice of Dickens, the principal zamindars residing in and around Calcutta met on 10 November 1837 at the Hindu College and decided to form an association, called the Landholders' Society, 'to defend and promote the landed interests of the country, in the same manner as the Chamber of Commerce has been instituted for the commercial interests'. A provisional committee, consisting of Raja Radhakant Deb, Bhawanicharan Mitra, Ramkamal Sen and Prasannakumar Tagore, was elected to draw up a prospectus for the Society. The only instruction with which the provisional committee was charged was that, in preparing the prospectus they should bear in mind that the Society 'was intended to embrace people of all descriptions, without reference to caste, country or complexion, and, rejecting all exclusiveness, was to be based on the most universal and liberal principles; the only qualification necessary to become its member being the possession of interest in the soil of the country'. The prospectus prepared by the provisional committee was adopted at another meeting.

For example, the prominent Indians and non-official Britons of Calcutta had combined in 1827 to protest against the Stamp Act, in 1829 to represent their demands to the British Parliament before the renewal of the Company's charter, and in 1835 to demand the repeal of the press regulations.

On the eve of Dickens's departure for Britain in January 1842, the Landholders' Society presented him with an address which praised his services to the Society and said that 'your personal labour and liberal pecuniary assistance have been mainly instrumental to its establishment'. In his reply to the address, Dickens wrote to the secretaries of the Society: 'You notice with approbation the active part I took in the formation of the Society. I believe the original conception was mine, but without your zealous and disinterested aid, Sirs, as honorary secretaries, and without the cordial co-operation of my excellent friends Dwarkanath Tagore, Raja Radhakant Deb, Ramcomul Sen, and many other worthy and public-spirited Hindoo and Mahomedan gentlemen, any efforts of mine must have proved abortive.' For the texts of the address and Dickens's reply to it, see Bengal Hurkaru, 26 January 1842. During the controversy over the 'Black Acts' in 1849-50, Dickens addressed an open letter 'to the Natives of India, Fellow-Subjects of Our Imperial Crown', in which he said: 'I originally suggested, and was very instrumental in organizing the Landholders' Society ... .' See Bengal Hurkaru, 10 January 1850.
meeting of zamindars held on 25 February 1838 at the same place. It laid down the objects of the Society to be 'to promote the General interests' of the Landholders ... [and a] cordial and friendly communication between all classes interested in land, without distinction of colour, caste, birth, place, or religion'; to 'diffuse information on all subjects connected with the interest of the soil'; to 'compose and settle differences and disputes amongst Landholders'; to 'endeavour to obtain a legal limitation to the claims of the State for the better securing of titles'; to 'make respectful representations to Government when any regulation shall be promulgated injurious to the general interest of all connected with the soil'; in the same manner 'to ask for such new enactments as may be deemed important to the interests of the Landholders and others connected with the soil'; to 'ask for the repeal of all existing Laws that may be prejudicial to the same classes'; to 'extend the assistance of the Society to individuals when we think a general principle is involved, in order that such cases may be appealed to superior authorities'; to 'defend ourselves by legal means against the Resumption Measure, now in progress, and any further attacks of the same nature, or any encroachment upon the principles of the permanent settlement'; to 'contend for the fulfilment of the pledge, by proclamation, to extend the permanent settlement to the North West Provinces'; to 'assist Landholders living at a distance in their business with the Courts and Public Offices of the Presidency, and generally to furnish them with advice on all matters properly connected with the objects of the Society'. Each member of the Society was required to pay an entrance fee of five rupees and an annual subscription of twenty rupees. It was to be managed by an elected committee of twelve—later twenty-four—which was to meet at least once a month and was 'earnestly recommended to establish branch Societies in every district of the British Indian Empire, with the view of establishing regular communications on all subjects connected with the objects of the Society'.

The Landholders' Society was formally inaugurated at a public meeting held in the Calcutta town hall on 19 March 1838, which was attended by over two hundred of the most respectable zamindars and a few Anglo-Indians. Raja Radhakant Deb, who chaired the meeting, referred to the resumption operations which had, he said, cast a gloom over the landholders, and emphasized the need for union among them. Straw, he said, could easily be broken by the finger when in separate blades, but if several blades be united together and formed into a rope, it was capable of confining even a wild elephant and reducing it to subjection. He pointed out that 'the establishment of such a Society was much called for, in order to keep a watch over the measures of Government and its functionaries, and for the purpose of making representations to it'. The
Society would provide the people with a ready means of bringing their grievances to the notice of the proper authorities and restrain them from adopting an erroneous course. Radhakant Deb maintained that the Society 'ought on no account to be considered as in any way opposed to the Government; on the contrary, if the object of Government be the good of the people, and this Society subserved that end, it was evident that Government could not but consider it as beneficial both to itself and to the country at large'.

The formation of the Landholders' Society caused quite a stir in Calcutta. While the Indian press naturally welcomed it, the reaction of the Anglo-Indian press was mixed. The Bengal Hurkaru hailed it 'as placing before the eyes of the population in some shape that form of domestic polity which has conferred such inestimable benefits in England and in America' and reported 'upon sufficient authority' that 'the present Governor-General [Lord Auckland] is a decided advocate for the establishment of corporate bodies'. The Englishman regarded the establishment of the Society as 'rather the result of that mixture of European and Asiatic, which is taking place all over the British Indian dominions' and remarked: 'Government have the choice between association and conspiracy; if they put down the one, they cannot prevent the other.' The Friend of India was not very friendly to the Society, but it advised the authorities not to get alarmed, for the Bengalis had 'not one element of political resistance in them'. 'This is no Canadian assembly,' it remarked, 'with a Papineau to breathe hostility into its councils. It is a large association of great Baboos, most of whom are too unwieldy for any treasonable views. It is a Society composed of the successors of those same landholders, from whom Moorshid Kooly Khan, more than a hundred years ago, took away all their lands by one stroke of the pen. The Calcutta Courier was visibly disturbed at what it considered to be 'a decided step progressive in the march of native improvement, and ... a very noticeable and remarkable "sign of the times"' and blamed the formation of the Landholders' Society upon the framers of the Charter Act of 1833. 'The Hindoos', it wrote, 'have at last made the discovery that union is power. This Association we look upon as a political association ... it is a clean carrying out of that principle of equality in the charter of freedom, which its single-minded and sincere framers doubtless intended should be acted upon! ... Our Native brethren have now, thanks to the equality faction at home, gotten an association: we shall not be much surprised if they shortly get an O'Connell; and then....'

46Bengal Hurkaru, 3 March 1838.
47Ibid., 12 March 1838.
48id., 21 March 1838.
49Ibid., 23 January 1838; also 12 March 1838. Lord Auckland was governor-general of India from 1836 to 1842. For the claim that he was sympathetic to the formation of the Landholders' Society, see also Englishman, 15 February 1849.
During the first two years of its existence, the Landholders' Society remained fairly active. It had two very energetic and able secretaries in Prasannakumar Tagore and William Cobb Hurry. Its managing committee, which included some of the most intelligent, influential and public-spirited citizens of Calcutta, held frequent meetings and took up a variety of questions. It had a regular establishment at 3 Clive Street Ghat, Calcutta. Immediately after its inauguration, it sought, and secured, the permission of the government to address the latter through the medium of its secretaries, 'in the same manner as is done by the Chamber of Commerce', on questions of public interest. It tried to maintain regular communications with the mofussil. It counted amongst its members persons of all communities from different parts of the presidency of Bengal. Its proceedings were regularly reported in the press. Nor did it confine its activities to India. On 9 July 1838 it appointed John Crawfurd as its agent in London and provided him with funds. When the British India Society was established in England in July 1839, the Landholders' Society opened communications with it and tried to organize a permanent parliamentary agency in London.

The growing influence of the Landholders' Society, especially its alliance with the British India Society in England, caused some uneasiness amongst a certain section of Anglo-Indians in India and they emphasized the need for creating a counterpoise to it by encouraging other interests. The Friend of India warned the government against the dangers likely to arise from 'a nucleus of opposition in the metropolis, composed of wealthy Zemindars, governed by an oligarchy, European and Native ... and an affiliated Society at home' and urged it to counteract them 'by giving the Zemindars in the country, the same advantages which are exclusively enjoyed by those in the metropolis; by a general system of education, more especially in the vernacular languages; by encouraging local "associations, by creating municipalities; by reanimating the country, and giving it a voice which shall be heard and felt'.

For the proceedings of the Society during 1838-9, see Bengal Hurkaru, 3, 21, 30 March, 9, 20, 27 April, 4, 10, 17 May, 7, 30 June, 13, 31 July, 11 August, 7, 12 September, 10 October, 1 November, 15 December 1838; 1, 16 February, 16 March, 16 April, 2, 21 May, 4, 28 September, 20 November, 7, 14-16 December 1839.
Towards the end of 1838 the Landholders' Society presented a long and well-reasoned petition, bearing over twenty thousand signatures and adopted at a large public meeting of about five thousand people in Calcutta, against the resumption of rent-free lands to the authorities in India. The latter's response was at first not encouraging, but when the Society transferred the agitation to Britain in 1839, they substantially relaxed the resumption regulations. The Landholders' Society was essentially and by its creed an organization of zamindars. Most of the representations which it made to the government — and these were always received with great attention — were on questions affecting interests of zamindars. But the Society did not function as a narrowly selfish interest group. Not only did it not claim any exclusive privilege for its constituents, it took up several questions which concerned the welfare of the public at large, such as the use of Bengali in the courts, the reduction of stamp duties, the grant of subsistence to witnesses in criminal suits, and the emigration of coolies to Mauritius. This is not surprising. Zamindars were the leaders of Indian society and as such its representatives and spokesmen to some extent. Being the only organized indigenous political body in Bengal at the time, the Landholders' Society naturally became the medium through which public grievances could be brought to the notice of the authorities. Luckily, some of the Calcutta zamindars, who controlled the Society, were also men with large and liberal views. They might not have been good zamindars, but their education and contacts had broadened their outlook and widened their sympathies. Moreover, they were anxious to disprove the accusation, which some of their Anglo-Indian critics were already busy making, that the Society represented only a particular and selfish interest. The close and active association of many Britons, especially lawyers, with the
Landholders’ Society also served to ensure its liberal character. From the comparatively scanty notices of the proceedings of the Landholders' Society in the contemporary press during 1840—1,67 one is led to conclude that, though the Society continued to function during these years, it had lost its initial momentum and vigour. But the departure, for England in January 1842 of Dwarkanath Tagore, who was the most influential public man of his time in Bengal, and of Theodore Dickens who was an active and zealous member of the Society, appears to have almost put a stop to its activities in India. ‘We have heard nothing of its operation, or even of its existence, for more than a twelve month’, wrote the Friend of India of the Landholders' Society on 26 January 1843.68 But the arrival in Calcutta early in 1843 of the famous Scottish agitator, George Thompson,69 in company with Dwarkanath Tagore, infused new life and vigour into the Landholders' Society. A new office of the Society was set up at 1 Chitpur Road, Calcutta.70 Prasannakumar Tagore returned to his duties as 'the Native Secretary' of the Society. The post of 'the European Secretary', vacated by William Cobb Hurry, was filled by William Theobald, a Calcutta barrister.71 George Thompson became an active member of the committee of the Society and was designated its agent in England, in the place of John Crawfurd.72 According to the instructions of the Society, George Thompson, on his return to England in 1844, established an office of the Society in London which was to serve as a depository of information concerning India and a place of resort for persons interested in the objects of the Society.73 But after about a year and half of useful activity, the Society once again sank into a state of torpidity. In 1848-9 an attempt was made to revive the Landholders' Society and make it 'a less aristocratical and consequently more popular association' than in the past,75 but the attempt did not succeed.

Our information about the activities of the Landholders' Society is so meagre and of such a fragmentary character that we can do no more than guess the causes which might have contributed to its early decay. The difficulties of carrying on constitutional agitation in the India of the first half of the nineteenth century, with its economic and educational backwardness and its poor means of communication, were almost insuperable. To these was added the terrible vis inertiae which pervaded Indian society at the time. The number of public-spirited men even in Calcutta was severely restricted in the thirties and forties of the nineteenth century and the few who had the will could not easily afford the time for public work. By the deaths of G.A. Prinsep76 (1839), David Hare77 (1842) and Ramkamal Sen (1844), by the defection of William

65 The petition is reprinted in Crawfurd, op. cit., Appendix, pp. 1-9.

66 See, for example, the remarks of Dwarkanath Tagore at a public meeting of the Society held on 7 December 1839, in Bengal Hurkaru, 16 December 1839.

67 Ibid., 13 January 1840, 1 January 1842.

68 See also Friend of India, 23 February 1843 and Bengal Hurkaru, 27 March 1843.

69 B. 1804; orator and philanthropist; M. P. 1847-52; visited India 1842-3 and 1856-7; d. 1878.

13
Cobb Hurry and Theodore Dickens in 1843,78 due probably to their dislike of George Thompson, and by the resignation of Prasannakumar Tagore from both the office of joint secretary to the Society and its membership in March 1844,79 following

70 As 1 Chitpur Road was found inconvenient for many members, the office of the Society was in February 1844 shifted to 5 Government Place, Calcutta, the chambers of William Theobald. See Bengal Hurkaru, 19 February 1844.

71 Ibid., 15 August 1843.


73 Ibid., 19 February 1844, and Englishman, 11 July 1844. The office was located at 6 Waterloo Place, Pall Mall, London, and was called 'the East India Landholders' Society's Office'.

74 For the proceedings of the Society in 1843-4, see Bengal Hurkaru, 16 February, 27, 30 March, 5, 25 April, 4, 20 May, 10, 27 June, 13, 25 July, 15 August, 13 September, 9, 20 December 1843; 19 February 1844; also Englishman, 11 July 1844.

75 See Bengal Hurkaru, 22 January, 3, 5, 6, 19, 31 March 1849; Englishman, 15 February 1849.

76 Merchant and sometime editor of Calcutta Courier.

77 B. 1775; went out to India as watch-maker 1800; educationist and philanthropist.

78 Hurry apparently stayed away from the Society when it was revived in early 1843. Dickens did not return to Calcutta from Britain until September 1843.

79 See Englishman, 11 July 1844. Ramanath Tagore was elected to fill the place of Prasannakumar Tagore as joint secretary to the Society.

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his appointment as government pleader in the sadar diwani adalat, the Society was deprived of some of its most active members. The establishment of a separate (British) Indigo Planters' Association at Calcutta in December 183980 weakened the claim of the Landholders' Society to speak on behalf of all the landed interests in Bengal. Nor could the Landholders' Society secure the support of all the wealthy Bengali zamindars. The Englishman wrote in December 1843: 'The Society has hitherto found it difficult enough to procure subscriptions for their ordinary business. Whether from apathy, or from jealousy of the few of their own countrymen who are really exerting themselves in their behalf, the wealthy landholders have done nothing for their own objects.'81 An undue reliance on agitation in Britain made the Society neglect its duties in India. The British India Society in London proved to be a broken reed. Its internal dissensions had a demoralizing effect on the Landholders' Society in Calcutta. The Landholders' Society had been called into being by the resumption grievance and the threatened revocation of the permanent settlement in Bengal. By substantially removing the first and giving explicit assurances on the
The Landholders' Society achieved nothing spectacular during the short period of its existence (1838-44), but as the first notable attempt at organizing a political association on western lines in India, which became in some respects an example for the future, it deserves prominent mention in the history of the country. Speaking at the Prasannakumar Tagore memorial meeting in Calcutta in 1868, Rajendralal Mitra remarked that he regarded the Landholders' Society as 'the pioneer of freedom in this country' 'It gave to the people', he added, 'the first lesson in the art of fighting constitutionally for their rights, and taught them how to manfully assert their claims and give expression to their opinions.'

Early in 1839 the Friend of India noticed the prominent attention being given to India by the Aborigines Protection Society of Britain, especially the activities in its behalf of the eloquent advocate of negro emancipation, George Thompson.

80 Bengal Hurkaru, 17 January 1840.

81 Englishman, 20 December 1843.

82 See below, pp. 28-32.

83 B. 1824; scholar; director of Wards' Institution 1856-80; leading member and later president of British Indian Association; d. 1891.

84 Englishman, 3 November 1868.

85 Formed in 1837 by T. F. Buxton, T. Hodgkin and other philanthropists for securing justice or the indigenous populations of the various British possessions.

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son, and remarked: 'His [George Thompson's] proceedings take away every lingering hope, that any of our old-school politicians might still be cherishing, of a return to the dark system of secret counsels and silent submission in India. It can no more be; and they must stomach the certainty as they best can.'

While the ravages of the terrible famine of 1837-8 in the North-Western Provinces had aroused the Aborigines Protection Society's sympathetic interest in India, other causes were also at work at this time which served to disturb the traditional indifference of Britons in general to their great dependency in the East/Steam navigation and a free press had brought India closer to Britain. The recent agitations against 'the Black Act' and the resumption of rent-free lands had made
some impact. The movement of British arms in the north-west and the rupture with China had drawn attention to India. The closure of European markets to British goods had made manufacturers in Britain take an increased interest in developing their Indian market. The still-active spirit of philosophical radicalism in Britain was not satisfied with the Charter Act of 1833 which had done no more than 'clip the wings of the chartered monopolists of India'. Having secured the abolition of slavery in the West Indies, British philanthropy directed its attention to India where a different kind of slavery prevailed and a nefarious 'coolie trade' was growing. The emancipationists in Britain looked upon India not only as a new client but also as a possible ally: she could, by producing more cotton, end the dependence of British manufacturers on American slave-grown cotton and thereby strike a blow at the institution of slavery in the United States of America.

Towards the middle of 1838 certain members of the Aborigines Protection Society, notably Joseph Pease87 and William Howitt,88 joined hands with some prominent emancipationists, such as Thomas Clarkson89 and George Thompson, and Anglo-Indians, like Sir Charles Forbes,90 Robert Montgomery Martin91 and Major-General John Briggs,92 to agitate Indian questions in England. The support of Lord Brougham93 and Daniel O'Connell was secured. After some preliminary campaigning in the provinces, a provisional committee was appointed on 27 March 1839 to establish a new broad-based metropolitan association in London, named the British India Society, 'for bettering the condition of our fellow-subjects—the Natives of British India', and a prospectus was issued.94

86Friend of India, 9 May 1839; also 7 March 1839.
87B. 1772; philanthropist and businessman; d. 1846.
88B. 1792; author and philanthropist; d. 1879.
89B. 1760; philanthropist; d. 1846.
90B. 1774; connected with the mercantile firm of Forbes and Company, Bombay; M. P. 1812-32; d. 1849.
91B. 1803?; historical writer and statistician; d. 1868.
92B. 1785; Indian military and political officer 1801-35; d. 1875.
93Henry Peter, Baron Brougham and Vaux (1775-1868). Author and statesman.
94J. H. Bell, British Folks and British India Fifty Years Ago: Joseph Pease and His Contemporaries (1891), pp. 58-60.

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The formation of the British India Society was blessed by the Society of Friends, to which some of the initiators of the movement, for example Pease and Howitt, belonged, at their annual
meeting on 1 June 1839 at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate Street, London. The British India Society was formally inaugurated on 6 July 1839 at a great public meeting at Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, with Lord Brougham in the chair.

Speakers at the Freemasons' Hall meeting, which was attended by many distinguished British public men and Anglo-Indians and about half a dozen Indians, severely criticized the Company's government in India for its 'wicked wars', its 'ruinous' system of taxation, its failure to develop the resources of the country, its neglect of public works, its salt and opium monopolies, and its system of patronage. They drew attention to the poverty, misery, and discontent prevailing in India and called upon the British people to discharge their responsibility towards the welfare of their Indian fellow-subjects. They underlined the enormous present and potential value of India to Britain. They pointed out how by encouraging and consuming the free produce of India they could not only promote the cause of negro emancipation in America but also provide increased employment for workers in Britain. Lord Brougham emphasized the duty of the British people to intercede on behalf of the people of India as the latter were denied any share or voice in the government of their country and all their affairs were 'managed behind their backs'. Daniel O'Connell pleaded for 'Justice to India'. 'The crimes that have been committed in India', he said, 'are matters to weep over...'. The tale of India's suffering was, in his view, one of much greater complexity than even that of Ireland. He advocated 'a fixed and reasonable rent' for India and concluded by saying: '... from this hour I adopt the Natives of India as my clients.' John Crawfurd dwelt upon the injustice and iniquity of the resumption of rent-free lands by the government in Bengal. George Thompson remarked that 'by bettering the condition of our fellow-subjects—the Natives of India, we shall be advancing the prosperity of our own country, and conferring incalculable benefits upon other parts of the world.'

The meeting at Freemasons' Hall on 6 July 1839 adopted four important resolutions, which read as follows:

95 Addresses, Delivered before the Members of the Society of Friends, at Their Yearly Meeting ...on the 1st of June, 1839 (1839).

96 Speeches, Delivered at a Public Meeting, for the Formation of a British India Society ... July 6th, 1839(1839).

97 The Indians present at the meeting were Nawab Iqbaluddaula, Prince of Avadh; Imamud-din, son of Tipu Sultan; Mir Afzal Khan and Mir Karim Ali, agents of the Raja of Satara; I. Naoroji and H. Meharbanji, Parsis from Bombay learning shipbuilding on the Thames; and D. Mancherji, Parsi merchant from Bombay. Ibid., p. 1.

98 Ibid., p. 6.

99 Ibid., pp. 23-34.

100 Ibid. pp. 45-9.

101 Ibid., p. 59.
(1) 'That the present condition of our Native fellow-subjects, in British India, estimated at
100,000,000, wholly excluded from the privileges of representation, and under the dominion of a
Government, in whose appointment they have no voice, and over whose acts they have no
control—demands the active sympathy and constant vigilance of the British people.'102

(2) 'That it is established by ample evidence, that there exists throughout British India a great
amount of poverty, misery, ignorance, and discontent;—that immense tracts of land are suffered
to lie waste;—that the revenue is declining;—that the people are oppressed by grievous
monopolies, . extending even to the necessaries of life;—that the ancient public works are
perishing;—that the internal communications have been neglected, and that dreadful famines
frequently devastate the land.'103

(3) 'That these evils exist in a country of vast extent and great fertility; whose inhabitants are
docile, intelligent and industrious; whose ancient institutions might be made instrumental to
good Government—a country capable of supplying many of our demands for tropical produce,
and the desire and capacity of whose population to receive the manufactures, and thus stimulate
the commerce of Great Britain, would, under a just and enlightened rule, be incalculably
developed.'104

(4) 'That for the purpose of obtaining and diffusing information—of directing more efficiently
the public attention to a subject involving no less our commercial and political interests, than our
social and moral duties—and of suggesting and giving effect to such measures as are likely to
improve the circumstances, and provide for the happiness of the people of British India, an
Association be now formed, to be called "The British India Society", for bettering the condition
of our fellow-subjects—the Natives of British India.'105

A representative committee of twenty was appointed to draw up the rules of the Society, with
F.C. Brown106 and George Thompson as secretaries and John Briggs as treasurer.

Launched under such distinguished auspices, supported by such varied interests and served by
such earnestness, experience and eloquence, the British India Society held out the hope of a long,
active and beneficent career. But the hope was cruelly belied. All went well for the first few
months. Lectures were delivered and branch societies were organized at many towns.107 George
Thompson, whom even Lord Brougham described as 'the most eloquent man, and the most
accomplished orator I know',108 toured the country and hundreds flocked to hear him wherever
he went. In the autumn of 1839 he delivered a series of

102 Ibid. p. 21

103 Ibid. p. 34. 104 Ibid p. 42. 105 Ibid. p. 49.

106 B. 1792; owner of an estate in Malabar and writer on Indian subjects; d. 1868.

107 Bell, op. cit., p. 86.
six lectures on India at Manchester in which he appealed equally to the commercial and philanthropic instincts of his audience. The lectures were reported by the Guardian and afterwards reprinted in a handsome volume at the cost of Lord Clifford. Petitions and remonstrances were addressed to Parliament and the Court of Directors. Information was proffered on Indian questions arising in Parliament to such members—William Ewart, Daniel O'Connell, Joseph Hume, Charles Lushington, and others—as were pledged to the views of the Society. Communications were opened with persons in India, where the formation of the Society had already aroused great interest, and an Indian Committee of the Society was selected in-October 1839. The Landholders' Society of Calcutta formally allied itself with the British India Society in December 1839 and later sent a contribution of £500 to it through its London agent, John Crawford. From Bombay, Cowasji Jahangir Readymoney, Jamshedji Jijibhai, Jagannath Shankarseth and other prominent citizens wrote in September 1839, promising their 'best and most unqualified support' to the Society if it contemplated no interference with their religion or customs. In January 1840 a Bombay committee of the Society was established to furnish the parent body with funds and information. It included the leading representatives of the various communities in the town—Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and British. The formation of the Society aroused interest in Ireland and even in far-off America. In Dublin lectures on India were delivered by Robert Moore of the Irish bar and a branch of the Society was organized. Prominent American abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips hailed the Society as a potent ally and offered to co-operate. Garrison reprinted George Thompson's Manchester lectures in America, prefaced by an introduction in which he underlined the lecturer's remark: "The battleground of freedom for
117 B. 1812; broker and merchant; knighted 1872; d. 1878.

118 B. 1783; merchant and philanthropist; knighted 1842; made baronet 1858; d. 1859.

119 B. 1802; merchant; president of Bombay Association 1852-65; member of Bombay legislative council from 1862 until his death in 1865.

120 Bell, op. cit., p. 79.

121 Bombay Times, 11, 29 January 1840. We have no information about the future activities, if any, of the Bombay committee.

122 Bell, op. cit., pp. 139, 143.

123 Ibid., pp. 68-77, 104-12.

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the world is on the plains of Hindostan.'124

But the British India Society was hardly a year old when it was threatened with disintegration. Early in 1840 a serious difference of opinion developed amongst the members of its London committee over the opium question. John Crawfurd, in particular, who was involved in the opium trade, threatened that if the Society persisted with its agitation over opium and did not prevent George Thompson from lecturing on it, he would walk off with the Calcutta remittance of £500 in his pocket and quit the Society altogether.125 Briggs, who was speculating in teas, was afraid of a speedy peace with China and planned to start with Alexander Rogers126 a separate journal.127 'I begin to be very suspicious', wrote William Howitt to Joseph Pease on 5 March 1840, 'of the moral soundness of Anglo-Indians in general. They have been in a bad school.'128 These internal dissensions had already paralysed the activities of the London committee. In April 1840 Crawfurd carried out his threat and almost wrecked the organization.129 In June 1840 Briggs and Rogers launched their rival monthly paper called the Indian News.

Faced with the prospect of disintegration, Thompson had proposed to Pease in March 1840 that the rump of the London committee of the British India Society should be handed over to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society on the condition that the latter association should take decided action to advance its objects—the abolition of slavery in India, the institution of a permanent settlement of the land revenue, the development of the resources of India, and a speedy end to the salt monopoly and the opium trade. Pease, instead, favoured an alliance with the free trade party. He also suggested that the headquarters of the Society should be shifted from London, which was honeycombed with the East India Company and military interests, to Manchester.130

The Society, however, survived the split and apparently rallied its diminished forces. The London committee was reorganized and strengthened with the addition of William Adam131 as
a secretary. On 6 July 1840 the first anniversary meeting of the Society was held in Freemasons' Hall, with Sir Charles Forbes in the chair. It was attended, among others, by several leading American abolitionists who had come to London in connexion with the first World's Anti-Slavery Convention in mid-June. Both at the Convention and at the anniversary meeting of the Society, the American speakers again and again reiterated the argument, that as a means of checking the slave traffic in the Southern States

124 Lectures on British India ... with a preface by W. L. Garrison (1840), p. vi.

125 Bell, op. cit., p. 89.

126 Sheriff of London and Middlesex 1841-2; assistant protector of emigrants in Bengal until his death in 1852.

127 Bell, op. cit., p. 89.

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid., p. 91.

130 Ibid., pp. 92-4.

131 Author of the famous reports on vernacular education in Bengal and Bihar 1835-8; Unitarian; friend of Rammohan Roy.

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of the American Republic, no available method could equal that of a speedy development of cotton cultivation in India. They also joined the British speakers in condemning the Company's administration in India. The most notable speech at the Society's anniversary meeting was made by O'Connell. He appeared there, he said, 'as the advocate of 150 millions of human beings in India, who were treated worse than slaves, and rendered beggars by oppression'. He came there 'to prefer a bill of indictment against the East India Company' and to 'arraign them before the tribunal of the British nation for establishing and upholding in India a system of government productive of misery, injustice, and poverty to the inhabitants'. He roundly condemned the salt monopoly, the opium trade and the resumption of rent-free lands in India. He made a glowing appeal to the British public to 'raise the shield of humanity round the Natives of India, in order to vindicate our common Christianity and promote the blessings of peace and prosperity in that long-oppressed quarter of the world'.132

Among the resolutions adopted at the first anniversary meeting of the Society on 6 July 1840, the following deserve mention:

(1) 'That the Government and the people of this empire are responsible to the civilized world for the maintenance and administration of British rule in India, on such principles as shall promote the happiness and improvement of the native population.'
(2) 'That the employment of proper means to call forth the resources of British India will greatly increase the resources of England, give activity to her industry, and add to the comfort and prosperity of all classes of her population.'

(3) 'That the development of the resources of British India is calculated to produce important moral and social effects, both on the people of the British West Indies and on those of the United States of America; on the former, by supplying the deficient quantity of sugar required for the consumption of England, and thereby confirming and securing the salutary effects of the act of Emancipation; and on the latter, by enabling the free-grown cotton of India successfully to compete with the cotton of America, and thereby leading to the natural and peaceful extinction of trans-Atlantic slavery.'

(4) 'That this meeting is of opinion, that the oppressive and fluctuating amount of the land revenue; the general resumption by the Indian Government demand on lands hitherto held rent-free; the imperfection and corruption in the administration of police and justice; the maintenance of vexatious monopolies, are evils which ought to receive the immediate attention of the Government of this country, as tending to produce distrust and discontent among the native population; to unsettle the tenures of property, and to endanger the public peace; to cramp the exertions of industry and the progress of improvement; to lessen the production of exportable commodities and by necessary consequence the capacity of extending commercial relations with Great Britain and other nations, and to diminish the force of the example which England has set by the abolition of slavery in the West Indies, and thus perpetuate the existence of slavery in the other countries of the world.'

132 The Times, 7 July 1840; Bengal Hurkaru, 28 September 1840; Bell, op. cit., p. 108.

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On 26 August 1840 a great public meeting was held at the Corn Exchange, Manchester, to organize the Northern-Central British India Society, with which the provincial British India Societies were to be affiliated.134 Manchester now became the centre of gravity of the British India Society. In January 1841 the Society launched a monthly journal of its own, called the British Indian Advocate. It was edited by William Adam, and after his departure to the United States in the autumn of 1841 by George Thompson. The journal bore the motto: 'Justice to India—Prosperity to England—Freedom to the Slave.'

Free trade was not one of the specific planks of the British India Society, but the general drift of its campaign was unmistakably in that direction. Moreover, the leaders of the Society were almost to a man free traders. The sole exception was Sir Charles Forbes. Similarly, many leaders of the free trade party, including Richard Cobden and John Bright, were members of the British India Society.138 On the eve of the 1841 general election in Britain, the British India Society entered into a formal alliance with the Anti-Corn-Law League. A 'definitive treaty' was concluded in June 1841 which was signed by Joseph Pease and F.C. Brown on behalf of the
committee of the British India Society, and by Richard Cobden and John Brooks on behalf of the council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League. It read as follows:

'The Committee of the British India Society agrees that Mr. George Thompson shall render his gratuitous services to the Council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League in its efforts to promote the establishment and secure the recognition of the principles of free trade.

'The Council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League recognizes the legitimacy and importance of the objects sought by the British India Society, and approves of the principles of the Society as stated in the address adopted at its constitution.

'The Council regards those objects as kindred to its own, and as inseparably connected with the establishment of free trade and the promotion of the best interests of the British Empire; and the Council pledges itself, as far as it is competent, upon the settlement of the question of the Corn Laws, now pending, to co-operate with the British India Society for the attainment of its great object, Justice to India.'140

The leaders of the British India Society no doubt believed that, in concluding

133 Bengal Hurkaru, 28 September 1840.

134 bid., 17 November 1840.

135 British Indian Advocate, 1 January 1841.

136B. 1804; statesman; d. 1865.

137B. 1811; orator and statesman; d. 1889.

138See British Indian Advocate, 1 January 1841, p. 7, and Bell, op. cit., p. 92.

139Bell, op. cit., p. 136.

140bid., p. 137. See also Anti-Bread-Tax Circular, 16 June 1841, British Indian Advocate, 1 July 1841, pp. 57-8, 64, and Bengal Hurkaru, 31 August 1841.

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this treaty with the Anti-Corn-Law League, they had struck a good bargain. They had secured for their cause the promise of support of the powerful free trade party — 'the enlightened friends of industry and trade at home' — on apparently no worse terms for them than that they should hand over George Thompson's services gratuitously and temporarily to the platform work of free trade agitation.141 But they were mistaken. The alliance in fact proved disastrous to their organization and to their cause.
One immediate and important result of their resolve to make common cause with the Anti-Corn-Law League was that Sir Charles Forbes withdrew in protest from the London committee of the Society. Sir Charles was in home affairs a Tory of Tories, but his deep piety, quenchless human sympathy and love of justice had made him an ardent reformer in all matters affecting the welfare of India, where he had spent a good many years of his life, and earned for himself the sobriquet of 'the Benevolent Father of India'. He was the most generous contributor to the funds of the Society. The defection of such a man could not but undermine the stability of the Society and its prestige both in England and in India.

By identifying itself with the Anti-Corn-Law League, the British India Society had to bear more than its share of the aversion and hostility of gentlemen of the 'landed interest' in England to whom it was in no way necessarily opposed.

Though not explicitly referred to, the treaty between the British India Society and the Anti-Corn-Law League was the result of an understanding arrived at between the leaders of the two organizations that the British India Society would suspend its agitation on behalf of India until the corn laws were repealed. Even without this understanding it would have been difficult for the British India Society to engage any large portion of attention to the question of distant India at a time when the great domestic question of the corn laws increasingly concentrated upon itself the attention and the feelings of all classes of the people throughout Britain. Nor can the leaders of the British India Society be blamed for giving precedence to an all-important issue at home and deciding that India must wait. As George Thompson put it:

'Not that we love India less,

But that we love England more.'

But they certainly miscalculated in hoping that after securing 'a speedy triumph in the war now waging with the bread monopoly', the leaders of the Anti-Corn-

141 British Indian Advocate, 1 July 1841, pp. 57-8, 64.

142 Bell, op. cit., p. 133.

143 Speeches, Delivered at a Public Meeting, for the Formation of a British India Society ..., p. 64.

144 In 1839-40 Forbes contributed about £1,000 to the funds of the Society. See Bengal Hurkaru, 24 November 1840.

145 Bell, op. cit., p. 144.

146 See Free Trade with India (1847), pp. 3, 19-20.

147 British Indian Advocate, 1 January 1842, p. 179.
Law League would at once direct their energies to bring relief 'to the natives of much wronged India'. By the time the corn laws were repealed in 1846, the organization of the British India Society, which had been allowed to fall into disuse, had disintegrated, and the clause of Indian reform, which had been deferred and subordinated, had been almost forgotten. And in 1847 when William Howitt publicly reminded the leaders of the free trade party of their solemn pledge of 1841, his reminder went unheeded. On the eve of the renewal of the Company's charter in 1853, 'the friends of India' in England had to improvise a new organization, called the India Reform Society, and rather belatedly Richard Cobden and John Bright, the Castor and Pollux, the David and Jonathan, of the free trade movement came forward to redeem their promise of 1841. Nothing, however, could make up for lost time. The Company was put on trial but escaped conviction. The petitions submitted to Parliament by political associations in India were disregarded and Indians began to despair of getting justice from England. Things were allowed to drift in India until they culminated in the revolt of 1857.

The British India Society represented the first attempt at organized agitation on behalf of India in Britain. Various causes contributed to its early collapse. It had to fight against widespread apathy and ignorance and against powerful vested interests. It failed to organize a broad-based movement. Internal dissensions crippled its London committee soon after its birth. Its doctrinaire and declamatory tone alienated friends and created enemies. Instead of working for the people of India, some of its prominent members wasted time and energy in taking up the cause of the deposed Raja of Satara or that of the captive Emperor of Delhi. The Society could not compete with the Anti-Corn-Law League for the attention of the British public and by entering into a formal alliance with the latter organization in 1841 it unwittingly signed its own death-warrant. But the British India Society did not labour entirely in vain. It tried to bring together 'the friends of India' on a common platform and served as the prototype for later organizations, such as the India Reform Society, the East India Association, and the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. It awakened some interest among the British people in Indian affairs and reminded them of the great responsibility which devolved upon their shoulders as rulers of that distant dependency. It put the East India Company on the defensive. It was partly as a result of the Society's efforts that the Company encouraged the cultivation of cotton and the investment of British capital in India, abolished slavery and mitigated the severities of the resumption laws. The most notable

148 Ibid., 1 July 1841, pp. 57-8.

149 Free Trade with India, pp. 19-20.

150 In 1826-7 James Silk Buckingham (1786-1855), the famous Anglo-Indian journalist, had made an unsuccessful attempt to establish a 'British-Indian Association' in Britain 'for the promotion of improvement in our Anglo-Asiatic possessions'. See 'British-Indian Association', Oriental Herald, January 1827, pp. 1-9; also Bengal Hurkaru, 24 May, 30 August, 6, 11 September 1827.
achievement of the Society, however, lay in the fact that it stimulated political agitation in India.

In 1842, when Dwarkanath Tagore first went to England, he persuaded George Thompson to visit India. As an apostle of humanity and civilization, as secretary of the British India Society and as an eloquent advocate of Indian causes, Thompson was already known in India. His arrival in Calcutta, along with Dwarkanath Tagore, early in January 1843 created a stir in the country. While one section of the press hailed him as a prophet and a liberator, another dubbed him a stipendiary agitator and a grievance-monger. With a view to instruct and guide the warm hearts and intellects of Young Bengal in the path of self-improvement and public usefulness, Thompson delivered a series of weekly lectures in Calcutta which were attended by hundreds of people and widely reported in the press throughout India. In these lectures Thompson called upon educated Indians to discharge their duties of enlightened citizens. He advised them to rouse themselves and become the narrators of their own grievances. 'India', he told them, 'has foreign rulers, foreign councillors, foreign historians, foreign defamers, and, I am sorry to say, is obliged to have foreign advocates. Call a meeting at the Town Hall upon a question exclusively affecting the natives of India, and the speakers are foreigners. Let a cause require an agent in England, and though it be one altogether affecting the natives themselves, that agent must be a foreigner.' And he asked his audience: 'Ought it to be so? ... Shall it continue to be so? ... When will it be otherwise?' He told them that they were themselves to blame for the evils of legislation and administration. 'You offer no advice, you threaten no opposition, you recommend no modification.' He advised them to direct their intelligence, education and influence to patriotic ends and to combine for the good of their common country. They should collect and carefully digest information on the various topics of interest around them and bring it to a focus. They should call meetings, memorialize, send representations, knock at the door of justice, again and again, harder and harder, and if not heard by the local authorities, they should appeal to the people and Parliament of Britain who were the real rulers of India. So much did he desire, he said, to see a man of their own nation stepping forward as the pioneer in their cause, that he could wish himself a Hindu, that he might consecrate himself to the good of his countrymen, and set an example of fearless and self-denying devotion to their cause. But he did not despair of an Indian patriot coming forward and saying: 'I will henceforth live, not unto myself, but for the

151 See Scotsman, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 20 January 1843.

152 See, for example, Bengal Hurkam, 3 January 1843; Agra Akhbar, 14 January 1843, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 23 January 1843; Bombay Times, 14 January 1843; and Indian Review, January 1843, pp. 5-24.

153 G. Thompson, Addresses; Delivered at Meetings of the Native Community of Calcutta, and on Other Occasions (1843), p. 43.

154 Ibid. 30.
sake of my own, my native, my beloved land.'155 He told Indians that by isolated effort they could do little, but by the power of voluntary association and well-directed general effort, they could achieve much. He, however, enjoined upon them the duty of deep study, of patient industry, of mutual assistance and forbearance, of full, fair and impartial representation of the condition and claims of the various classes of the population, of moderation and charity in criticism, and of employing only pure, peaceful and constitutional methods. He exhorted them to know India and to study the history of England. 'Judge not of our country', he urged, 'by the acts of a few. Judge us rather by those deeds of universal charity, which have gained us an unsullied fame, even at the ends of the earth. Our national power has been abused—our honour too often tarnished—our resources too often prostituted—and our religion too often disgraced—but the heart of England has not been turned from the love of justice, nor her arm paralysed in the cause of the poor.'156

George Thompson's oratory cast a spell over the rising generation of Bengalis. Nothing like it had been heard before in Calcutta. The Bengal Herald wrote that 'no man who ever came to this country ever made such an impression on the native mind as has been produced by Mr. Thompson's addresses'.157 His visit marks a landmark in the history of political agitation in India and it is not without justification that he has been called the 'father of political education in India'.158 His addresses prepared the way for the formation of the Bengal British India Society on 20 April 1843.159 The nucleus for the formation of the Bengal British India Society already existed in Calcutta. In March 1838 some English-educated and liberal-minded young men had established in Calcutta a literary association called the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge.160 This Society had risen on the ashes of Derozio's Academic Association and included many ex-students of the Hindu College who met once a month to discuss some question of general interest. It had about 170 members from Calcutta and the mofussil and between 1840 and 1843 published three volumes of selections from the papers read at its meetings.161 The Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge was 'in a languishing condition'162 when George

155 Ibid., pp. 9, 31.
156 Ibid., p. 20.
157 Bengal Herald, 18 March 1843.
159 Bengal Hurkaru, 24 April 1843.
160 Ibid., 3 March, 19 May 1838.
Thompson arrived in Calcutta, but it provided him with the first platform to inaugurate his series of lectures and its leading members played a prominent role in the formation of the Bengal British India Society.

Noticing the crowded meetings addressed by Thompson in Calcutta, the Friend of India remarked: 'We can well remember the time, when, if he had landed in India, not five natives would have been found in Calcutta, able to comprehend a single sentence delivered by him. Accustomed as we are to periodical reports of education, we become in a measure insensible of the progress of improvement effected by the labours of Government and of private associations, till it is suddenly presented to the mind by some unexpected association like the present, when we find hundreds of educated natives listening with admiration to that eloquence which has produced so powerful an effect in our native land.'

The rapid spread of English education generated new ideas of public spirit and patriotism, born of familiarity with the writings of European poets and philosophers. Young men left college with ideas of the political degradation of the people of India and very ardent desires to raise themselves and their fellow-countrymen above their fallen state. Having read, they wrote and they spoke and they tried to act. Already they were playing at patriotic associations. For example, on 9 February 1839, a group of Eurasians and Indians had assembled at the Calcutta town hall to establish a society to be called the Patriotic Association (later designated 'the United India Association'). The object of the Association was to secure by lawful and constitutional means the full implementation of the Charter Act of 1833 and the removal of all disabilities and grievances under which the people laboured. C. R. Fenwick, who presided over the meeting, took the Company's government to task for depriving them of their birthright of freedom and of all those privileges which as Her Majesty's subjects, they had a claim to. He dwelt at length upon the disabilities, grievances and hardships under which they suffered, especially their exclusion from higher employments and the denial of any voice to them in the legislature. 'No nation, no civilized nation,' he said, 'would quietly submit to such enormities, and the object of the Patriotic Association is to show that the natives of India are a nation.' The Association was, however, still-born.

Two years later—on 3 October 1841—another political association, called the Deshahitaishini Sabha or Society for the Amelioration of India, was established in Calcutta at the initiative of some 'conductors of the native press' and old Hindu College students. The public meeting at which the

161 See ibid., 16 January 1843, and Selections of Discourses Read at Meetings of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, [1838-43], 3 vols. (1840-3).

162 Thompson, Addresses; Delivered at Meetings of the Native Community of Calcutta, and on Other Occasions, p. 4.
Deshahitaishini Sabha was established was convened by an advertisement in the popular Bengali daily Sambad Prabhakar—a fact which, according to the Calcutta Christian Advocate, indicated 'that the native press has already obtained so potent an influence over the intelligent portion of the Hindu community'—and it was 'numerously and respectfully attended'. The object of the Sabha was to co-operate with the British India Society in England for the welfare of India. Its membership was open to all men, without distinction of colour, creed or sect. It was to establish an English journal for advocating the rights of Indians and to present a petition to Parliament for the redress of their grievances. A committee of twenty-four was elected for carrying on the concerns of the Sabha.

A Bengali translation of an address written in English by one Sharada Prasad Ghose was read to the meeting. The address gives us a fair indication of the sentiments which were animating Young Bengal at the time. It began thus: 'Ever since the commencement of British supremacy in this country, the policy of our present rulers has been to deprive us of the enjoyment of political liberty.... The administration of the Supreme Government of this country has, a few years since, been entrusted to the hands of six gentlemen, who compose the council of India. These gentlemen enact laws for the government of millions of human beings, who acknowledge subjection to British sway, without taking their opinion as to the tendency of those laws which purport to be conducive to their welfare. We are thus rendered ignorant of what passes within the council-chamber; and hence is the reason that we are so often governed by laws which have a pernicious tendency to occasion and perpetuate our political degradation.... Our deprivation of the enjoyment of political liberty is the cause of our misery and degradation. The loss of happiness follows the loss of civil liberty, as shadow does substance. This is a principle which has been received as an axiom of political science.' The author cited the examples of England and ancient Rome to prove that the political greatness of a country depended upon the possession of political rights by its people. He did not expect that 'our present rulers will ever enable us to rise in the scale of political greatness'. With the help of a quotation from The Pleasures of Hope, he tried to establish that they 'pay a superstitious adoration to mammon and scruple not to adopt any means by which they can enrich themselves, and reduce us to squalid poverty'. As an instance of their 'grinding oppression exercised over us', he referred to the resumption of rent-free lands, Then, with apt quotations from Paradise Lost, Childe Harold and Thompson's Seasons, and with allusions to Grecian history, Hampden and the American War of Independence, he tried
to impress upon his audience the need for union and patriotism. He advised them to co-operate with the British India Society which had for its objects 'the improvement of their degraded condition' and the removal of their grievances. He strongly urged the editors of Indian papers to afford 'their aid in the glorious cause': 'They are to write continually on political subjects, pointing out the evils of the Government, together with the means by which those evils can be remedied; in the same manner as the gentlemen of the British India Society are doing at present ... as our misery has proceeded from the oppression of the Government, so, in order to remove our grievances, a stop should be put to that oppression....' He also advised his countrymen to represent their grievances to 'that august assembly', the British Parliament. 'You do not,' he argued, 'like the brave and noble-minded American, aspire as high as to free yourselves from the yoke of British sway; to take in your own hands the reins of Government; and to display in the world striking instances of your courage exerted in the cause of your independence. No. Your aspiration is by far much humbler; you only desire to be freed from the tyranny and oppression of the local Government of this country....' And this, he believed, could be achieved by an urgent petition to Parliament. He attributed the mitigation of the severity of the resumption laws to the interference of 'the British nation'.

The Deshahitaishini Sabha shared the sad fate of the Patriotic or United India Association, but the feelings and opinions of which they were both the outcome remained and grew. The personality and perorations of George Thompson imparted a fresh impulse to them and they flowered into the Bengal British India Society of 1843. The object of this Society was declared to be 'the collection and dissemination of information, relating to the actual condition of the people of British India, and the laws, institutions and resources of the country; and to employ such other means of a peaceable and lawful character, as may appear calculated to secure the welfare, extend the just rights, and advance the interests of all classes of our fellow subjects'. The Society was to 'adopt and recommend such measures only, as are consistent with pure loyalty to the person and government of the reigning Sovereign of the British dominions, and the due observance of the laws and regulations of the country'. Membership of the Society was open to 'all persons of adult age, and not at the time receiving instruction in any public seminary, contributing to the funds of the Society' and 'anxious to promote the good of India, and the improvement, efficiency, and stability of the British Government, without respect of caste, creed, place of birth, or rank in society'.

Until he left India in December 1843, George Thompson remained president of the Bengal British India Society. His place was filled in January 1844 by William Theobald, a Calcutta barrister who was also one of the secretaries of

172 Bengal Hurkaru, 6 October 1841.

173 Thompson, Addresses; Delivered at Meetings of the Native Community of Calcutta, and on Other Occasions, pp. 137-40.

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the Landholders' Society.174 When Theobald resigned in November 1845175 —apparently due to some serious difference of opinion—Ramgopal Ghose176 was elected president of the Society. Pyarichandra Mitra177 acted as secretary of the Society as long as it lasted. Other prominent members of the Society were: Tarachandra Chakravarty,178 Chandrasekhar Deb,179 K.M. Banerji,180 Dakshinranjan Mukherji,181 Harimohan Sen,182 Kishorichandra Mitra,183 Ramchandra Mitra,184 Ramtanu Lahiri,185 Govindachandra Basak,186 Radhanath Sikdar,187 M. Crow,188 Samuel Smith,189 Alexander Duff,190 J.J. Fleury,191 G.F. Remfry,192 and G.F.T. Speede.193

The Bengal British India Society was, like the Landholders' Society, a joint Indo-British venture. The overwhelming majority of its members were, however, Indians.194 These latter represented the younger generation of English-educated and public-spirited men from Calcutta and the mofussil. Though some of them were also zamindars and members of the Landholders' Society, the Bengal British India Society was in its composition and outlook essentially bourgeois.195

174 Bengal Hurkaru, 9 January 1844.

175 Ibid, 7 November 1845.

176 B. 1815; merchant, orator and reformer; member of Bengal legislative council 1862-4; d. 1868.

177 B. 1814; merchant, author and social reformer; member of Bengal legislative council 1868-9; d. 1883.

178 President of Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge; Young Bengal nicknamed 'Chuckerbutty faction' after him; b. 1806; began career as teacher but later employed in sadar diwani adalat; d. 1857.

179 B 1810; appointed deputy magistrate 1844.

180 B. 1813; teacher and missionary; baptized 1833; d. 1885.

181 B. 1814; landlord and lawyer; secretary of Oudh British Indian Association 1861-5; d. 1878.
182 B. 1812; son of Ramkamal Sen; diwan of Bank of Bengal; joined Jaipur state service 1868; d. 1872.

183 B. 1822; writer and social reformer; deputy magistrate 1848-58; d. 1873.

184 Teacher in Hindu College; d. 1874.

185 B. 1813; teacher and social reformer; d. 1898.

186 Deputy collector of Midnapur.

187 Writer in surveyor-general's office; later superintendent of Alipur observatory; b. 1813; d. 1870.

188 Deputy collector of Calcutta; earlier editor of Reformer; d. 1847.

189 Proprietor of Bengal Hurkaru.

190 B. 1806; Scottish missionary and teacher; d. 1878.

191 Assistant and adjuster of weights in Company's mint.

192 Indigo planter; master of Calcutta Trade Association.

193 Teacher in Hindu College; author.

194 Of the sixty-odd members of the Society whose names are available, only about 20 were British.

195 In 1870 Kishorichandra Mitra recalled that the Society 'was composed of the upper middle-class men, sympathizing with the condition of the ryots'. See Indian Daily News, 9 April 1870. Another contemporary, Bhola Nath Chandra, wrote in 1893 that while the Landholders' Society represented 'the aristocracy of wealth', the Bengal British India Society represented 'the aristocracy of intelligence'. See his Raja Digambar Mitra, C.S.I.: His Life and Career (1893), p. 36.

The Bengal British India Society was more of a study circle than an association of agitators. At its very foundation, George Thompson had pointed out that the operations of the Society were to be 'of a necessarily limited character'. 'For the work of agitation and petitioning, as carried on in England,' he had told the budding patriots of Calcutta, 'you are not yet prepared. You have no representative body, no public, in the English sense of the word. Beyond your own immediate neighbourhood, all is tame acquiescence, or sullen discontent, or interested connivance, or profound ignorance, or perfect helplessness.' Yet, notwithstanding these handicaps, the members of the Society could, he said, perform a useful function by way of collecting information,
valuable to the public at large, to the government and to their friends in England. They should quietly and inoffensively prosecute inquiries into questions of general interest, bring their contributions together, prepare their statements and represent their grievances and then make an appeal in quarters where there were both the disposition and the ability to aid them. 'Sit down', said Thompson, 'and draw out a statement of those evils. Let them be intelligibly exhibited, and convincingly illustrated; and let the plain and practicable remedy be set forth. We then, who have access to the people and Parliament of England, thus assisted by you, will be able in your own language to make known your wishes and your wants.' 196

Though the promised help from England was not forthcoming, the members of the Bengal British India Society faithfully followed the lines laid down by Thompson in 1843. They organized no monster meetings and delivered no orations. Quietly and unobtrusively, they met—almost regularly—for over three years, to deliberate on questions of public interest. 197 Individual members and subcommittees laboured in between the monthly meetings to prosecute their inquiries and write their papers and reports on questions entrusted to their care by the Society. The Society carefully examined the legislation proposed to be introduced by the government and submitted its views and suggestions for improvement to the latter. It also occasionally petitioned the authorities in India and England on important public questions, such as the maintenance of direct communication by steam between Calcutta and Suez, the establishment of a small cause court and the increase of drunkenness in Calcutta. It showed great interest in the administration of justice, police and municipal affairs. It compiled and published in the form of a pamphlet the evidences of prominent Britons regarding the efficiency of Indian agency in the administration of the country, with a prefatory notice of the offices held by Hindus under Muslim rule and of those to which they were admitted.

196 Thompson, Addresses; Delivered at Meetings of the Native Community of Calcutta, and on Other Occasions, pp. 127-8.

197 For the proceedings of the Bengal British India Society, see Bengal Hurkaru, 24 April, 6 May, 10, 21 June 1843; 9 January, 3 February, 13 March, 15 April, 6 May, 29 June, 11 September, 12 October, 12 November, 9 December 1844; 16 January, 6 February, 3, 21 March, 16 April, 12 May, 11 December 1845; 31 January, 14 February, 11 July 1846.

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under British rule, in support of the petition sent to England by the inhabitants of Calcutta in April 1843 for the full implementation of section 87 of the Charter Act of 1833. 198 How far this movement influenced the resolution of the government of India in October 1844 to give preference to educated Indians in civil employment, it is hard to say.

The Society did not, however, confine its attention entirely to administrative and political issues. It conducted an open and detailed inquiry into the condition of the raiyats in lower Bengal. A printed questionnaire was sent to responsible persons in the mofussil and the information furnished by the latter, along with the remedial measures suggested, was examined and analysed by a subcommittee of the Society before being made public. The plight of teachers in government schools in Bengal and of the ticca bearers in Calcutta attracted the attention of the
Society. It advocated the causes of mass, technical and female education. It raised its voice against the prevalence of kulin polygamy and perpetual widowhood amongst Hindus. Some members of the Society even favoured legislative action to put down the former evil.

A section of the Anglo-Indian press never took kindly to the Bengal British India Society. It dubbed its members 'the Chuckerbotty faction' and accused them of talking sedition. The Government weaned some of the prominent members away from the Society by appointing them deputy magistrates. The older and more conservative leaders of the Indian community in Calcutta kept aloof from the Society. The inquiry conducted by the Society into the condition of the raiyats in lower Bengal could not have made it popular with the zamindars. Moreover, the advanced views of the members of the Society as regards the education of girls, the remarriage of widows and the abolition of polygamy must have given offence to orthodox Hindus. In May 1845 William Theobald warned the members of the Society not to make themselves 'too prominent, either by the nature or number of the subjects undertaken' and advised them to wait for improvement in Hindu society, instead of urging legislative interference with its customs.

The precise reasons which prompted Theobald to resign the presidency of the Society in November 1845 were never made public, though the Bengal Hurkaru reported that there was 'a very general feeling among the members'

198 Evidences relative to the Efficiency of Native Agency in the Administration of This Country (1844). Section 87 of the Charter Act of 1833 (3 & 4 Will. 4, c. 85) said that 'no native of [British India] ... shall, by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, or employment under the ... Company'. See A. B. Keith (ed.), Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy 1750-1921 (1922), vol. i, pp. 272-3.

199 See, for example, Friend of India, 21 September 1843, 13 February 1845; Englishman, 14 July 1843; and Calcutta Christian Advocate, 29 November 1845.

200 Between 1843 and 1846 at least three members of the Society—Chandrasekhar Deb, Shivachandra Deb and Kishorichandra Mitra—were appointed deputy magistrates. On 13 February 1845 the Friend of India noted that the 'exaggerated statements and inflammatory addresses' of Young Bengal had 'died into an echo' and remarked that 'a few Deputy-Magistrates, judiciously bestowed, will doubtless prevent their revival'.

201 Bengal Hurkaru, 12 May 1845.

32 of the Society 'that they should have a native gentleman of rank and consideration for their President, which it is hoped will have the effect of giving a more national character to the Society as an institution emanating from, and supported by, the great body of the native community'. Ramgopal Ghose accepted the office of president of the Society in December 1845 'with some reluctance and great diffidence, as the nature of his pursuits would not permit him to devote sufficient attention to his duties'. At a meeting of the Society held on 27 January 1846, Ramgopal Ghose expressed his regret 'that an unfavourable impression had gone
abroad against the Society', though he declined 'to discuss whether this was due to any injudicious proceedings on the part of the members or to other causes'. He also referred to 'an impression in the public mind that this Society was entirely of a political character'. He emphatically repudiated it as 'a great misapprehension' and remarked: 'The Society has not, as a matter of fact, exclusively, or even principally, devoted itself to the consideration of political questions; while it had aimed to assist the Government in effecting such reforms as appeared feasible and necessary, ...it had laboured also in endeavouring to promote the social and moral condition of the country.'

From 1845 on the Hindu community in Calcutta became increasingly alarmed and excited over both the attempt of the government to alter the traditional Hindu law of inheritance so as to enable apostates from Hinduism to have a share in their ancestral property and the renewed offensive of missionaries to convert school-going Hindu children to Christianity. This development could hardly have been conducive to the smooth functioning of a mixed body like the Bengal British India Society. In August 1846 the Society suffered an irreparable loss in the death of its patron, Dwarkanath Tagore, and it was probably not long afterwards that it itself ceased to exist.

The demise of the Bengal British India Society in 1846 virtually marks the end of that era of close co-operation in public life between educated Indians and non-official Anglo-Indians which had been initiated in Calcutta by men like Rammohan Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore about a quarter of a century before. Henceforward the leaders of the two communities in Calcutta, who had often in the past stood side by side, were to be found standing face to face over an increasing number of public issues. It is significant that the British Indian Association, organized in 1851 by some of those Indians who had once been active in the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society, contained not a single Anglo-Indian member.

Even the most superficial examination of the Indian press in the first half of the nineteenth century would suffice to convince one of the fact that of the many grievances of which Indians complained during the period, none was more keenly

202 Ibid., 7 November 1845.

203 Ibid., 31 January 1846.

204 Ibid.

205 See below, pp. 51-2.

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and universally felt than that caused by the activities of Christian missionaries. Mainly from motives of expediency, the East India Company had in the beginning of its political career in India manifested a scrupulous regard for the religions, customs, laws and institutions of its newly conquered subjects. It had for long tried to restrict the entry of missionaries into its dominions in India, because it was conscious of the trouble which they could create. But in 1813, under
pressure from 'home', the Company had to open India to missionary enterprise and to establish an 'Indian church'. In the years which followed the number of missionaries—of various denominations—steadily increased in India. They embarked on a vigorous campaign of teaching, preaching and proselytization. They also began to exert pressure on the government in order to secure the promotion of education, the legal protection of Christian converts, the suppression of inhuman rites such as sati and infanticide, and the dissociation of the state from the support of temples and Hindu and Muslim religious festivals. It implies no disparagement of the great and noble work done by missionaries in India, especially in the fields of education and social reform, to say that some of them indulged in indiscriminate abuse of Indian religions and customs and at times adopted questionable means to gain converts. The intemperate denunciation of Hinduism by missionaries drove even a progressive Hindu like Rammohan Roy, who had great respect for Christianity, to speak out in defence of his ancestral religion.206 It was partly as a reaction to the activities of missionaries that the conservative Hindus of Calcutta established the Hindu College in 1817 and the Dharma Sabha in 1830. From the early 1820s on a bitter and acrimonious controversy developed between missionaries on the one side and spokesmen of Indian religions on the other. Stray cases of conversion were dramatized and created extraordinary excitement and alarm.

There was little hostility in India to Christianity as such,207 but the constant vilification by missionaries of Indian religions and customs was resented and the conversion of minors and students to Christianity repeatedly threw the Indian communities into a ferment. The British government in India snared in the unpopularity which attached to missionaries in that country and there was a general outcry whenever the former appeared to abet or encourage the activities of the latter. As missionaries concentrated their fire on Hinduism and gained most of their converts from its ranks, Hindu society felt particularly aggrieved. The Friend of India—itself an organ of the Baptist missionaries of Serampore (near Calcutta)—wrote: 'No man acquainted with the character and economy of native society will feel any surprise at the acerbity of feeling manifested by Hindoos, orthodox or liberal, as they see youth after youth abandoning the creed of their forefathers, and crossing the irrevocable Rubicon, and thus separating themselves for ever from all farther association with their family and friends.'


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They consider the apostacy, as they term it, of their connections not only as the greatest of calamities, but the deepest disgrace. On such occasions we believe they feel more poignantly than does a Papist when his relative embraces Protestantism; or a Protestant when a connection joins the Romanists. From the analogy of our own sensibilities on any such calamity, we may learn to make allowance—a charitable, and a Christian allowance—for the feelings of the natives when they contemplate the irreparable dissolution of so many ties of affection and relationship.'208
As the demand for English education grew in India, a steadily increasing number of Indian youth was exposed to the influence of missionaries, who largely catered to the demand, and the cases of conversion or of laxity in the observance of their own creed became more frequent. In 1839 the baptism of two Parsi boys studying in the seminary of the General Assembly and the judgement of the court in favour of the missionaries created such a commotion in Bombay that hundreds of boys were withdrawn from missionary schools and some of the most respectable and influential Parsis, Hindus and Muslims of the town submitted a petition to the governor in which they accused the missionaries of insidiously carrying on the work of conversion 'under the cloak of education' and the government of giving countenance and encouragement to the efforts of the missionaries. The petitioners charged the government with departing from its earlier policy of strict non-interference with indigenous religions 'in proportion as English power has become more firmly rooted in India' and warned it of the 'evil consequences' which were likely to follow if the belief became widespread, 'that England contemplates the forcible conversion of the inhabitants of her empire in the East'. In Madras the Hindu Literary Society had in 1834 refused to lend its assistance to the Madras Native Education Society because the latter wanted to make instruction in the Christian scriptures the basis of its scheme of education, and instead established an English seminary of its own. In 1839 a petition signed by over 70,000 inhabitants of Madras was presented to the governor of the presidency in which he was requested to provide them with the means of English education, as was done in Bengal and Bombay, without attempting to interfere with their religion. Two years later the conversion of three Hindu students to Christianity in Madras created 'a panic in the Native community' and resulted in the establishment of Pacheappa's School in 1842 to accommodate students withdrawn from missionary institutions.

The formation of rival associations, called the Brahma Sabha and the Dharma Sabha, the one representing the liberal and the other the conservative Hindus. While the liberals tried to meet the challenge from the west by liberalizing and reforming Hindu religion and society, the conservatives tried to meet the same challenge by tightening internal discipline and resisting
external interference. The liberals were dissatisfied with the existing state of Hindu religion and society, but they were not particularly enamoured of Christianity and the conduct of its votaries. Whatever appealed to them in Christianity, they sought for and discovered in the rich and ancient repository of their own religion. They, therefore, felt that they did not need to renounce the faith into which they were born but only to re-establish it in its pure and pristine form. Nor was the renunciation of their ancestral faith an easy matter for them. The Friend of India noted in 1845: 'With the better sort of our educated men there was a strong feeling against the renunciation of the national faith, even though they could not believe in it. Renouncing their religion looked to them as if it were the renouncing of their nationality. Their love of country and kindred forbade it; and, on the other hand, there was nothing in their case to urge it, but a feeble dislike to absurdity and falsehood. Hence they adopted a course of outward conformity, combined with mingled contempt, and occasionally a little superstitious regard, for Brahminical idolatry, and perfect indifference to anything better. ... Of late, however, a considerable portion of the educated Natives have been seeking after some means, by which they might avow themselves Hindoos in religion, without having to blush for the avowal before their European friends, or feeling disgraced in their own eyes. The expedient that has found particular favour with them is the abandoning of the Pooranic mythology and idolatry, as an invention declared in their Shastras to be intended only as a something to restrain the ignorant rabble ..., and the adoption of the Vedantic theology....'213 The instinct of self-preservation prompted conservative and liberal Hindus alike to resist the inroads of Christian missionaries, and the latter's indiscriminate denunciation of both the Sanatanists and the Vedantists had often the effect of uniting them in opposition to the common adversary) In fact, missionaries were surprised to discover that liberal Hindus were 'far more inveterate opponents of the Gospel' than the orthodox.214

'Observing the terribly rapid progress of Christianity ... which has ... greatly prejudiced our own Religion', some of the liberal Hindus of Calcutta, under the leadership of Devendranath Tagore,215 established on 6 October 1839 a society called the Tattvabodhini Sabha, whose object was to propagate an ancient, dignified and intellectual form of Hinduism and thereby "put a bar to' the spread of atheism and of Christianity.216 The Tattvabodhini Sabha took

213 Friend of India, 16 January 1845.

214 See, for example, Calcutta Christian Advocate, 1 February, 31 May 1845; Friend of India, 6 November 1845, 27 June 1850; and Bombay Guardian, 11 April 1851.

215 B. 1818; eldest son of Dwarkanath Tagore and father of poet Rabindranath; d. 1905.

216 Friend of India, 13 February 1840.

up the cudgels on behalf of Hinduism in its journal, the Tattvabodhini Patrika. It exposed 'the machinations of the missionaries', systematically refuted their accusations against Hinduism, such as those contained in Alexander Duff's India, and India Missions (1839), organized schools, sent out preachers against Christianity, and in general launched an anti-conversion crusade. The Tattvabodhini Sabha did much to popularize Vedantism and its membership rapidly increased. It
revived the shaken spirit of English-educated Bengalis and diverted their attention from a blind imitation and adoration of the west to the great values of ancient Hindu culture. While it made use of the new learning from the west to reform Hinduism, it remained firmly anchored to its native moorings. The old lamp of Hinduism was rekindled with the new light from the west. In 1843-4 Bombay and its neighbourhood were once again convulsed over the conversion of a minor Hindu boy, aged twelve, called Shripad Seshadri. Protest meetings were organized and a committee was established to watch over the interests of Hinduism. A liberal Hindu, Bal Gangadhar Jambhekar, took the lead in getting the boy released from the custody of the missionaries, through the intervention of the courts, and succeeded, despite the great opposition of orthodox Hindus, especially in Poona, in securing his readmission to the Hindu fold.

The part played by British rule in bringing about the unification of India is well known. What is not so obvious is the part played by the press in India in promoting the same object. It was the press which established a regular contact between the mofussil and the metropolitan centres, and between one province and another; The English-owned press in India regularly carried news about the mofussil and other parts of the country and reproduced extracts from the papers of the other provinces. All those who could read English were thus in a position to know what was happening all over the country. In the beginning of the nineteenth century it took about a month before the papers, say, of Calcutta reached Bombay. But after the introduction of steam navigation in the 'thirties, the time was shortened to less than a fortnight. The Indian-owned press was closely modelled upon the English-owned press, and though its

217 B. 1810; teacher and social reformer;d. 1846.


219 An incident that occurred in 1852 would best illustrate the point. On the eve of his retirement as chief justice of the Bombay supreme court in late 1852, Sir Erskine Perry (1806-82) was surprised to learn that the Hindus of Madras, to whom he was personally unknown, had voted an address of thanks to him. But the text of the address, which was received a few days later, cleared the mystery. It said how the attention of the Hindus of Madras had for several years past been drawn, 'through the medium of the local press—which is in the practice of transferring to its columns whatever transpired deserving of public notice at the sister presidencies —', to his impartiality as a judge and his efforts to promote secular education amongst 'their fellow countrymen at Bombay'. Bombay Gazette, 19, 24 November 1852.

37 influence in the first half of the nineteenth century was almost entirely local, it carried news about the other provinces of India to a larger number of people served by it within a particular region. The people of Bombay and Madras had thus little difficulty in knowing about the activities of the Landholders' Society and the Tattvabodhini Sabha of Calcutta. Similarly, the people of Calcutta were, thanks to the press, kept informed of the agitation in Bombay against the conversion of Indian youths.
One of the earliest and most significant effects of the growth of the press in India was to reinforce the cultural and social bonds which already existed between sections of the various communities in different parts of the country and to bring them into closer and more intimate touch with each other. By the mid-'forties both missionaries and the government began to feel the impact of this growing solidarity in India. Early in 1845 the government of India published the draft of an act which proposed to make certain changes in the Hindu law of inheritance so as to enable Hindu converts to Christianity to have a share in their ancestral property.220 Though the avowed intention of the "government of India in making the proposed change was to establish liberty of conscience in the country, there was little doubt that it was being made under pressure from missionaries who had long been agitating for it because they considered the Hindu law of inheritance to be 'one of the strongest bulwarks of the national [Hindu] creed'221 and 'a serious impediment to conversion'.222 No sooner was a draft of the so-called Lex Loci Act published than the Hindus of Madras and Bengal submitted memorials against it in which they alleged that the proposed law would mean a serious interference with their ancient usages and customs, in violation of the earlier assurances by the government to the contrary, and that it would put a premium on apostacy.223 In its reply to the memorialists, the government of India justified its intention on the ground of enlightenment and toleration, and dismissed the apprehensions of the memorialists as baseless.224 But the memorials and the agitation accompanying them appear to have had their effect on the authorities, because the draft act was set aside for the time being.

The publication of the draft of the Lex Loci Act in 1845 came at a time when the Hindu community of Bengal and Madras was in a state of great excitement over some recent cases of conversion of Hindu youths, belonging to wealthy and respectable families and studying in missionary schools. In Calcutta Hindus called a "public meeting to consider the desirability of adopting measures to counteract 'the machinations of the merciless padris'.225 The Friend of India

220 Supplement to Calcutta Gazette, 1, 5 February 1845.

221 Friend of India, 11 April 1845.

222 Bengal Hurkaru, 16 April 1850.

223 For the texts of the memorials, see India Legislative Consultations, 2 August 1845, vol. 36, nos. 4, 8, 11. India Office Records.

224 Ibid., no. 5; also Bengal Hurkaru, 23 June 1845.

225 Sambad Prabhakar, 20 May 1845, quoted in Calcutta Christian Advocate, 24 May 1845

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noted in June 1845 that the current movement amongst Hindus rested on 'a broader basis' than those in the past and embraced 'men of the most, opposite sentiments,—those who believe and those who eschew the popular mythology,—the worshippers of one god, and the worshippers of
three hundred and thirty millions,—those who outrage every precept of Hindooism, and those who scrupulously follow the Hindoo ritual,—those who live, like the divine sages, on a vegetarian diet, and drink nothing but pure water, and those who indulge in all the luxuries of Wilson’s cuisine.226 Again, in December 1845, it wrote: ‘In this crusade against Christianity we find men of all sects and parties meeting on common ground. The descendants of Goopeemohun Peer Alee, the fallen, and of Goopeemohun Deb, the prince of the orthodox, the Tagores and Debs,—men who have faith in idols, and those who despise them,—the Hindoo Pharisee, and the Hindoo libertine,—the man whose kitchen is limited to the most ritualistic food, and the man who eats beef and drinks champagne, without scruple—brahmuns and soodras,—young Bengal and old Bengal,—the well-educated Hindoo youth who has studied Shakespeare and Bacon, and the old Hindoo who believes that the world rests on the back of a tortoise,—all are united in one general opposition to the truths of Christianity and in efforts to oppose its progress.’227 The Calcutta Christian Advocate remarked in May 1845: ‘The Dharma, Brahma, and Tattwabodhini, Sabhas,—Young Bengal,—the bigoted and the liberal, orthodox and reformer, the gross idolater, and pure Vedantists, all are united in hatred and opposition to the gospel.’228

The Hindu movement in Calcutta in 1845 resulted in the intensification of propaganda against ‘missionarism’, the withdrawal of ‘Hundreds of children from the schools run by missionaries, the establishment of a free school by the Hindu community in Calcutta to provide English education for its children, and the relaxation of restrictions on eating and drinking and on the readmission of apostates to the Hindu fold.

In Madras, where Hindu society was more orthodox and where missionaries had achieved greater success than in Bengal, the situation was far more serious. The consternation created there by the conversion of children in missionary schools was compounded by the widespread belief among local Hindus that the Company’s civilians and courts were abetting and aiding the operations of missionaries. Early in 1844 the baptism of a Jain Brahman boy, named Vishwananathan, created a sensation which was ‘felt throughout all the southern parts of India, and gave rise to a bitter enmity and a systematic opposition’ to missionaries, particularly those of the Protestant denomination.229 Early in 1845 the Hindus of Madras took the lead,230 which was soon afterwards followed by those

226 Friend of India, 12 June 1845.

227 Ibid., 4 December 1845.

228 Calcutta Christian Advocate, 31 May 1845.

229 Madras Native Herald, 7 December 1844, quoted in Calcutta Christian Advocate, 4 January 1845.

230 See Athenaeum, 5 April 1845.
of Calcutta, in opposing the proposed Lex Loci Act and submitted a petition against it to the government of India in which they maintained that the contemplated innovation was ‘intended to deprive the Hindoo community of a national and legal right derived from their ancestors, and hitherto respected by their European rulers’, and afforded ‘strong cause of suspicion that such an innovation is only the prelude to others, that the security in person, property and religion, hitherto ensured to native subjects, is in danger of being taken from them’.231

In November 1845 there was a serious riot between Christians and Hindus in Tinnevelly, ‘the emporium of missionaryism’ in south India. The local magistrate, E. B. Thomas,232 whom Hindus already "suspected of partiality to Christians, jailed more than a hundred Hindus, but on an appeal being made to the sessions court at Madras, many of them were acquitted and the second judge of the court, Malcolm Lewin.233 minuted that the Tinnevelly outrages were ‘all imputable to the missionaries, and to the improper support they have received from the local officers of the Government’.234 The missionaries then approached the governor of Madras, Lord Tweeddale,235 who ordered the sessions court to send him a copy of the proceedings and notes of the judges and officers in the Tinnevelly riot case. The action of the governor gave offence to the judges of the sessions court, particularly to Malcolm Lewin who sent a memorial to the Court of Directors in London protesting against what he considered to be an interference by the executive with the independence of the judiciary. Tweeddale removed Lewin from the bench and cancelled his appointment as provisional member of his council. Lewin became a martyr. The Hindus of Madras presented him with an address in October 1846 in which they expressed their sympathy with him and their appreciation of his integrity and noble-mindedness. In his reply to the address Lewin remarked: 'Had the Government met with no resistance in their attempt to coerce the Judges of the Supreme Court into measures fatal to impartial justice, it is probable the next attempt would have been, an open and undisguised one, to force Christianity upon the Hindus.'236 The echoes of the events in Madras reverberated throughout the country. From far-off Calcutta, the secretary of the Dharma Sabha of Bengal wrote a letter to Lewin in which he said: 'The attempts which have recently been made at Madras to trespass on the religious privileges of our countrymen in that Presidency being an outrage on the general cause of liberty of conscience, and therefore, an affront to all, of what creed soever, who claim that right, the Dhurma Subha of Bengal feels itself called upon to unite with the Hindoo community of Madras, in acknowledging to you the obligation under which you have placed all friends of religious

231 India Legislative Consultations, 2 August 1845, vol. 36, no. 4.

232 Joined East India Company's service 1825; left India 1858.

233 B. 1800; joined East India Company's service 1815; dismissed 1846; writer on Indian affairs; d. 1869.

214 Madras Christian Instructor and Missionary Record, November 1846, p. 641.

235 George Hay, eighth marquis of Tweeddale (1787-1876). Governor of Madras 1842-8.

236 Proceedings at the Public Meeting of the Hindu Community, Held in the Rooms of Patcheapah's Institution, on Wednesday the 7th October 1846 (1846), p. 20.
toleration, by having firmly and magnanimously opposed the efforts which were made to render
the bench of Justice an instrument of oppression.'237

Various other events occurred in 1846 which, according to the Friend of India, threw the
presidency of Madras into 'a state of agitation, of which there has been no example since the
mutiny of the Coast Army [in 1806]'.238 The judgements of the supreme court of Madras in
favour of the missionaries in the cases of two allegedly minor Hindu converts to Christianity
annoys the local Hindu community. The employment by missionaries of indigenous preachers,
especially in the Hindu places of pilgrimage, and the offensive language used by the latter were
resented by Hindus. The Hindus of Madras also objected to the open association of officials,
including the governor and the chief secretary,239 with the operations of missionaries, especially
at a time when missionaries were agitating for the complete dissociation of the government from
'Hindu idolatry'. Tweeddale's use of the term 'Heathens' for Hindus in his order of May 1846 to
the sessions court was seized upon by the Madras Hindus as evidence of 'his contempt and hatred
of the Hindu community'. The introduction of Greek and Latin, which were taught in missionary
schools but not in state schools, in the examination for the public service was objected to as
being designed to favour those educated in missionary schools and to exclude those educated in
state schools. Objection was also taken by the Madras Hindus to the type of questions asked in
the examination for the public service on the ground that they required a knowledge of Christian
theology or insulted Hinduism, and thus virtually excluded Hindus from being able to answer
them. What caused greater annoyance to the Hindus of Madras in 1846 was the notorious 'Bible
Minute' of Tweeddale, in which he approved of, despite popular protest, the recommendation
of the Council of Education that the Bible should be a text book for English classes in state schools,
saying: 'It is the only means I know of giving to the Natives a practical knowledge of the
sciences [sic], from whence rise all those high qualities which they admire so much in the
character of those whom Providence had placed to rule over them.'240 Not surprisingly, Hindus
detected in the introduction of the Bible as a text book in state schools a disingenuous attempt on
the part of the government to promote their conversion to Christianity.

All these and many other grievances against missionaries and the local government were
narrated in great detail in two lengthy memorials, signed by thousands of people, which the
Hindus of Madras submitted to the Court of Directors in 1846 and 1847. Towards the close of
their first memorial they said: 'Your memorialists have heard that the ancestors of the English,
once petitioned their Roman conquerors, in an address entitled—"The Groans of the Britons", if
your memorialists presumed to affix a heading to the present memorial, it

237 Bengal Hurkaru, 15 February 1847.

238 Friend of India, 17 December 1846.

239 J. F. Thomas (1797-1877). Brother of E. B. Thomas, magistrate of Tinnevelly; member of
governor's council 1850-5.

240 for the text of the minute, see Englishman, 15 April 1847.
would be “The Wrongs and Oppressions of the Hindus” ... '241 The memorials were, however, not confined to a mere narration of grievances. They expressed a total lack of confidence in Tweeddale's government, whom they accused of 'a fixed plan ... to subvert the religion of the country, by the official encouragement it gives to Protestant Missionaries',242 and warned that, unless it was checked in time, it 'must render British rule precarious or something worse; bequeathing to Indian posterity, from age to age, the legacy of eternal hatred to the British name and nation'.243

How strong and universal was the feeling of resentment against missionaries amongst the Hindus of Madras at the time was testified by the Native Herald, the organ of the Free Church of Scotland at Madras, in December 1846. It wrote: 'There is no house where Christianity is not exposed—the disgust with which all classes of the community look upon Christianity is very strong and prevalent at present—we have all heard of the late meeting [on 7 October 1846 to memorialize the Court of Directors] — under what feeling did the great men of the Hindus, the men who could speak English and had come much in contact with the Europeans and were supposed not to have the same prejudices and narrow views as the common people—what were the feelings which they shewed in that place? every one of them, the most educated of them to the least educated, from the highest caste men to the lowest Pulle, manifested a bitter spirit of enmity against Christianity. Though people of all castes were brought together at that time there were no fightings about caste. Though Brahmins and all the lower castes were mixed together, there was a living sympathy among all the people that were there, the same 'spirit filled all their hearts, and out of the fulness of their hearts their mouths poured out curses and blasphemies against Christianity—from a single family up to the whole nation the prevailing spirit in the Hindus at present is enmity against Christianity. There is an enmity in each family, and there is a national enmity and a universal enmity filling the breast of every man and woman of every rank and caste among the Hindus: yea, the whole nation is moved from its very bottom and filled with implacable hatred, and bent upon the utter destruction of Christianity.'244

The excitement of the Hindu community in Madras reminded the Madras Christian Instructor of the violent opposition raised at Ephesus against the gospel as preached by Paul, and it remarked that 'the whole city has been moved, as though its temples were shaken and their idols tottering to a fah'.245 The Friend of India wrote in August 1847 that the presidency of Madras had for the past

241 Proceedings at the Public Meeting of the Hindu Community ... 7th October 1846, p. 16.

242 The Memorial of the Hindu Inhabitants of the Madras Presidency to the Court of Directors, 12 May 1847 (1847), p. 1.


244 Madras Native Herald, December 1846, quoted in ibid., pp. 4-5; also Englishman, 24 June 1847.
sixteen months been turned 'into a boiling volcano'.

The agitation in Madras in 1846-7 did not remain confined to the presidency alone. It received prominent attention in the press throughout the country. While the missionary and the pro-missionary Anglo-Indian press defended the missionaries and the Tweeddale administration in Madras, the Hindu press and a section of the Anglo-Indian press sympathized with the Hindus of Madras. A correspondent from Mysore wrote to the Serampore Friend of India in 1847: The educated natives here are in a state of great excitement, which is likely to increase, as thousands of copies of these memorials have been distributed far and wide in all the languages of the South of India.'

The Hindus of distant Calcutta, who had already joined hands with their co-religionists in Madras by submitting memorials to the government of India against the proposed Lex Loci Act in 1845 and by sending a letter of thanks to Lewin early in 1847, not only reprinted and circulated the Madras memorials in Bengal, but also made the cause of the Madras Hindus their own by dispatching in the autumn of 1847 a memorial to the Court of Directors against Tweeddale's 'Bible Minute', in which they said that they had 'watched with the deepest interest, the occurrences which have for many months past agitated the public mind at Madras, and they fully concur with their brethren of that Presidency in considering the proceedings of the local Government as being indicative of a settled design to subvert the Hindu religion in order to substitute the Christian faith'. They asserted 'the constitutional right of every subject of the British Crown to follow whatever religion he may choose', ascribed the 'popularity and stability' of British rule in India to its faithful observance of the principle of religious toleration, and asked the Court to prohibit all future governors-general from introducing into state schools the Christian scriptures or any other books designed to induce the pupils to embrace a religion differing from that of their parents.

Nor did Hindus stand alone in their opposition to the activities of missionaries and what they regarded as the misuse of government power on behalf of proselytism. Their opposition was vigorously supported by a few Anglo-Indians, notably Lewin and the editors of the Englishman, the Crescent and the United Service Gazette. Edward Harley, editor of the Crescent, was most active on behalf of the Madras Hindus and probably drafted their memorials to the Court of Directors in 1846-7. The Friend of India remarked: 'However keenly the Natives may feel the secession of members of their own body from Hindooism it is only when Europeans are engaged in blowing the bellows that indigenous bigotry is fanned into such a blaze. This result of past experience is fully corroborated.
by the Madras agitation.'252

Sparks from Madras ignited the tinder in Calcutta in 1847. A 'grand meeting' was held on 19 September 1847 'for devising plans for the effectual check of missionary proselytism in Bengal'. It was, noted the Bengal Hurkaru, 'crowded to excess by a curious and motley group of natives of every caste and creed. There was the Gossain with his head full of Jaydeva and the amorous feats of his sylvan deity, the Tantrist still heated with the bhackra or Bacchanalian carousal of the preceding night, the educated fore-thinker as ignorant of God as he was of the world when at college, the Vedantist combining in himself the unitarianism of the Vedas and the liberalism of the fore-thinker, all assembled under the general appellation of Hindoo to adopt proposals of the best means for the repression of the common enemy.' The meeting resolved to form an association, named the Hindu Society, in order to prevent Hindus from sending their children to missionary schools on pain of excommunication. At the conclusion of the meeting 'one of the orthodox party' was heard telling the boys present: 'Babas, be a follower of one God, i.e. a Vedantist, eat whatever you like, do whatever you like, but be not a Christian.'253 The Friend of India ridiculed this latest attempt of the Calcutta Hindus to stem the tide of Christianity in the country. 'The Hindoos,' it wrote in September 1847, 'acting merely on the defensive, cannot be expected to bring the same energy, life and soul into this struggle as those whose efforts are aggressive.' In its opinion, Hinduism had 'lost its vigor, and must go to the wall'. The failure of their present movement, which in its view was inevitable, would be their 'final defeat'.254

Hindu opposition to 'missionaryism' was far more determined in the Indian princely states. For example, the conversion of a minor Hindu boy, Baba Pandurang at Nagpur in 1848 caused immense excitement in the town. A '15 to 20,000 strong' deputation waited on the raja and presented a petition for the recovery of the boy from the custody of the missionaries. The government of India had to intercede with the missionaries at Nagpur to restore the boy to his parents in order to avert the danger of mob violence.255 One of the many reasons why the people of British India in the nineteenth century were so deeply interested in the continuance of the Indian princely states was that the latter were relatively immune from 'the missionary menace' and their very continuance was supposed to act as a check on the proselytizing tendency of the British government in India.256

The Hindu agitation in Bengal and Madras, which had almost subsided by the end of 1847, following the departure of Tweeddale from India and the conciliatory

252 Friend of India, 4 March 1847.

253 Bengal Hurkaru, 21 September 1847.
reply given by the Court of Directors to the Madras memorials, flared up again in late 1849, when the government of India, acting apparently under pressure from home worked up by missionaries, gave notice of its intention to pass the Lex Loci Act which it had deferred passing in 1845. No sooner was a draft of the Lex Loci Act published on 31 October 1849 than it was bitterly condemned by the Hindu press of Bengal and Madras and communications began to pass between the leaders of the Hindu community in the two presidencies. A few months later two numerous signed but separate memorials protesting against the proposed legislation, on the lines similar to those of 1845, were submitted to the governor-general of India, the first being on behalf of 'the Hindoo inhabitants of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa' and the second on behalf of those of 'the Presidency of Fort St. George'.

But the governor-general, Lord Dalhousie, who, incidentally, was the son-in-law of the Marquis of Tweeddale, did not even care to reply to the memorials and the Act was passed on 11 April 1850. This 'breach of common etiquette' added insult to injury. The Hindu Intelligencer of Calcutta remarked that probably Lord Dalhousie 'did not think it worth his while to be civil in his intercourse with the blackees of the land'.

The press sounded the tocsin. The Bengal Recorder wrote: '"The die is cast and all is over." Lord Dalhousie has struck the last blow at the stupendous structure of the Hindoo faith. What the 100,000 troops of the "Destroyer of Idols" failed to achieve; what the sharp scimitars of our Mahomedan Conquerors could not effect; what the persecuting despotism of the tyrant of Mysore dared not meddle with; the Right Honorable James Andrew, Earl of Dalhousie, Governor General of India, &c. &c. has carried at the point of the quill. ... The lex loci is abroad, and with it, heresy is abroad. The Act XXI of 1850 must be engraven in the hearts of our countrymen, or the Act XXI of 1850 will one day be the ruin of them.'

The Hindu Intelligencer remarked: 'Thus it appears that the Indian Governments as well as the authorities in Leadenhall Street have identified themselves with the missionaries and their cause, and the fears entertained of the Marquis of Tweeddale's Government have been verified by that of his son-in-law, the Marquis of Dalhousie.'

The Englishman's sombre comment was: 'Saturday night's Gazette contained as Act No 21 of 1850, the abolition of the Hindoo ceremonial law in all the territories of the East India Company, so far as it is connected with the tenure of land. This has been done by a Government which has imposed upon the Hindoo and Musalman

257 See Calcutta Christian Advocate, 20 April 1850.

258 'Calcutta Gazette, 31 October 1849, p. 1067.'
population of India, the maintenance of the Anglican Church. We must leave to better casuists the reconcilement of these two opposite proceedings; but as the date of this Act No. 21 may be an epoch of some importance to future historians, it is well to put on record the 11th of April 1850, as the first legislative step towards the expulsion of the British from India.264 The paper advised Hindus to lose no time in carrying their complaints to England and warned them that if they failed to do so, they would find 'that the first opportunity will be snatched to strike another blow at their usages and customs'. 'To England', the cry was taken up by others. 'Lord Dalhousie', wrote the Bengal Recorder, 'has not conquered yet. England's Lords and "England's Commons are still to be overcome. The hundred millions of Her Majesty's lieges in India may be regarded with scorn by an Indian Politician surrounded by a hundred thousand bayonets; but they nevertheless can command a voice, that may yet ring upon the ears of John Company, somewhat similarly to that of the Ghost of Caesar, "I will meet thee in Westminster Hall". Yes! that is the tribunal to which our Hindoo countrymen should appeal. The Parliament House of Great Britain is their last and their only hope. The Lords will hear their prayer, for the Lords of England are not quite so aristocratical as their friends in this country; the Commons will cheerfully hearken to their complaints, for the Commons of England are not quite such great bigots as their friends in this country. They respect justice; they reverence the laws of property. The noble house that could impeach Warren Hastings for the murder of Nund Coomar, the robbery of the Begums, the cruelty to Cheyte Sing; that could "impeach him in the name of the people of India, whose rights he had trodden under foot and whose country he had turned into a desert", will not certainly turn a deaf ear to the memorial of their Hindoo subjects; will not suffer ungrateful children to triumph over their injured parents, aye! injured as man can injure man; will not suffer the fundamental principles of the Hindoo faith to be assailed by a persecution, more formidable than the persecution of the followers of Mahomed, more powerful than that of the sword of the Imaum. We say, the Parliament House of Great Britain will not suffer such despotism to revel in its Indian Settlement.'265

On 31 October 1849—simultaneously with the introduction of the Lex Loci legislation—the government of India proposed to place British-born subjects in India under the criminal jurisdiction of the ordinary courts from which they had hitherto been exempt.266 Non-official Britons in India denounced the proposal—the so-called 'Black Acts'—as an encroachment on their privileges. The very idea of being tried by Indians was abhorrent to them. Almost the entire Anglo-Indian press throughout the country indulged in a chorus of protest against the
contemplated legislation. A public meeting was held in Calcutta on 29 December 1849 and a committee was appointed to organize agitation against

264 Englishman, 15 April 1850.

265 Quoted in Calcutta Christian Advocate, 27 April 1850.

266 Calcutta Gazette, 31 October 1849, p. 1067.

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'the Black Acts'. Funds were raised and a petition was sent home.267

What, however, began as a movement against the Company's administration in India soon degenerated into a racial quarrel. Anglo-Indian orators and writers freely railed against Indian capacity and character. This naturally gave offence to educated Indians and they came out openly in support of the proposed legislation as being not only just and reasonable in itself, but also a check on European offenders, especially in the mofussil, who often escaped punishment because Indians who were aggrieved could not always afford to carry their complaints to the supreme court in the metropolis, where alone they could hitherto be tried. 'Wherein lies the difference say we, between an Englishman and a Native,' wrote the Bengal Recorder, 'that such distinctions should be at all made in favor of the former? Does a white skin and a pair of breeches give him his superiority? or does he claim it in the right of conquest?'268 A Bengali correspondent from the mofussil wrote to the Friend of India: 'For an Englishman to find himself made to stand in the same prisoner's dock with a native who wears the simple apparel of Dhutty and Chader, whereas his antagonist wears pantaloons and a broadcloth coat, may appear degrading to an Englishman, but is perfectly equitable in the eye of reason and justice.'269

One of the most tragic results of the controversy over 'the Black Acts' was that it drove a wedge even between those Britons and Indians, especially in Calcutta, who had often in the past co-operated with each other. The leader of the opposition to 'the Black Acts' in Calcutta was Theodore Dickens. As an old friend of Indians, he appealed to the latter not to lend their support to the proposed measure. 'You can never become better by making us worse,' he warned them.270 The man who took the lead in organizing a counter-agitation in favour of 'the Black Acts' was Ramgopal Ghose, one of the most liberal and enlightened Indians of his time who had also the closest personal and professional contacts with Europeans. In an ably written pamphlet,271 Ghose demolished the arguments advanced by Europeans against their being subjected to the same administration of justice in cases of felony to which Indians were subjected, and refuted the charges made by them against the character and capacity of his countrymen. For his courageous stand, Ramgopal Ghose was expelled from the mainly European Agricultural and Horticultural Society of Calcutta, which was indebted to his pecuniary liberality in many ways. The incident prompted even the Anglo-Indian Eastern Star of Calcutta, one of the most strenuous opponents of 'the Black Acts', to remark that 'a more discreditable proceeding never occurred in a Calcutta scientific society'.272 Notwithstanding the opposition

267 Friend of India, 3 January 1850.
of non-official Anglo-Indians, the government of India passed 'the Black Acts' in April 1850.273

But the prospect of a white rebellion in India frightened the Court of Directors and they instructed the government of India to suspend the operation of the Acts.274

Encouraged by the example of their Anglo-Indian fellow-subjects and the success already achieved by the latter in their agitation against 'the Black Acts', the Hindus of Calcutta met in a public meeting on 14 May 1850 and appointed a committee to arrange for sending a memorial to Britain against the Lex Loci Act.275 The circular issued by this committee in August 1850 gives us a fair idea of the feelings which animated the Hindus of Calcutta and elsewhere in India at the time.276 It commenced thus: 'The Government had promised never to interfere with our religion. They have now broken that promise in various ways, and have, more especially of late, taken up arms to inflict severe blows upon our religion, i.e. they have promulgated the celebrated Act XXI of 1850 against the Dayabhaga and our other Scriptures, with the secret design of destroying the Hindoo and advancing the Christian religion.' The circular described the Lex Loci Act as 'the most fearful of all the acts of injustice which the Government has done to the Hindoos' and remarked that it would 'undoubtedly prove a weapon of destruction to the Hindoo race, and eradicate the tree of Hindooism'. 'The missionaries', the circular went on to add, 'have never failed to oppose us; they have laboured and are labouring to eradicate our religion by fraud, force, or policy, and to make the Christian religion predominant over all others. Under the influence of their spell children have fled from their mothers' bosoms—parents have been bereft of sons, brothers of brothers, wives of husbands. The four corners of the world are filled with lamentations, because of the outrages of the missionaries in all places, all towns, all villages .... But even such outrages could be borne, for there was no great alarm in the mind. We had the assurance in our minds that as long as the Government did not interfere in these things—i.e. as long as they did not engage in a wrong course of conduct in their favour, so long the outrages of the missionaries, even though a thousand-fold, were not to be reckoned as of any consequence. But now that those persons who are lords of the country and in whose hands are entrusted our lives and properties, have taken the club in their own hands and begun to oppress us through partiality for our opponents,—and are determined to destroy Hindooism and advance Christianity, we have no safety. For, "Parents are avaricious, the king has taken arms, the gods desire sacrifices, who then will be my saviour." Be ye therefore sure that a great misfortune has befallen us; there is no end now to our calamities. The calamities which have now happened to us through an adverse Providence, are unparalleled. Every
273 Ibid., 11 April 1850.

274 Ibid., 23 May 1850.

275 Hindu Intelligencer, 4 June 1850, quoted in Friend of India, 27 June 1850.

276 For the text of the circular, see Friend of India, 15 August 1850.

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one without distinction of age or sex should try to escape such a danger. It is absolutely necessary that the whole body of Hindoos should have recourse to Government for justice, and endeavour with all their wealth, might and lives to save their religion and their caste.' The circular underlined the importance of continuing the agitation against the Lex Loci Act and of extending it to Britain. 'For if we bear up, and do not cry against this aggravated injustice, then we shall afterwards be consumed by the fire of still greater injustice; because when the strong descries the weakness of the weak, he wishes the more to manifest his power.' The circular said that merely sending a petition to Britain would not do, Hindus must appoint an advocate to plead their case in Britain and collect money to pay for his services. Referring to the Anglo-Indian agitation against 'the Black Acts', it remarked: 'The subscriptions which the European residents of this country have made in order to appeal to England against the Black Acts amount to about 40,000 rupees—and will probably amount to more. The agitation caused in the two communities by the two Acts is similar, and both classes ought to act in the same way....' The circular concluded by emphasizing the need for securing the co-operation of the Hindus in the mofussil and in the North-Western Provinces in the present agitation to get the Lex Loci Act repealed.

From Madras a person signing himself 'A Brahmin' addressed an open letter to Dalhousie in which he warned the governor-general that if the Lex Loci Act was not repealed Hindus would refuse to cultivate the soil, to pay the revenue, and to defend the government from its enemies. The correspondent also said: 'I am confident that my countrymen in the three Presidencies will join in one compact for their own interests, and translate this letter into the common languages of the country for its better circulation among our community here and elsewhere.'277 The text of the letter was published by the Englishman on 9 August 1850. A Bengali correspondent wrote to the editor of the same paper a week later; 'What does the Madras Brahmin say: "Let us not cultivate our lands, let us withhold the revenue, let us not assist the Government." What if we all combine together, the Hindoos and Mohamedans of whole India, and resolve upon so doing. Do you think we cannot achieve it? But' let me not therefore be understood to imply an immediate resort to these measures. No! ... we are not yet quite helpless. The Queen, the Parliament, the people of England are not so unjust and so unmerciful.' The correspondent revealed that the committee appointed by the Hindus in Calcutta to fight against the Lex Loci Act was in communication with the one appointed in Madras for the same purpose. He was critical of the Calcutta committee for appealing only to Bengali Hindus for support and remarked: 'Why does it make a distinction there—why does it not call upon the inhabitants of the three Presidencies to join together in one common cause?' The correspondent advised the Calcutta committee 'to co-operate with the Madras people, which everyone must acknowledge is the fittest
body for such an undertaking', and added: 'The Madras people are not only brave and enterprising, but are clever, prudent, and well-informed. Our big Baboos are only employed in faction, and have no knowledge of politics.'

The Friend of India took serious note of the correspondence published in the Englishman, and, in a leader entitled 'The Disturbed State of India', wrote on 22 August 1850: 'Our statesmen in India and England have been flattering themselves, ever since the battle of Goozerat, that India is in a state of profound peace; that we have no longer an enemy capable of meeting us in the field, and may now turn our attention to the improvement of our institutions. But they little dream of the storm which is now brewing around them, and which may at no very distant period require all our military resources. We feel it our duty to entreat them not to close their eyes to the fact that a treasonable conspiracy appears to be even now in progress, not in some remote province on the banks of the Sutledge or the Indus, but at the headquarters of their dominion, which may shake the empire to its centre.'

From England, the editor of the Indian News—apparently an old India hand—interrupted a series of leaders on the 'Renewal of the East India Company's Charter' to utter a more emphatic warning: 'We have before stated, that, of which there can now be little doubt, there is at this moment more dissatisfaction and general discontent against our rule in India than ever before existed; and we repeat, that if the policy lately adopted, and threatened to be pursued, continues, it is more than probable that some general and extensive revolution will ensue, in which the native army is more likely to join than to oppose.'

In 1851 the Hindus of Madras were once again thrown into a state of general commotion by the judgement of Sir William Burton, of the local supreme court, who was closely associated with missionaries and whom they already suspected of partiality to Christians, forcing the reluctant wife of a young Brahman convert to go with her husband on the ground that 'a man ought not to be deprived of the services of his wife on account of a change of faith'.

Calcutta, where agitation had already become almost a normal feature of public life, was convulsed in 1851 by the conversion of Gyanendramohan Tagore, the only son of Prasannakumar Tagore, one of the wealthiest and most respectable citizens of the town. The Friend of India wrote: 'There have been many converts from the upper ranks of Hindoo society, but this is the first instance, we believe, in which sacerdotal rank has been combined with

278 Ibid., 16 August 1850.

279 'Friend of India, 22 August 1850.

280 Indian News, 2 November 1850.

281 B. 1794; puisne judge of Cape of Good Hope 1829-32, of supreme court of New South Wales 1832-44 and of Madras 1844-57; president of New South Wales legislative council 1858-61; d.1888.
wealth, and it has created a proportionate sensation.'284 The event confirmed the worst fears of Hindus about the Lex Loci Act—that once the fear of losing their patrimony was removed, Hindu boys would 'easily, fearlessly, and with smiling faces go to church to be baptized'—and they were naturally seized with panic. 'The whole of the Hindu community', noted the Calcutta Christian Advocate, 'is evidently thrown into a state of great terror, as the besieged in their fort when its towers are tumbling about their heads and the walls are crumbling around them.'285

CHAPTER TWO Two Models of Political Change

IT IS AGAINST this background—of religious excitement, of racial estrangement, of economic and political discontent, of a steady growth of education and public opinion, and of an increasing unification of the country—that we approach the agitation in India in the early 'fifties in connexion with the renewal of the Company's charter.

On 18 September 1851 the Bengal Hurkaru reported that 'a meeting of the respectable native zemindars, resident in and about Calcutta', held on 14 September at the house of Raja Pratapchandra Singh of Paikpara,1 had decided to revive the Landholders' Society 'under new auspices'. It added: 'This time its operations will embrace a large sphere of duties; without confining its attention to the mere landed interest of the country, it will also attend to other questions affecting its welfare. This will be evident from the name which the resuscitated society has assumed.... The society was christened the "National Association".' The Hurkaru predicted that the new society would not be as ephemeral and ineffective as its predecessor had been, for it had 'independent and honourable men [like Prasannakumar Tagore and Devendranath Tagore] for leaders and prime movers'.2

The Citizen, however, did not share the optimism of the Hurkaru regarding the longevity and effectiveness of the new society. It doubted 'if an exclusive native society composed of zemindars will work for anything valuable for the country, or' even important for themselves in a collective capacity', and went on to add: 'The principle of nationality will seal the fate of the undertaking as an instrument of good.'3
We do not know what persuaded the promoters of the new society later to change its designation, for when they met again on 29 October 1851 they resolved that a society be formed 'for a period of not less than three years' under the denomination of the British Indian Association, and that the object of the

1B. 1826; leading zamindar of Bengal; member of Bengal legislative council 1862-4; vice-president of British Indian Association from 1854 until his death in 1866.

2Bengal Hurkaru, 18 September 1851. The Hindu Intelligencer (cited in Bengal Hurkaru, 2 October 1851) maintained that 'National Association' was not a correct translation of 'De-shahitarthi Sabha', the Bengali name of the projected association.

3Citizen, 19 September 1851.

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Association 'shall be to promote the improvement and efficiency of the British Indian Government by every legitimate means in its power, and thereby to advance the common interests of Great Britain and India, and ameliorate the condition of the native inhabitants of the subject country'.4 Raja Radhakant Deb was chosen president of the Association and Devendranath Tagore its secretary. A small but fairly representative committee was appointed to manage the affairs of the Association.

The primary aim of the British Indian Association—this is confirmed by the fact that it was formed 'for a period of not less than three years'—was to represent Indian interests in the debates regarding* the future government of India in connexion with the approaching renewal of the Company's charter. The Association was anxious that 'the sentiments of the people of the different Presidencies should be presented to Parliament, bearing the impress of unity', preferably 'in a joint petition'.5 With this end in view, it opened correspondence with 'the most influential gentlemen of Madras and Bombay'. It rightly concluded that 'the publication of the rules and proceedings of the Association in the English newspapers, must have had the effect of concentrating the attention of those whose minds had already been awakened to the subject by the approaching termination of the Charter'.6 On 11 December 1851 the secretary of the British Indian Association, Devendranath Tagore, addressed a letter to a prominent citizen of Madras (G. Lakshminarasu Chetty?)7 which gives us an idea of what the aims and intentions of the leaders of the Association were.8 The letter invited the co-operation of 'native gentlemen' in the southern presidency 'in advancing the objects of the Association' either 'by becoming members of it, and contributing to its funds, or ... [by] establishing at the seat of Government or any other chief city, a Society of their own, having the same objects in view, but carrying on operations independently'. It must be obvious to you', the letter went on to say, 'that the representations which are to be made to the British Parliament, with reference to the approaching termination of the East India Company's Charter, would have great weight, if they were made simultaneously by the Natives of every part of British India, or by a Society having just pretensions to represent them. They would, the Committee [of the British Indian Association] believe, possess the same influence, whether they came separately from Calcutta, and Agra, and Bombay and Madras, from so many
distinct bodies associated together for the same ends, but acting independently of each other, or from one central body representing the wishes and interests of the several Presidencies. There are, however, advantages likely to flow from the union of the native gentlemen of the other three Presidencies with the British Indian Association, which should not be overlooked. One evident advantage would be, that the expenses attendant upon the prosecution of those ends, would be greatly lessened: for instance, in the one case, it would be necessary to provide for the cost of a single agent, to represent the Association in England and to submit their representations to Parliament; whereas, in the other case, each Presidency would have to bear the expenses of a separate, agent. Moreover, there would not be the same diversity of opinions as to the reforms and measures to be sought for, as must be expected when several bodies devise separate plans, for the improvement of the administration. If the people of Madras felt 'that there would be greater benefit from co-operating with the British Indian Association than from forming a separate Association at your Presidency, it will be necessary to form a Corresponding Committee there, for the purpose, not only of assisting the resources of the association to which they wish to lend their support, but also of communicating readily and freely with this Committee on all those subjects, on which either this Committee or the Corresponding Committee may desire to address the British Parliament, so that the sentiments, which may be embodied in the Petitions that may be prepared, may receive the concurrence of all those on whose behalf they are to be made. The formation of a Corresponding Committee at your Presidency, as an auxiliary to this Association, is not of course to preclude such Committee from making, as an independent body, any representations to their own Government, or the Supreme Government, on local subjects, which circumstances may call for; and this Committee wish it to be understood that they are prepared to give the same consideration to such subjects, and render the same assistance towards forwarding such representations, those particularly, which may need to be brought before the Legislative Council, as to subjects and representations exclusively affecting the Bengal Presidency.' The letter urged the addressee to use his influence with his countrymen in Madras 'to make the necessary efforts, at the present juncture, to bring the circumstances of the people of India before their rulers in England' and to lose no time 'in organizing either a Corresponding Committee or
an Association, as the discussion on the subject of the Charter and other questions which it involves, cannot fail to take place at a very early date'. Similar communications were addressed by the secretary of the British Indian Association to persons in Bombay and Poona whose names were known to him only through the press.

Strangely enough, Poona was the first town to follow the lead of Calcutta. A few young men there who had 'received a liberal education' prevailed upon the local gentry to take advantage of the ensuing revision of the charter in order to ventilate their grievances by sending 'a mission' to Britain.9 After a few

9 Telegraph and Courier, 26 February, 20 March 1852.

preliminary meetings held in January 1852, a society called the Deccan Association was formed on 1 February 1852.10 Its affairs were to be managed by an elected committee of fifteen. Yashwantrao Madhav Raste11 was appointed 1 secretary of the Association and Gopalrao Hari Desmukh12 its assistant secretary. Its membership was open to those who subscribed Rs. 20 or more towards a fund 'for the purpose of meeting the expenses of a mission to England, and a petition to the British Parliament, praying for the redress of certain grievances, to be presented at the ensuing Charter discussion'. By the end of March 1852 about 10,000 rupees had been collected. Correspondence was opened with the British Indian Association of Calcutta and with prominent 'sirdars, and jagheerdars, and merchants in the Deccan and Koncan'. A 'List of the Grievances and Wants of the Deccan' was drawn up which was to form the basis of the proposed petition to Parliament. The Association was to demand the security of land tenures, cheap and speedy justice, the abolition of the salt tax, the equalization of customs and duties on exports and imports, an increased expenditure on education and public works, the prevention of 'the drain' of Indian capital to Britain, preference to educated Indians in public employment, 'no less than half of situations now held exclusively by Europeans to be held by natives', and 'an equal number of natives with Europeans ... [to] have seats in the Legislative Council of India'.13 But the Deccan Association did not live long enough to send a mission or even a petition to Britain. If the newspapers are to be believed, local British officials nipped it in the bud by frightening the sardars and by removing the two most active English-educated members of the Association from Poona by offering them lucrative jobs elsewhere.14

Madras was the next to act. It had already been drawn closer to Calcutta because of the recent agitation against proselytism and the government's attempt to change the Hindu law of inheritance. The leaders of the Hindu community at both places had already begun to communicate and co-operate with each other. "The Madras Hindus were also beholden to the Calcutta Hindus for the sympathy and support extended to them in their troubles by the latter. Madras, therefore, unlike Poona, in the beginning followed substantially the line of action recommended by the Calcutta association in its communication of 11 December 1851. A public meeting was held on 26 February 1852.15 It was chaired by C. Appaswami  

11 Second class sardar; d. 1860.

12 B. 1823; joined Bombay judicial service 1852; retired as judge of small cause court 1879; author and social reformer; popularly known as 'Lokahitvadi'; member of Bombay legislative council 1880-2; diwan of Ratlam state 1884; d. 1892.


14 See Prabhakar, 10 October 1852, quoted in Bombay Gazette, 16 October 1852, and a letter from 'N' to the editor, Bombay Gazette, 24 November 1852.

15 For the proceedings of the meeting, see Spectator, 1 March 1852, and Proceedings of the Madras Branch of the British Indian Association, and of the Deccan Association, pp. 3-11.

Pillai,16 who, in his opening remarks, alluded to the formation of the British Indian Association at Calcutta and the appointment by it of a paid agent in London—facts of which, he said, they had already 'been informed by the newspapers'. He also alluded to the communication received by 'a member of our body' from the secretary of the Calcutta association, soliciting the cooperation of the people of Madras, and remarked: 'Upon this [last] point my own idea is, that it is advisable to form a branch society, and thus join our grievances with those of our brethren in Bengal.' The meeting resolved that 'a society be formed under the designation of the "Madras Branch of the British Indian Association at Calcutta"'. It also adopted a set of rules for the branch association—closely modelled on those of the Calcutta association—which provided, among other things, for a committee of management which was to 'correspond with the British Indian Association at Calcutta, and adopt necessary measures to submit representations to the authorities in England, and to act generally for the Association'. Though the committee of management was dominated by the mercantile element, it also contained representatives of other groups. C. Y. Mudaliar17 was elected president of the association and V. Ramanujachari18 its secretary. But the prime mover of the association was G. Lakshminarasu Chetty.

Madras had held public meetings and sent petitions to the authorities on public questions even before, but it was not until February 1852 that it organized a political association. Early in the 1830s some of the leading Hindus of the town had formed 'the Madras Hindu Literary Society',19 obviously in imitation of the local predominantly European Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary of the Royal Asiatic Society. It was under the auspices of the Hindu Literary Society that the famous advocate-general of Madras, George Norton,20 who did so much to promote the cause of Hindu education and social reform in Madras, delivered in 1833-4 a series of lectures on 'the plan of government and the system of administration of justice in India'.21 Though the Society occasionally interested itself in public questions, it was essentially a literary club and not very active even as such.

Madras was then—and until a much later period—called 'the benighted presidency'. The indifference of the local government had combined with lack of indigenous initiative to retard
the progress of English education in the presidency. The efforts of missionaries to fill the gap were inhibited by their pronounced and almost aggressive proselytizing animus. 'Young Madras' was slower to emerge than 'Young Bengal' or even 'Young Bombay'. The means of internal

16 Merchant.

17 Mirasidar.

18 B. 1828; graduated 1848; later employed as translator in the local court.

19 Madras Male Asylum Herald, 26 September 1833, 16 July 1834. Kaveli Venkata Lakshmaniah, a pandit who was the only Indian member of the Madras Literary Society, was president of the Hindu Literary Society and V. Shrinivasiah its secretary.

20 B. 1791; advocate-general of Bombay 1825-7 and of Madras 1827-54; d. 1876.

21 See G. Norton, Rudimentals: Being a Series of Discourses ... (1841).

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communication in Madras were far less developed than those in Bengal or Bombay. The same was true of the press. The Hindus of Madras were resolute and bitter on the subject of caste privileges and on the integrity of their religion. They acted boldly as they felt earnestly in these matters. But, due to the circumstances mentioned above, political consciousness was much less organized in Madras than in Calcutta. The meeting on 26 February 1852 to form a political association in Madras was, therefore, an event in the history of the presidency. The Athenaeum wrote: 'It was curious to note how exactly the Hindus as well as the Mahomedans have copied the style of English deliberative assemblies.... But it must surely occur to them at times that a great change has taken place as compared with the days of their forefathers; when Chetties and Pillays, however naturally gifted, would hardly have dreamed of meeting to discuss the affairs of Government. What would old Mahomed Ali, or the early Hindu monarchs of the Carnatic have said to such a preposterous demand? We noticed in the meeting various wondering faces from the Northern Circars, the owners of which were evidently greatly puzzled to make out what was meant by the assemblage, and what could possibly come of it. But it needs no gift of prophecy to foretell that by and by, when he has learned to know his rights, the Asiatic will find voice enough to dilate upon them.'

22 Beginning as a branch society of the British Indian Association at Calcutta, the Madras association intended to place itself 'under the guidance of that body to whose superintendence the work of petitioning the Imperial Parliament, on points involving the joint interests of both Presidencies, should be committed'.23 but within a few months it changed its mind and decided to withdraw from its connexion 'as a branch Association subordinate to that of the Metropolis' and to constitute itself as an independent society.24 What had happened—according to the Madras association—was as follows.
While the committee of the Madras association was busy collecting information from various quarters regarding the subjects to be laid before Parliament, it received from the Calcutta association the sketch of a petition to which it was requested 'to consent ... with such suggestions thereon as ... [it] might deem requisite'. The committee of the Madras association considered the document to be highly objectionable on many grounds: it 'related almost wholly to plans and recommendations of change in the Government of this country, for the exaltation of the highest classes of the Hindus, while it left almost untouched the pitiable condition of the middling and lower classes, and was in various respects unsuitable to the circumstances of the inhabitants of this Presidency', it went beyond 'the grand object for which they were constituted, the plain representation of tangible grievances and asking remedies thereto'. The committee of the Madras association realized that 'there were many and important points in which a joint interest could not be taken; and others in which there could not always be a joint concurrence'. There was also 'the uncertainty of the expenditure attending a connection with the Calcutta Association'. What further annoyed the committee of the Madras association was the intelligence received, while it was still considering the draft petition sent by the British Indian Association, that the London agent of the metropolitan association had circulated the document in England.25 The committee of the Madras association might well have felt that the metropolitan association was treating the subordinate association in the same cavalier fashion as the metropolitan government treated the subordinate government of Fort St. George.

A general meeting of the members and subscribers of the Madras Branch of the British Indian Association was held at the 'Association rooms' on 13 July 1852 and it was resolved that 'the Association do conduct their proceedings henceforth independently of the Calcutta Association'. The name of the association was altered to 'The Madras Native Association' and Malcolm Lewin, who had 'always expressed the most kindly feelings towards the native community', was requested to act as the agent of the association in England.26

The reasons advanced by the Madras association for its decision to sever its connexion with the Calcutta association do not appear to be entirely satisfactory. The petition drawn up by the British Indian Association of Calcutta was an able and well-written piece which dealt mainly with general subjects concerning the whole country. It contained many proposals which the Madras association might prudently have endorsed. In fact the petition submitted by the Madras Native Association to Parliament later in the year did adopt most of the proposals contained in the Calcutta petition—even those to which the Madras association had earlier taken objection as being too ambitious.27 On questions of a purely local character in which it had a distinct interest the Madras association could easily have submitted a separate petition. As to the supposed

22 Athenaeum, 28 February 1852.
23Spectator, 1 March 1852.
24Ibid., 16 July 1852, 4 April 1853.
57
offence given by the circulation of the Calcutta proposals in England while they were still under reference to Madras, the fault was not really that of the British Indian Association. The latter's agent in London, apprehending an early dissolution of Parliament and anxious that the British public should be apprised in time of the woes and wants of the people of India, had published the draft proposals on his own authority. The Hindus of Calcutta were politically more advanced than their co-religionists of Madras. The former had been at the game much longer. Their outlook was wider and their demands more far-reaching. The Hindus of Madras were still rather parochial in their outlook—thinking mainly of their own local grievances—and in political matters they had not yet learnt, like the Hindus of Calcutta, to think for themselves. G. Lakshminarasu Chetty, who was the leader of the Hindu community in Madras, was an intelligent and courageous man, but he appears to have relied too heavily on the advice of Harley, the editor of the Madras Crescent, and Lewin, the ex-judge of the sadar court. It is not unlikely that Harley and Lewin, especially the former, used their influence with Lakshminarasu Chetty to wean the Madras association from the British Indian Association at Calcutta.

Whatever the reasons, the split between the Calcutta and Madras associations was most unfortunate. It wrecked the possibility of presenting a joint Indian petition to Parliament. It negativised the claim of the Calcutta Hindus that their petition represented 'the sentiments entertained by themselves, and the most intelligent part of their native fellow-subjects all over the country'. The separate petitions presented by the associations of the three presidencies in 1852-3 did not have the same influence with Parliament as a joint petition would have had. The first major effort in India to achieve inter-provincial co-operation in political agitation had failed. Perhaps it was premature. But a long time was to elapse before it was made again.)

In education, wealth and public spirit Bombay was at this time second only to Calcutta, but it was the last of the presidency towns in India to organize a political association of its own. While Calcutta was already in the 1840s 'one vast English academy', Bombay's Elphinstone College and missionary schools were complaining of poor attendance. The Friend of India wrote in 1843: 'A native youth in Calcutta who has not a good English tongue and pen, is held in little or no estimation.' But Professor R. T. Reid noted on his arrival in Bombay early in 1848 that English education was at a discount in the town. While Young Bengal was in the early 1840s playing at patriotic associations, Young Bombay had nothing to boast of but 'a sort of historical debating club called the Native Literary Society, where the merits of the "dire Hannibal" and the guilt of Brutus were occasionally discussed', and even this was 'in a very languishing condition'. It was the establishment of the Students' Literary and Scientific Society at the Elphinstone College in 1848 which gave a powerful stimulus and useful direction to the energies
of Young Bombay. Calcutta had its first English newspaper in 1780 and its first vernacular newspaper in 1816. Bombay did not lag far behind. It saw its first English newspaper in 1789 and its first vernacular newspaper in 1822. But the subsequent development of the press was faster and more impressive in Calcutta than in Bombay.

Bombay was also far more difficult to move than Calcutta or Madras. Not only was the population of Bombay more mixed than that of Calcutta or Madras, no one community or group enjoyed absolute predominance in Bombay as it

28 Petition to Parliament from the Members of the British Indian Association, and Other Native Inhabitants of the Bengal Presidency, relative to the East India Company's Charter (1852), p. 1.

29 Friend of India, 11 April 1844.


31 Friend of India, 13 April 1843.

32 Called to the Irish bar 1853; taught jurisprudence at Elphinstone College, Bombay, for over a quarter of a century; d. 1883.

33 Proceedings of the Students' Literary and Scientific Society, Bombay, for the Years 1854-55 and 1855-56(1856), p. 2.

34 Ibid., p. 4.

35 Friend of India, 11 April 1844.

36 Friend of India, 13 April 1843.

37 Called to the Irish bar 1853; taught jurisprudence at Elphinstone College, Bombay, for over a quarter of a century; d. 1883.


39 Ibid., p. 4.

59 did in the other two presidency towns. The wealth and talent of Calcutta and Madras were possessed almost entirely by Hindus, but in Bombay they were shared, more or less equally, by all the three major communities of the town— Hindus, Muslims and Parsis. Bombay could not act effectively unless the cooperation of the leaders of all the three communities was forthcoming, and this could not be easily or hastily secured.

Noticing how even Poona had taken the lead over Bombay in organizing a political association, the Telegraph and Courier adduced another reason for the comparative slowness of Bombay. It said: 'The leading members of native society are men of wealth and position, who have been brought continually into contact with high European officials, and become, if not imbued with many of the feelings and views of these latter, at least disposed to regard public affairs with an eye rather of indolent content than of searching scrutiny and criticism. The younger and educated generation of natives, on the other hand, do not possess the standing or experience requisite to render their opinions of real and admitted weight; and like most young men, they are probably a shade too radical in their views, and more than a shade too enthusiastic in the expression of them. We apprehend the inaction of Bombay, while Poona is on the move, must be attributed to these peculiarities in the constitution of native society at the Presidency.'35 But the fact that Bombay was slower than even Poona and Madras to organize an association in 1852 was
probably due more than anything else to the serious Muslim-Parsi riots there in the latter half of 1851 which rudely disturbed the harmony of its civic life.

At last in August 1852 the Young Bombay party was able to persuade the more patriotic of the local gentry to take steps to organize a political association in Bombay. On the 26th of the month a public meeting was held at the Elphinstone Institution. It was attended by most of the leading merchants and bankers of the town—Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, Jew and Portuguese—besides the alumni of the Elphinstone College. The meeting resolved to establish a society called the 'Bombay Association'. The object of the Association was 'to ascertain the wants of the Natives of India living under the Government of this Presidency, and to represent from time to time, to the authorities, measures calculated to advance the welfare and improvement of the country'. The Association proposed 'to take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the enquiries now being made in England into the nature and constitution of the Indian Government, to represent to the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain, such reforms and improvements in the existing system of Government as are calculated to procure the most efficient administration of public affairs, and to secure the general welfare and interests of the people of India; and in connection with the latter objects this Association shall open communications with, and seek the co-operation of the Societies formed for the same purposes at Calcutta and Madras'. A constitution for the Association was adopted which provided for a general committee of management of not less than fifteen members, with Sir Jamshedji Jijibhai as honorary president, Jagannath Shankarseth as president, and Bhau Daji37 and Vinayakrao Jagannathji38 as joint secretaries.

The two notable speeches made at the meeting were those of Jagannath Shankarseth, the chairman, and Dadabhai Naoroji. then a teacher in the Elphinstone College but already the rising hope of the Young Bombay party. The former observed that 'the grand aim' of the meeting was 'to secure the happiness of millions of our countrymen' and that it could not but commend itself to everyone to whom his country and its people are dear'. He expressed the hope that the results of the meeting would 'prove beneficial to the people of this country, particularly the poorer portion who know little or nothing of the feelings of their rulers regarding them'. 'We are not in opposition to Government', he said, 'nor can Government be opposed to our objects, if it can be shown that the good of the country is what we seek. The Government have the power to do much good, and we have many proofs that they have the will also.... The Government are willing, I am sure, to do what good they can, and when they are correctly informed they will always be ready to act for the advantage of the people over whom they rule. But they are not in possession of full and correct information on all subjects connected with the welfare of the people. Besides their official sources of information, Government will be glad to have other channels of information on which they can rely. An Association like the one now established will doubtless be listened to with attention in respect to all matters which concern the wants and
wishes of the people, which of course Natives have better means of knowing than gentlemen whose time is engaged with the duties of their official situations. I feel confident that the Government will be glad to receive suggestions from an Association of respectable Natives who intend to enquire carefully what the interests of the people may require, and seek to promote those interests in a temperate manner through the cooperation of the authorities themselves.'40

Dadabhai Naoroji remarked: 'The word "Grievance" has nowadays become very common—it is in the mouth of everybody. But I apprehend, few have any idea of the real import of the term. Under the British Government, we do not suffer any great Zulam [oppression]; we are comparatively happier under this kind government than we would be likely to be under any other. Whatever evil we have to complain of, originates from one cause, namely, the ignorance of European officers, come fresh from home, with regard to many of the habits, customs, and usages prevalent in this country; these officers may pass laws or regulations injurious to the Natives, and yet fancy they (officers) have done their duty conscientiously. The authorities think them to be right, while the Natives

37 B. 1821; physician and antiquarian; d. 1874.

38 Son of Jagannath Shankarseth; b. 1831?; merchant; d. 1874.

39 B. 1825; began career as teacher but later took to business; first Indian member of British Parliament 1892-5; president of Indian National Congress 1886, 1893 and 1906; d. 1917.

40 Bombay Gazette, 27 August 1852.

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think otherwise. But if an Association like this be in existence we can then suggest improvements when the Draft of an Act is published. Those suggestions emanating from such an Assembly must be listened to and perhaps adopted. The real grievances that I am aware of are those relative to the state of the Kunbis [peasants] in the interior, and the judicial and revenue systems. But we want facts regarding all these, and the present meeting is one step in the enquiry.'41

The British Indian Association of Calcutta was the first in 1852 to come out with its petition to Parliament. The petition began by expressing 'the deepest sentiments of loyalty and fidelity to Her Majesty' entertained by Indians 'as subjects of the Crown of Great Britain' and their sincere desire for 'the permanence of the British supremacy in India, which has ensured to them freedom from foreign incursions and intestine dissensions, and security from spoliation by lawless power'. But, said the petition, while Indians acknowledged 'the blessings of an improved form of government, and ... many of the advantages incidental to their connection with one of the greatest and most prosperous nations', they could not but feel that they had 'not profited by their connection with Great Britain, to the extent which they had a right to look for'.42 The petition referred to the Charter Act of 1833 and remarked that it had disappointed Indians because it had made no provision 'for those benefits which the circumstances of India notoriously required', for example, the relaxation of the pressure of the revenue system, the promotion of public works,
'the encouragement of the manufactures and commerce of the country, which had been depressed in consequence of throwing open the trade with India', the abolition of 'gigantic monopolies', the improvement of the judiciary and the police, the education of the people, 'the appointment to the higher offices, of persons better qualified, by their experience, capacity, and knowledge of the languages and laws of the country, than those who were heretofore sent out, usually before they had emerged from their state of adolescence', and 'the admission of the natives to a participation in those rights which are conceded by all constitutional governments, and which would qualify them to enjoy the benefit of free institutions at a future period'. Their feeling of disappointment with the Charter Act of 1833, said the petition, had been deepened by their perceiving that, despite the assurance contained in section 87 of the Act, Indians were not appointed to any but subordinate posts.43

The petition of the British Indian Association averred that as 'the governments of remote dependencies of the empire are generally liable to be ill conducted, particularly when those dependencies are of the magnitude to which Her Majesty's dominions in India have at this day attained', Parliament should have more frequent opportunities of reviewing them, and it suggested that

41 Ibid.

42 Petition to Parliament from the Members of the British Indian Association ..., p. 2.

43 Ibid., pp. 2-4.

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'the term of the arrangements, which may be next entered upon the government of this country, should not be extended beyond ten years'.44 The petition condemned the existing system of 'dual government' of India at 'home' and recommended that the future government of India should be vested in one body, consisting of 12 members—half of whom might be nominated by the Crown, the other half elected by a popular body. The petition demanded that 'the functions of the Supreme Government [in India] should be limited to the objects which more appropriately belong to it, namely, the disposal of political and military affairs, a control over the Governors of the several presidencies [Bengal having a separate governor of its own], and a veto on the laws prepared by a Legislative Council specially appointed'.45 The petition described the union of political or executive power with the legislative as being anomalous and pregnant with injury to the interests of the people and demanded that 'the Legislature of India should be a body not only distinct from the persons in whom the political and executive powers are vested, but also possessing a popular character, so as in some respects to represent the sentiments of the people and to be so looked upon by them'. 'It is a most unprecedented circumstance', the petition said, 'that, though the natives of India have, for the best part of a century, been subjects of the Crown of Great Britain, they have not, to this day, been admitted to the smallest share in the administration of the affairs of their country.'46

The Calcutta petition also pointed out how the deliberations of the existing legislative council were carried on behind closed doors and how the government paid no attention to popular
remonstrances. As an instance illustrating the latter grievance, it referred to the protests made by the people of Bengal and Madras against the recent Lex Loci Act which 'were not even noticed by the Government'. It urged 'that the Legislature of British India be placed on the footing of those enjoyed by most of the Colonies of Her Majesty, and that legislation be carried on with open doors, so that the people may have full knowledge of the proceedings, and an assurance that their wants and interests will not fail to be cared for'.

As regards the composition of this legislature, the petition suggested that it should consist of 17 members, of whom 12 were to be Indians ('three selected from among the most respectable and qualified native inhabitants of each presidency, to represent the natives thereof), and 5 Europeans (four appointed by the several provincial governments from among their senior civil officers to represent their interests and one appointed by the Crown, possessing legal qualification, who was to preside over the council).48

'Until the people are considered qualified to exercise the right of electing their own delegates to the Legislative Council,' said the Calcutta petition, 'the native members may be nominated by the Governor-General, in communication with the Governors of the several presidencies; but certain rules may, at the same time, be framed, by which the people of any presidency or province may have the power of objecting, on specified grounds, to any appointments so made....' The petition suggested that the legislative council so constituted 'should have the same powers in regard to the proposing, making and cancelling of laws, as are now vested in the Governor-General and the four ordinary members of Council, but that the laws framed by them should be submitted to the Supreme Government for confirmation'.49

The Calcutta petition demanded that Parliament should embody in an Act a declaration that the use of their religious laws and institutions is guaranteed to the natives; and that no laws subversive thereof shall at any time be passed by the local legislature or the Imperial Parliament, unless they be in consonance with the general feelings of the natives themselves'.50

The petition suggested that each presidency or province should have a separate governor, selected from among the ablest civil officers.51 It urged that the exorbitant salaries paid to the higher officials should be reduced and the money thus saved should be applied to public works and an increase in the allowances of the low-paid subordinate officials.52 It contained a severe
indictment of the Haileybury system and demanded that it should be scrapped, 'throwing public offices to public competition by British youths in the United Kingdom, and by native youths in India'. It suggested various improvements in the judicial, police and revenue systems of the country. It demanded an increased expenditure on works of public utility and the abolition of the salt and opium monopolies and of the excise and stamp duties. The petition complained that no provision on a suitable scale had been made for education and that the education of the mass of the people had as yet been completely neglected. While it urged the diffusion of education amongst the masses through the medium of the vernacular languages, the petition also suggested the establishment of a university in each presidency.

The petition of the British Indian Association objected to the maintenance of the ecclesiastical establishment in India out of the general revenues of the country. It pointed out that the government of India was for a mixed community, the majority of which was composed of Hindus and Muslims, and it was, therefore, inexpedient that the government should have any connexion with the appointment of ministers of any religion.

The Bombay Association was the next to dispatch its petition to Parliament early in November 1852. Though the last of the presidency associations to be organized, it was the quickest to draw up a petition, and this despite the fact that it suffered an early setback due to the secession of some of its prominent founder members and that its efforts to elicit information from the mofussil did not meet with much success owing to popular indifference and official antipathy.

Like the petition of the Calcutta British Indian Association, the petition of the Bombay Association commenced by paying a compliment to British rule but demanding its improvement. 'Your Petitioners', it read, 'are fully sensible of, and are glad to acknowledge, the many blessings they enjoy under the British rule; but these they attribute to the British character, rather than to the plan of government which it has hitherto been deemed expedient to provide for India; and
which, being the result of circumstances, and not of design, is but little suited to the present state of the country, and to the fair demands of the people of India.'\(^7\)

The Bombay petition, like the one from Calcutta, condemned the 'dual government' of India and suggested that 'an Indian Council, not placed under a Minister of the Crown, but of which the latter should form the President, and be directly responsible to Parliament, would form a more simple, efficient, and responsible Home Government than that now existing. Though it did not consider it necessary to offer opinions on the details of how this council was to be constituted, the Bombay petition remarked that ability and previous residence in India should be indispensable qualifications for the membership of the council.\(^8\)

The petition of the Bombay Association complained that the local government was conducted with a secrecy which was 'most injurious to the character and best interests of the Government itself, and most unsatisfactory to the governed'. It condemned the excessive centralization of power in the hands of the governor-general and remarked that the efficiency of the local governments of Bombay and Madras was 'very much impaired, and the despatch of public business considerably retarded, by the necessity of continual reference to the Supreme Government at Calcutta, for its sanction for the most trifling matters; and changes recommended by the local Government, and supported by the authority of its experience, are frequently rejected by the Supreme Power, with no local knowledge to guide its decisions'.\(^9\)

Like the British Indian Association, the Bombay Association, too, in its petition complained of the costliness of the British administration in India, the exorbitant salaries paid to British officials, the defects of the Haileybury system, the exclusion of Indians from higher employments and the drawbacks of the existing civil and judicial arrangements. The Bombay petition asserted that the

51 Petition to Parliament from the Members of the Bombay Association, and Other Native Inhabitants of the Bombay Presidency, relative to the British-Indian Government (1852), pp. 3-4.

58 Ibid., pp. 5-8.

59 Ibid., p. 9.

60 Lords Ellenborough, 60 Elphinstone, 61 and others.

The Bombay petition lamented 'the extreme deficiency of the means of internal communication in this Presidency' and suggested that five per cent of the amount of land revenue should be annually expended in the district where it was levied in making roads, bridges, tanks and other works of similar utility. It, however, averred that 'all the improvements sought for, or in the
power of your Honorable House to make, are but secondary in importance compared with the 
necessity of introducing a complete system of education for the masses of the people', and 
recommended an increased expenditure for educational purposes and the establishment of a 
university in each presidency.63

The petition of the Bombay Association concluded by asking Parliament to 'limit the period of 
existence of any future Government of India to ten years, in order that the interests of so many 
millions of British subjects may be more frequently brought under the consideration of 
Parliament'.64

The Madras Native Association was the last to submit its petition to Parliament in 1852. It spent 
about a year in collecting facts and figures and 'drew up a comprehensive document which, 
according to the Friend of India, was 'one gigantic bill of indictment' and 'tainted by a bitterness 
of tone, and a kind of sulky hostility to the Government'.65 Unlike the petitions from Calcutta 
and Bombay, the Madras petition indulged in no customary compliments to British rule and 
straightaway proceeded to enumerate 'some few of the many grievances and wants belonging 
more immediately to the inhabitants of the Madras Presidency'.66 According to the petition, the 
grievances of the people of Madras arose 'principally from the excessive taxation, and the 
 vexations which accompany its collection; and the insufficiency, delay, and expense of the 
Company's Courts of Law' and their chief wants were 'the construction of roads, bridges, and 
works for the supply of irrigation; ... a better provision for the education of the people ... and a 
form of local government more conducive to the happiness

60Edward Law, first earl of Ellenborough (1790-1871). President of board of control 1828-30, 
1834-5, 1841, 1858; governor-general of India 1842-4.

61 John, thirteenth Baron Elphinstone (1807-60). Governor of Madras 1837-42 and of Bombay 
1853-60.

62 Petition to Parliament from the Members of the Bombay Association ..., p. 11.

63 Ibid., pp. 20-3.

64 Ibid., p. 23.

65Friend of India, 5 May 1853.

66 Petition to the Imperial Parliament from the Members of the Madras Native Association, and 
Other Native Inhabitants of the Madras Presidency, for Redress of Grievances: in connection 
with the Expiration of the East India Company's Charter (1852), p. 1.

66

of the subject and the prosperity of the country'.67
The petition of the Madras Native Association contained a detailed examination of the history and present working of the zamindari and raiyatwari systems in the presidency and pronounced both of them to be 'the instruments of injustice and oppression'.68 It was especially critical of the raiyatwari system, 'the operation of which has reduced the agricultural classes to the deepest poverty and destitution',69 and appealed for the restoration of the ancient village system which prevailed in that region before the Muslim conquest.70 It also severely condemned the tax on trades and occupations (mutarpha), the salt monopoly and liquor traffic.71 The petition characterized the existing judicial system as being extremely expensive, slow, complicated and imperfect and recommended a return to the old indigenous institution of the panchayat.12 It accused the local government of indifference to the promotion of the education of the people and to the construction of public works. It complained of the impossibility of getting access to public records and of the wasteful and anachronistic system of maintaining revenue records in Marathi.73

The petition of the Madras Native Association reiterated the dissatisfaction of the Madras Hindus with their local government 'for its proselytizing propensities' and with the government of India for its interference with the Hindu law of inheritance. About the latter the petition said: 'Your Petitioners would be wanting in their duty towards the entire Hindu community from one end of India to the other, if they omitted to complain to Your Honorable House respecting the enormous power granted to the Governor General in Council, and the unjust partiality with which that power has been exercised, in what it has been pleased to term the Lex Loci; by which is meant an enactment, subverting, in one of its most essential and venerated points, the Hindu Law of Inheritance, guaranteed to them on various occasions ... .'74 Like the Calcutta petition, the Madras petition, too, demanded that the government of India should dissociate itself from the ecclesiastical establishment so that 'the people of this country may be no further taxed for the maintenance of a number of individuals who are of no earthly use to them'.75

The petition from Madras, like those from Calcutta and Bombay, condemned the Haileybury system and demanded an increased employment of indigenous agency in the administration of the country. It said that 'justice to the masses of the people in general, and towards the more intelligent of them in particular, requires that the hitherto prevalent system of governing the country through

67 Ibid
68 Ibid., p. 2.
69 Ibid
70 Ibid., p. 13.
71 Ibid., pp. 16-19.
72 Ibid. pp. 22-8.
73 Ibid., pp. 28-32.
the exclusive medium of a Covenanted Civil Service should be, if not wholly, at least partially, abandoned' and suggested that' the educated and trained natives, now acting as proxies in the performance of the functions nominally assigned to these young and incompetent Civilians, . . . [be] placed, under their own personal responsibility'.76

Like the Bombay Association, the Madras Native Association in its petition to Parliament demanded greater independence for local governments and blamed 'the systematic obstructiveness of Supreme Government' for checking all improvement. In its view 'the grand desideratum for the just and efficient government of each presidential division' was to provide the latter with a legislative council, 'after the precedent of the neighbouring Crown settlement of Ceylon', distinct from the executive and carrying on its deliberations with open doors, and containing both official and non-official members 'in equal number, six or seven each', the former to be nominated by the government, 'the latter to be selected by the Governor, out of a list of eighteen or twenty-one persons, chosen by the votes of the ratepayers in Madras, and of persons eligible to serve on the Grand and Petty Juries'.77

The Madras petition averred that 'a single council of the whole of India, although constituted on the same popular principle, would never be able to distribute justice and effective government to a hundred and twenty millions of people, spread over an area of upwards of a million and a quarter of square miles, and comprising so great a variety of races and languages: the more distant provinces, as is the case at present, would be neglected ... while the nearer ones would absorb all its attention, and engross the whole of its indulgence: whereas by granting to each Presidency a local Government for the management of its internal affairs, the members of it would watch over the interests of the whole circuit committed to their charge; of which, from their local knowledge they would be enabled, and from their sympathy would be induced, to seek and pursue the welfare and progressive improvement'.78

The Madras petition also recommended that the supreme council of India should, 'in some degree at least, partake of the popular element recommended to be embodied in the Councils of the Presidencies; which should have their respective interests equally represented by a like number of members'. As regards the 'home government' of India, the petition complained that from neither the Court of Directors nor the Board of Control could 'the people obtain any redress, nor even the slightest notice of their petitions and memorials', and it suggested that they should be fused into one or substituted by another agency presided over by a secretary of state for the affairs of India. The petition did not enter into the details of how this new agency was to be constituted, but suggested that the persons comprising it should have an interest in India and

74 Ibid., pp. 32-3.

75 Ibid., p.32..

67

76 Ibid., pp. 38-9.

77 Ibid., pp. 37-8.
The Madras petition demanded that a full and thorough investigation should be conducted into the administration of India by means of 'an impartial Commission ... assembled in India; composed of persons both in and out of public employ, and of Europeans and natives conjointly', and in order that such a commission might have sufficient time to complete its work, the present charter of the Company should be nominally continued. As to the future, the petition suggested a parliamentary review of Indian affairs at stated intervals, 'if practicable triennially, but quinquennially, at the latest'.

Though totally unconnected and widely separated, the three presidency associations had, in 1852, put forward demands which were strikingly similar. This can easily be accounted for. The government of India was one. Even the character of the local administrations was, broadly speaking, similar. The people in Bengal, Bombay and Madras had, therefore, many common grievances, such as the cumbrous system of 'dual government' at home legislation without due regard to the feelings and interests of the subject people, the exclusion of Indians from higher employment and any share in the government of their country, the costliness of the administration, the ignorance and incompetence of covenanted civilians, the neglect of education and public works, excessive taxation, the salt and opium monopolies, and the defects of the revenue, judicial and police arrangements. The development of English education and the English language press had given rise to a small nucleus of men in the presidency and other towns who had a common stock of ideas and aspirations. It was these men—belonging mainly to the landholding, mercantile and professional classes—who organized and controlled the associations at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Little surprise, therefore, that their petitions in 1852 complained of the same things and in almost the same manner.

The slight variations of content and emphasis in the three petitions were mainly the result of local circumstances. The people of the subordinate presidencies of Bombay and Madras naturally demanded greater independence for their local governments, while the people at the metropolis were more concerned with the constitution of the supreme government. The associations at Calcutta and Madras were composed entirely of Hindus, hence they did not hesitate to denounce state interference with Hindu usages and customs, while the Bombay Association was silent on this point probably because it contained men of all creeds. Similarly, the marked reticence of the Bombay Association on questions of land and agriculture may be ascribed to the fact that the townspeople of Bombay were less conversant with these questions than the zamindars of Bengal or the mirasidars of Madras. The able and ambitious petition of the British Indian Association reflected the advanced political consciousness of Calcutta. The short and sober petition from Bombay bore testimony to the practicalness.
of the local population, while the length and bitterness of the Madras petition were due as much to its intrepid draftsmen—Lakshminarasu Chetty and Harley—as to the genuineness of its many complaints.

The majority of the Anglo-Indian press was hostile to the East India Company and played a prominent part in the charter agitation in India in the early 'fifties. Day after day, week after week, it exposed the evils of the Company's government, ventilated Indian grievances, kept the country informed of the progress of the charter question in England, and called upon Indians to organize, agitate, or be for ever fallen. 'Our native fellow-subjects ought to recollect', wrote the Bombay Telegraph and Courier in February 1852, 'that if they allow the present time to pass by without acting, they can have no hope of any reform in the system of Indian Government for at least a quarter of a century.'81 The Madras Spectator wrote in June 1852: 'If India were true to herself; if, instead of idle murmurings of discontent, without union, force, or purpose, the natives would only rouse themselves and plead their own cause, pointing out the wrongs sustained by them and the redress which they need; they may depend on it that they would find no reluctant or niggard hearers.'82 Similar sentiments were expressed by many other Anglo-Indian newspapers.

When, however, the agitation in India got under way and the petitions of the various presidency associations were published, some of the Anglo-Indian newspapers which had earlier blessed the movement—probably because of their antipathy to Leadenhall Street—began to find fault with it. 'Indian patriots' were accused of being narrow-minded, exclusive, selfish and unrepresentative and their demands, especially those relating to the legislative councils and the civil service, were condemned as being extravagant. Referring to the demand of the Bombay Association that 'the Councils of the local Governments should, in matters of general policy and legislation, be opened so as to admit of respectable and intelligent Natives taking a part in the discussion of matters of general interest to the country', the Bombay Times averred that it was unlikely to be conceded 'for a century to come'.83 Even the Telegraph and Courier, which had earlier advised Indians to demand that 'a certain proportion of the Council should be elected by the people instead of appointed by the Government',84 disapproved of the Bombay Association's demand.85 The Bombay Gazette—another erstwhile friend and advocate of Indians—remarked that 'when the time comes, for putting Natives on a footing of equality with Europeans in this country, it: will be time for Europeans to be looking out for another home'.86 The Madras Athenaeum refused to 'lend the slightest countenance to the notion which appears

81 Telegraph and Courier, 26 February 1852.

82 Spectator, 18 June 1852.

83 Bombay Times, 30 October 1852.

84 Telegraph and Courier, 29 March 1852.

85 Ibid., 1-2 November 1852.
to be uppermost in the minds of leading Hindus, that English institutions can be established in this part of the Queen's dominions, or that the country can be governed by and for the people', and added: 'We may as well attempt to assimilate the natural productions of the two hemispheres as strive to naturalise in the East the growth of Anglo-Saxon civilization.'

'We do not', wrote the Madras Spectator, 'consider the native community yet fitted to hold the highest positions under Government .... It is not mental incapacity, nor yet moral unworthiness, that disqualified the Hindus for taking the foremost place under the British government of India, but the lack of that training, and those habits of mind, which are only to be attained through a course of Christian ethics.'

The petition of the British Indian Association was the most ambitious of the Indian petitions and it was most severely criticized by Anglo-Indian newspapers, and by none more so than the so-called Friend of India, which, incidentally, was one of the few 'court journals' in the country.

Referring to the demand of the British Indian Association for a reconstitution of the legislative council for India, the Friend of India wrote: 'To place the power of the purse, the power of granting or refusing supplies, and the power of making all laws in the hands of the Natives, is, in fact, to transfer the whole Government to them.... Indeed, after the Natives have thus been placed in a position to control the administration, in all questions of vital importance, it would be much better for us to return with our ships, and leave the Government in the hands of the Committee of the British Indian Association, than to retain the responsibility of governing India, without the power of acting either efficiently or benevolently.' As regards the proposal of the British Indian Association for the abolition of the exclusive privileges of the British civil service in India, the Friend of India remarked: 'There could be no inducement to educate men expressly for the Indian Service, when they would find themselves, on entering it, constantly jostled, and liable to be superseded by others. Whenever the Civilian finds that he had no more claim to any office whatever, than Baboo Gudadhur Misser, or the Sheikh Abdoolla, that Service must, ipso facto, become extinct.'

Writing on the same subject about a year later, the Friend of India said: 'Every nation and every free colony has a right to employ any agency it pleases. The principle has been acknowledged in Canada, is being acknowledged in Australia, and will be acknowledged at the Cape. We only submit, that to acknowledge it in this country is to acknowledge also the right to self-government. Logically speaking, the consequence is inevitable. If a Native, because he is a Native, has an equal or a preferential right to a Judgeship, why not to a higher appointment, why not to all? The only possible argument, if the principle of right is once acknowledged against such appointments, is that they would not be for the interest of England, which is simply the argument.

87 Athenaeum, 16 September 1852.

88 Spectator, 19 September 1853.
In August 1852 an Anglo-Indian newspaper of Calcutta, called the Indian Charter, bemoaned the general apathy which prevailed in England towards Indian affairs and enquired, 'Where is the British India Society? ... Is it dead, or sleeps it only?' The enquiry elicited no response. A long time was to elapse before the agitation in India and the persistent efforts of the agents in England of Indian associations could succeed in directing the attention of John Bull to the dusky millions of Hindustan. On 12 March 1853 a meeting of the friends of India was held in Charles Street, St. James's Square, London, 'with a view of bringing public opinion to bear on the Imperial Parliament in the case of India, so as to obtain due attention to the complaints and claims of the inhabitants of that vast empire'. The meeting, which was presided over by Danby Seymour, resolved to establish an India Reform Society, with John Dickinson as its secretary and its headquarters at 12 Haymarket. The affairs of the Society were to be conducted by a committee which included prominent representatives of the press, Parliament, Anglo-India and Manchester, some of whom had been associated with the earlier British India Society. The chief object of the India Reform Society was to secure a full and impartial inquiry into Indian affairs, preferably on the spot. The Society did not confine its activities to Britain. Soon after its formation, it opened communications with the associations in India, which not only endorsed its demand for a full and impartial investigation but also supplied it with information and funds. The India Reform Society appeared too late in the field materially to affect the legislation regarding the future government of India, but it did enliven the debate over the Indian question both in and out of Parliament. The vigorous attacks of its able pamphleteers and the twenty-odd M.P.s, headed by John Bright and called the 'Young Indians', who sat on its committee, damaged the Company but failed to destroy it.

Thanks to the exertions of the 'friends of India', Indian petitions received some interesting notices in the British press. Commenting upon the Bombay petition, the Leader wrote that it was 'conceived in a thoroughly English spirit' which proved that the people of Bombay had made 'the first step from barbaric to political life' and that they were 'actually fitting themselves to receive, if not to extort, a due share of Self-Government, under British institutions'.

90 Ibid., 30 June 1853.

91 Quoted in Telegraph and Courier, 25 August 1852.

92 For the proceedings of the meeting, see Daily News (London), 15 March 1853, and Spectator (Madras), 9 May 1853.

93 B. 1820; M.P. for Poole 1850-68; visited India 1853-4; joint secretary to board of control 1855-8; d. 1877.

94 B. 1815; businessman and writer on Indian affairs; d. 1876.
advised the British government to 'imitate on the Ganges and the Indus the course which it is taking on the St. Lawrence ... to apply the Canadian principle to their' Indian policy'. The Examiner considered the Calcutta petition to be 'the evidence of a peaceful revolution in Asiatic society' and warned that the British rulers of India 'must look to change and provide for it, or it will provide for them'.

The proceedings of the parliamentary committees appointed to inquire into Indian affairs and the debates in Parliament on the question of the renewal of the Company's charter were regularly reported and commented upon by the press in India. The fact that most of the witnesses examined by the parliamentary committees were servants of 'the Leadenhall Jointstockery' gave cause for grave dissatisfaction in India, which was increased by the knowledge that the Aberdeen ministry intended at the earliest opportunity to renew the Company's charter with only slight modifications. In May 1853 Bombay, Calcutta and Madras—acting probably under the advice of the London India Reform Society—again submitted separate petitions to Parliament, demanding that a parliamentary commission should be sent out to India to conduct a full and complete inquiry into Indian affairs.

The British government's inept handling of the charter question united Indians and non-official Anglo-Indians in common opposition to it. The Government of India Bill introduced in Parliament by Sir Charles Wood in the summer of 1853 was almost universally condemned in India. On 19 July 1853, Theodore Dickens, an old friend and advocate of Indians, addressed an open letter to the 'Fellow-subjects of the Crown of England, Hindoo and Mahomedan Natives of Bengal' in which he impressed upon them the urgent need for energetic action before it was too late and assured them of his assistance in their endeavours. 'The Double Government of India', he wrote, 'is to be continued! Think on what you have obtained, and on what you have to hope from that system of Government! ... The covenanted service is to be a competition service. A competition among the educated youth of England, Ireland and Scotland. What share will you have in that competition and its rewards? None! The competition, otherwise a most wise and just provision, but rivets the bolts which shut in your faces the gates of exclusion. Awake, arise, or be for ever fallen. This

97 Quoted in ibid., 23 May 1853.

98 Quoted in ibid., 16 December 1853.

99 Englishman, 20 May 1853.

100 Second Petition to Parliament from the Members of the Bombay Association ... (1853); Supplementary Petition to the Imperial Parliament from the Members of the Madras Native
Association ... (1853). For the text of the 1853 petition of the British Indian Association, see Report of the Proceedings of a Public Meeting of the Native Community Held in the Town Hall, on Friday, the 29th July, 1853 (1853), pp. 41-9.

101 B. 1800; M.P. 1832-65; chancellor of exchequer 1846-52; president of board of control 1852-5; first lord of admiralty 1855-8; secretary of state for India 1859-66; created Viscount Halifax 1866; d. 1885.

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bill is not for 20 years, but for an indefinite period of time. You have learnt the weight these times lend to your petitions ... petition again, but mildly. There is a might in mildness, be firm and claim your rights, but talk not of your numbers nor hint at physical force. In this war, as in others, the moral is to the physical as three to one, nay as one thousand to one.'102

Encouraged by the stirring appeal of Dickens, the leaders of the Indian community at Calcutta called a public meeting at the town hall on 29 July 1853. Though attended by a few European friends, the meeting was 'strictly a native one', so that 'it may not afford any opportunity to persons in England, who choose to misrepresent us, to insinuate that in all our political movements we are led and guided by the European inhabitants, specially by members belonging to the legal profession'.103 The meeting was attended by about 4,000 people and the Hindoo Patriot called it a 'national demonstration'.104 It was presided over by the venerable Raja Radhakant Deb, but the principal speakers at the meeting—R.G. Ghose, P.C. Mitra and the Reverend K.M. Banerji—were of the Young Bengal party.

The meeting resolved that while it was 'the duty as well as interest of the native British subjects of India to remain faithfully attached to the British Government ... on an occasion like the present, every legitimate and constitutional means ought to be employed for the redress of their grievances'. It pronounced the Wood scheme of June 1853 unsatisfactory and disappointing, especially because of 'the absence of any provision for the extension of public works, the admission of even a single native into the Legislative Council, and the virtual exclusion of the educated natives from the Civil Service by the continuance of the Haileybury College as the exclusive medium of admission into that service'.105

A petition to the House of Commons was adopted at the meeting which characterized 'the non-admission of natives into the new constitution of the Legislative Council' as 'a deviation ... from what is become the habitual and strong current of imperial policy towards the colonies' and added: 'to the smallest colonies Parliament has given Legislative Councils in every case, partly composed of non-official members, and ... in the constitution of the Legislative Council of Ceylon, there is no necessary exclusion of the natives of the Island as in the proposed scheme for the Legislative Council of India'. The petition abstained from 'suggesting any number of natives as the proper or desirable proportion of native members; being well assured that if the prejudice against them were broken through by the admission of only a single native member, experience would lead to the admission of the proper number'. It referred to 'the peculiar circumstances of the British power in India' and how they were 'used in argument
as grounds of distrust', but it urged that those very circumstances in fact furnished 'the strongest reason for endeavouring to win the attachment of the native community' and that 'nothing would so greatly conduce to this most desirable end ... as a liberal admission of natives to places of trust'. It asserted that Indians possessed some advantages which qualified them for admission to the legislative council: 'they know better than it is possible any European should know the social interests and feelings of the natives of India; they better know in what manner native laws and customs affect native society; and it may be inferred they are well qualified to discuss and advise in what manner those laws and customs may best be modified for adaptation to an advancing civilization and imperial ideas'. The petition discounted the fear that 'natives would be found to obstruct any legislative changes required by the interests of society'. It also pointed out that the powers of the legislative council were of a very limited character and that the governor-general and Parliament possessed overriding authority.106

The petition condemned the virtual exclusion of Indians from the covenanted civil service by retaining Haileybury College as the exclusive medium of admission to it. It demanded that the examination for the covenanted civil service should be held in India also and that Indians should be 'raised to the highest employments and properly remunerated in all employments'.107

Neither the Calcutta meeting of 29 July 1853, nor its memorial, reported the London correspondent of the Friend of India, 'excited the most homoeopathic particle of attention' in Britain.108 The temporary interest in Indian affairs aroused in Britain had already waned. The Parliament and people of Britain were tired of the shower of petitions, pamphlets and leading articles on the Indian question. The governor-general, Dalhousie, wrote home that it was not safe to prolong the discussion of the Indian question in Parliament as it was encouraging agitation in India and urged immediate legislation.109

Commenting upon the outcome of the charter agitation, the Friend of India wrote that 'the patriot clique of the Presidency towns' had 'gained nothing'. 'Not only has the British Ministry', it added, 'refused to place all political power in their hands, or raise the disunited section of an insignificant party to the dominion of the East,—for their demands in reality went this length—but it has treated them, and their petitions with something approaching to contempt. The long-winded production which was sent home from Calcutta, and which demanded that the Baboos of the metropolis should be invested with supreme legislative power, has scarcely excited even a remark. It was never noticed in Committee, and scarcely alluded to in Parliament. The Madras petition has not been quite so completely overlooked. It has had the advantage, such as it
is, of being declared in Parliament to be "utterly untrue". The petitioners have not secured a seat in Council or an entrance into the covenanted service.'

But even the Friend of India, once it had got over its unworthy chuckle at the discomfiture of the educated classes in the presidency towns, conceded that their recent agitation had not been entirely in vain. 'That the dead lethargy of native society', it wrote, 'should be stirred by any means, was in itself an omen of good, and the educated classes learnt much in the progress of their agitation.'

Noticing the scant attention paid by the authorities in Britain to the petitions of the people of India, the Englishman had written in April 1853: 'How long is it supposed that the people of India, daily becoming more enlightened as to | their own rights and the doings of their rulers, will bear the misgovernment they have hitherto submitted to in patience. Just till a leader arises and no longer. They will, if no reform takes place, very soon be in a temper to get rid of the evils which they feel, without enquiring into those they know not of, and then what will be said by these great statesmen, these wise legislators, who declare the petitions of suffering millions disrespectful, not deserving attention. Have they ever read the petitions of the thirteen American provinces which preceded the war of independence. Surely these ought to afford a sufficient warning even to Dukes and fools, the latter of whom were said only to learn in the dear school of experience, but now even that school affords them no instruction and they proceed ignorantly and blindly to ruin.' The Friend of India had dismissed the Englishman's solemn warning with the remark: 'Is there no difference between the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers and the Calcutta Baboos, the only class of natives in Bengal who have expressed any very serious discontent?' But the veteran editor of the Englishman, who knew India better than the recent successor to J. C. Marshman in the editorial chair of the Friend of India, repeated the warning. He pointed out that discontent was 'more extensive than the limits of the Mahratta ditch' and though its expressions were likely to be stronger in Calcutta, where the English language was well understood and where people could speak out without danger, than in distant regions, where the dread of every man clothed with authority still prevailed, yet it was impossible that any Englishman not officially employed could have associated freely with Indians without being well aware of the strong sense of injustice which everywhere prevailed. 'Our columns', wrote the Englishman, 'do not record one out of hundreds of cases of oppression which are continually occurring, yet those we have presented to English readers are quite sufficient to rouse the deepest indignation. The Calcutta Baboos ... know perfectly well that these things are not the acts of the
Government, but are done in spite of the Government. Not so the people in general. They make no distinction between what is done by authority and under authority. To them everything is the act of the Sirkar, and nothing is forgotten.... The people of India, it is true, are not Cromwellians or Cameronians, but they are quite as much to be influenced by fanaticism as those celebrated opponents of despotism. It is by no means improbable that an Abd-el-Kadir should spring up in India, and then where would a single hand be held up for the Company. It is not merely idle, it is dangerous to deceive ourselves on this subject. The generation which was relieved from the Mahratta spear by British arms is passing away. We are no longer deliverers, but grinding tax-gatherers and unjust judges. This cannot last .... Either the East India Company must be abolished or British supremacy in India cannot last. The people cannot much longer be governed by Haileybury students. If it is wished to uphold that regime, steamers must be prohibited, the Press silenced, and all the educational institutions which have been reared with so much labour and expense, abolished. The natives of India are beginning to find out that there is not that difference between them—→ selves and their white fellow-servants, which justifies paying one of the latter as much as twenty of the former for the same, or less work. Every day is adding to the number of those capable of making the comparison . .. '114

Those, however, who knew India and were discerning enough had little doubt that any immediate danger to British rule in India came not from the spread of English education but from its ignorance, not from Young India but from Old India. Commenting upon the remarks of Lords Ellenborough and Brough-ton115 that English education would lead to the loss of the Indian empire,116 the Madras Spectator wrote: 'We do not think that the Madras Association have any more desire to get rid of English Government, than the most uninformed natives in the provinces. They see its defects and shortcomings, and very properly seek their correction, but are sensible of its advantages as well. More liberty and a larger share of the loaves and fishes, every man of course desires, but there is not one among them—we are speaking of the Hindus—who would vote for the displacement of Sir Henry Pottinger and the restoration of the Nawab of the Carnatic, if the question were made an open one tomorrow.... There is no risk of losing India through her illumination, she is more likely to be lost in her ignorance.. . .'117

In England an enlightened ex-civilian, Sir Charles E. Trevelyan,118 expressed a similar view before the Indian committee of the House of Lords in 1853.

114 Englishman, 29 April 1853.
115 John Cam Hobhouse, Baron Broughton de Gyfford (1786-1869). President of board of control 1835-41, 1846-52.

116 For the remarks of Ellenborough and Broughton about the ultimate result of English education in India, see Hansard, Third Series, 1853, vol. cxxiv, col. 635, and vol. cxxv, col. 24.

117 Spectator, 6 June 1853.

118 B. 1807; brother-in-law of T.B. Macaulay; joined East India Company's service in 1826 and retired in 1838 as secretary to board of revenue; secretary to British treasury 1840-59; governor of Madras 1859-60; finance member of viceroy's council 1863-5; d. 1886.

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As suggested by his opinion 'as to the effect of education upon the probable maintenance of the British Government in India', he repeated what he had said in a celebrated pamphlet fifteen years earlier: 'According to the unmitigated native system, the Mahomedans regard us as Kafirs, or infidel usurpers of some of the finest realms of Islam, for it is a tenet of that dominant and warlike religion constantly to strive for political supremacy, and to hold all other races in subjection. According to the same original native views, the Hindoos regard us as mlechas, that is, impure outcasts, with whom no communion ought to be held; and they all of them, both Hindoo and Mahomedan, regard us as usurping foreigners, who have taken their country from them, and exclude them from the avenues to wealth and distinction. The effect of a training in European learning is to give an entirely new turn to the native mind. The young men educated in this way cease to strive after independence according to the original Native model, and aim at improving the institutions of the country according to the English model, with the ultimate result of establishing constitutional self-government.' Sir Charles added that English-educated Indians considered their British rulers as persons under whose protection their schemes for the regeneration of their country might gradually be worked out, whereas according to the original Indian view of political change, it was possible to sweep the British off the face of India in a day 'and as a matter of fact, those who look for the improvement of India according to this model are continually meditating and hatching plots and conspiracies with that object; whereas, according to the new and improved system, the object must be worked out by gradual steps, and ages may elapse before the ultimate end will be obtained, and in the meantime the minority, who already regard us with respect, and aim at regenerating their country with our assistance, will receive continual accessions, until in the course of time they become the majority; but when that will be, no one can say 120

The Bombay Gazette endorsed the opinion of Trevelyan and remarked: '... there is no man knowing India at all, who would not admit that if for an indefinite period to come, any danger to our rule could really occur, it must be by a genuine Native outbreak, one with which young India could have no hearty sympathy, and which would certainly look upon it as a traitor, a renegade, and one given over hopelessly to heresy, irreligion, and the ideas of the foreigner.' The paper referred to the futile attempts of the Maratha sardars and educated young men of Poona to associate and how the decaying Maratha aristocracy saw in the needy, though intelligent, young men who aspired to direct them but impertinent and upstart adventurers, while the latter scarcely
concealed their contempt for the ignorance, the bigotry, the prejudice, and the arrogance of the former. 'In all too that young India does,' said the Bombay Gazette, 'how evident is the looking to ... European approbation. Nor is this to be smiled at merely

119 On the Education of the People of India (1838), pp. 187 ff.


as a weakness. That our educated young men aspire to become influential with their countrymen, to attain the proud position of leaders of their people, cannot be doubted; yet how singularly free are they from all suspicion even of pandering to their prejudices. In most Hindoo towns an agitation against cow-killing would be a thousand times more popular than petitions against the double government or the constitution of Haileybury, and would command a thousand times the funds and the signatures; yet not only does young India refuse all sympathy with gross prejudices of this kind, how certain so ever to achieve popularity by them, but even when the British Government is guilty of direct religious injustice, when ... it endows its own churches with the plundered endowments of Hindoo and Musselman priests, young India looks on calmly and abstains from availing itself of a grievance which it could scarcely agitate without associating itself with the superstitions of one side, and becoming obnoxious to whatever there is of bigotry on the other.' The Bombay Gazette pronounced educated Indians^ "essentially loyal' and described their position and feelings as follows: 'They undoubtedly aspire to power and influence, but are neither ignorant nor reckless in their agitation. They know their own weakness, and that for many a long day to come (for many generations, we have no doubt) they must submit to serve, and to no party of their own countrymen would they submit so readily as to their present rulers, whose knowledge, whose ideas, whose political maxims they aspire to share, and to whom they seek incessantly to assimilate their countrymen.'121

[The authorities both in India and in England treated the agitation over the charter question with almost contemptuous indifference. The Friend of India remarked that the governor-general's council considered 'a despatch from the Court as of infinitely more importance than the bustle outside'.122 The Bombay Gazette wrote: '... we confess to a sickening of the heart when we think how small a space some of the terrible problems connected with the country appear to occupy in the mind of our legislators.'123

Had the British government, instead of resting assured with the biased testimony of the Company's servants and supporters, bothered to take note of what some experienced and impartial Anglo-Indians were saying and writing, it would have known that all was not well with India. There could, for example, be no more unexceptionable witness than Francis Horsley Robinson.124 He was no party man, nor had he any personal grievance against the Company. He had recently retired after thirty years of meritorious service in the North-Western Provinces. In his evidence before the parliamentary committee in June 1853, Robinson was at pains to emphasize the growing disaffection
in India, which he attributed to the increased despotism of officials, their disregard for Indian feelings, their proselytizing spirit, and their dislike of Indians as Indians and as heathens. Later in the year—after the Government of India Bill had passed—Robinson dealt with the subject in greater detail in a pamphlet. He pointed out that British rule could not be popular with the old governing families. The influence of the latter was on the wane but their dislike of British rule, instead of diminishing, was on the increase. The new generation in India had not witnessed or suffered the horrors of that predatory warfare to which British intervention had put a stop and it had become habituated to the government of law and right and, therefore, more sensitive to any acts of despotic and oppressive authority. The British themselves had professed liberal principles in public documents and English education had inculcated extreme liberal ideas. The British government in India was a despotism administered on radical principles and it had undermined the influence of birth, rank and social position. But it stopped short in the liberal cause 'so soon as any question arises between the Government and its subjects, or so soon as we come to act between Englishmen and natives'. Of late years,' wrote Robinson, '... there has been a greater tendency to despotism in the Government, as far as the natives are concerned, and less regard to their feelings and prejudices; for formerly our power was not so completely established as to do without native support; we were to a considerable extent obliged to govern the people through their chiefs and men of influence.' He pointed out that as British rule became securely established officials ceased the practice of considering and conciliating the people and began to act 'with a despotism that I could not have ventured upon, had I been so inclined, without driving the people to insurrection'. He cited many instances of abuse, oppression and arbitrary mis-government, arising as much from misguided zeal as from evil intention, which harassed and vexed the people.

In Robinson's view, the most important cause of discontent in India was the proselytizing spirit that had of late been adopted by the British administration in that country. 'There are two points', he wrote, 'on which the natives of India feel most strongly, in regard to which the inherent and almost philosophical apathy of their character fails them—their religion, and the chastity of their women.' Robinson roundly accused 'the Government and a large proportion of its most influential civil officers' in India of having abandoned the old policy.
views were dittoed by C.E. Trevelyan. See Parliamentary Papers, 1852-3, vol. xxxii, no. 627-1, pp. 188-92.

126 F. H. Robinson, What Good May Come out of the India Bill ... (1853).

127 Ibid., p. 12.


129 Ibid., p. 15.

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of scrupulous neutrality in religious matters and taking up 'a partisan line of conduct'. He pointed out how the Court of Directors, under the influence of 'the small religious party who have effected something like a monopoly of India', had forbidden the government of India to have anything to do with non-Christian endowments, how it had been asserted in Parliament that it was 'our duty as a Government to further the progress of Christianity' in India, how James C. Melvill, the secretary to the East India Company, had 'indicated the conversion of the natives as the condition of releasing them from the position of a conquered race', and how Major Herbert Edwardes, in his published work, had told the world and the people of India 'that our wars in the Punjab were wars of Christianity'. 'All these things', Robinson added, 'the natives of India note with bitterness and view with exaggeration.'

Robinson averred that the religious party, which was strong in England, was 'still stronger in India' and that it had become almost an 'imperium in imperio'. He wrote: '... the local Government almost all over India has fallen into the hands of men ... who are linked together, and act together ... in the principle that the influence of Government, and the whole line of its policy, is to be brought to bear as directly as possible in the furtherance of the conversion of the natives to a certain form of Christianity, known as the Evangelical ... there is, at least under the Bengal and Agra Governments, hardly any man at the Presidency or in the interior, exercising any office involving direct government, who does not adhere to this party.'

Robinson was of the opinion that the British government, while it should give freedom and protection to missionaries, should give no direct encouragement to proselytization for Indians were not so much resentful of missionaries as of the support lent to them by the government. He believed that the doctrines of 'the party which just now have seized the direction of affairs in India—who are disposed to lend the influence of the Government to the propagation of Christianity ... [and] would make the Government of India Christian, while the people are Hindoo or Muhommedan' had already done great harm and would ultimately destroy the British empire in India. 'The fruits of these weak and reprehensible doctrines', wrote Robinson, 'are beginning to show themselves. In the last considerable tumult at Benares [in 1852], the defence of their religion was set forward as the war-cry of the mob; and there is hardly a doubt that the Muhommedans over all India have exchanged pledges to rise if their

130 Ibid, p. 16
forcible conversion be attempted.' He warned the British government not to forget the lesson it
had had in the failure of its policy in Ireland to force the religion of the conqueror down the
throat of the conquered, and to desist from repeating this folly in a country separated by half the
globe.136

Robinson believed that the impact of Christianity and of English education had already bred an
inquiring spirit and caused a ferment in Hindu society and that, left to the free exercise of their
will, the people of India would embrace some form of Christianity. But 'the greatest obstacle' he
saw to their doing so was that the government and its officers were 'taking a proselytizing
part'. He considered the intervention of British officials on behalf of missionaries to be imprudent
and unfortunate, for, instead of aiding the cause of Christianity, it had in fact retarded that cause,
as was evidenced by the fact that the only denomination whose numbers were decreasing in India
was that of the established church of England.137

'The fanatical view of religion', wrote Robinson, 'comes also unfortunately in aid of that unhappy
dislike to the natives of India, which has of late years grown up among the functionaries of
Government. The natives are, to many misjudging men, not only black fellows, liars, and rascals,
but enemies of God. The odium theologicum envenoms the hostility arising from difference of
nation and of class.... The existence of this feeling towards them is known to the natives, and
rankles in their hearts.'138 The British not only disliked Indians, they also treated them badly.
Robinson remarked:.... it is difficult to convey to the people of England an adequate notion of the
harshness and rudeness with which even the highest people in India are treated.'139

Among the other sources of discontent in India, Robinson listed the exclusion of Indians from
higher employments, the inquisition into all endowments, grants and pensions, the inefficiency
and expensiveness of the law courts, the special privileges attached to Britons in India, the
partiality shown to European offenders and the severity with which the offences of Indians were
visited.140

The Anglo-Indian press in the 'fifties frequently discussed the subject of Indian discontent.
Surprisingly enough, it was more or less unanimous not only in recognizing the existence of the
evil, but also in diagnosing the causes thereof. The general drift of its discussion was somewhat as follows.

Despite its immense strength and prestige, British rule is not popular in India. It has given the country peace and security but failed to win the affection of the people or add substantially to their prosperity. The British administration in India is more efficient, equitable and just than any Indians have ever known.

136 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
137 Ibid, p. 20.
138 Ibid., pp. 20-1.
139 Ibid., p.22.
140 Ibid., pp 22-31.

in the past, but the latter consider it to be unsympathetic, ungenerous and unlovable. Our innovations have not always produced satisfactory results. The people are full of complaints against our law courts, our police and our revenue system. We have destroyed the bulk of the old Indian aristocracy. Its remnant is dissatisfied in every sense and in the very highest degree. The peasant bears universally the marks of pauperism, the look of utter squalor. Neither in the zamindari nor in the raiyatwari areas is his lot a happy one. He detests the changed nature of the revenue demand—in cash instead of in kind as earlier—its severity and thoroughness. Living—more than ever before—at the mercy of the zamindar, the amla and the mahajan, he has little reason to be grateful for being under the dominion of a race so utterly alien to him and his. The resumption of rent-free lands has impoverished many families and caused a great deal of irritation and vexation. The old village system has been shaken. Proprietary rights are changing hands. Land is passing from the peasant to the bania, the mahajan and the sahukar. Our government has closed all careers to the members of the higher castes and classes, most of whom descend from ancestors accustomed to depend in some way or other on the state revenue, which is now otherwise disposed of. The ancient manufactures of India are on the decline. Manchester and Glasgow are driving them out of the market. The country is being drained of its wealthy The proud, fanatical and ignorant Muslim has never been reconciled to our rule. He is becoming more disaffected against our rule because it is driving him out of civil employ and giving preference to the English-educated Hindu. Hindus, Muslims and Parsis alike suspect us of harbouring a secret design to undermine their faith. They resent the activities of missionaries and governmental interference with their established customs and usages. Even English-educated Indians, whose existence is bound up with our own and who show some appreciation of our rule, are dissatisfied because we treat them with scan respect and severely exclude them from high office. It is generally believed by Indians that their country is declining under our rule. The only people who appear to be thriving under our rule are traders, usurers and those who manage to secure official employment and exploit it for personal aggrandizement.
The Bombay Gazette summed up the situation philosophically. 'No extensive changes', it wrote in 1853, 'can occur without ... [suffering] and India has had to bear simultaneously a change of rulers, a change in the nature of the expenditure of its spending classes, and the annihilation of its manufactures. When all this is understood, it is perhaps not so wonderful that there should have been distress, as that it should not have been greater.... But it will always become every Englishman to remember that India has suffered from the transfer of power to his countrymen, and even from the triumph of their manufacturing skill and industry.'

141 Bombay Gazette, 29 October 1853.

In the years immediately preceding the rebellion of 1857 nothing appeared to be safe and secure in India except the British raj. Every other interest and institution in the country felt menaced and insecure. The Indian princes trembled on their thrones as they saw one princely state after another annexed on the ground of misgovernment or failure to produce a natural heir. The fate of Nagpur, Satara, Jhansi, Tanjore and Avadh haunted them. The cry had gone forth that the British empire in India should be 'one and indivisible'. The rapidity and ease with which the British had been able to extend their dominion in India had emboldened them. Solemn obligations were forgotten and the caution and moderation of earlier years were thrown to the winds. Powerful organs of the press like The Times and the Friend of India hounded on the Indian government to a career of spoliation in the name of duty, of justice and of manifest destiny. Titles and treaties were denounced as antiquated parchments and the approaching doom of every Indian kingdom was loudly proclaimed. A few isolated voices raised here and there in protest and warning went unheeded. The Indian princes were terrified by the writing on the wall: 'Sab lal hojayega' ['All will become red'].

Zamindars and talukdars dreaded the fate of Avadh. If the British could break their faith with Nawab Wajid Ali Shah with impunity, what hope was there for the smaller fry. The government was already busy encroaching upon their rights and privileges. The Anglo-Indian press was inveighing against their alleged oppressions and extortions and suggesting 'the extinction of all existing tenures in a universal allodial proprietorship'. What was more disturbing was the fact that the powerful missionary lobby had started campaigning against the zamindari system, considering it to be 'one of the most powerful obstacles to the spread of Christianity in this country'. The cultivator was sure neither of his land nor of the revenue demand. The moneylender was universally detested and condemned. He had no friend—British or Indian—though few could do without him. The trader was threatened with new taxes. Traditional occupations and customary rights were in jeopardy. Even 'savage' tribes like the Santhals felt their age-old way of life menaced.

Orthodox Hindus and Muslims viewed with alarm the corroding influences of English education, administration and culture on their religious and-social orders. The British government was interfering with their ancient customs and usages. British officials had even begun to meddle with the celebration of Holi, Durga Puja and Muharram. Christian missionaries were growing bolder and bolder. They were to be found everywhere—in towns and villages, in fairs and places of
pilgrimage—openly denouncing popular beliefs and offering all sorts of threats and inducements in order to gain converts. They were spreading their

142 See, for example, Friend of India, 16 March and 14 September 1854.

143 The remark is commonly attributed to Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

144 Friend of India, 10 January 1856.

145 See, for example, a petition of the missionaries of Bengal to the local government, reproduced in ibid., 11 September 1856.

net wider every day. Earlier they left Muslims severely alone, but of late the latter had become the object of their special solicitude. The activities of the Reverend C. G. Pfander146 in particular in this regard from the mid-1840s on, involving as they did attacks on the Quran and the Prophet, gave great offence to Indian Muslims and 'moved all Islam to its depths'.147

Ever since the twenties of the nineteenth century—if not earlier—a belief had been gaining ground in India that the British government aimed at the ultimate subversion of indigenous faiths. It was in order to counteract this growing belief that the British government was obliged repeatedly to give assurances of its neutrality and non-interference in matters of religion and social customs. But as Christian missionaries extended their operations in India and the British government frequently succumbed to missionary pressure, the people of India steadily lost faith in the assurances of the British government. They saw missionaries, whom they generally identified with their rulers, openly abusing their religions, proclaiming the inevitable triumph of Christianity in India, and using every means—fair or foul—to gain their objective. They saw British civil and military officers abetting and aiding missionaries.148 They saw the British government interfering with their rites and customs at the behest of missionaries or unorthodox Hindus. They petitioned and protested. They reminded the government of its earlier assurances and attitudes. But their supplications went unheeded. After all, there had been no uprising, no armed resistance, and the petitions and protests had emanated mainly from Hindus. The British feared Muslims India because the latter were considered to be fanatical, warlike and capable of concerted action, but they apprehended no danger from Hindus, who were known to be mild, divided into numerous castes and sects, and already losing belief in their own creed. It was becoming a settled conviction with many Britons in India that Hinduism was dying. The Friend of India expressed this conviction early in 1857. After reviewing the progress of Christianity in other parts of the world, the paper wrote: 'It will be the same in India, though with an inferior material, a race steeped for generations in the foulest faith man ever yet invented, a faith to which Greek worship was refined, and Feticheism is pure, the process will be slow. It is none the less as inevitable, as that flame should ever struggle

146 B. in Germany 1805; missionary of Church Missionary Society; d. 1865.

148 In his evidence before a parliamentary select committee in June 1853, C.E. Trevelyan said: '... at every station [in India] there is a number, larger or smaller, of gentlemen and ladies, many of them holding most influential situations, who are professed and enthusiastic Christians, taking an active part in Bible and Missionary Societies and in Missionary Schools, and so forth; and although I greatly rejoice in this circumstance, yet it is my duty to state that it involves great danger ...' Parliamentary Papers, 1852-3, vol. xxxii, no. 627-1, p. 188. The Englishman wrote on 13 February 1858: 'At no period of our history had such favor been shown [to the Missionary cause by the Government, nor such active efforts been made by the European community in this country, the Government servants inclusive, to propagate Christianity, as during the ten years immediately preceding the present outbreak ....'

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upwards. Nor is this all. It has been evident for years to all men with eyes, that the old fabric of Hindooism is breaking up. In the Arctic Seas before the ice cracks a low steady murmur is heard, never ceasing, springing no one can tell whence, yet always in the midst of the vague terror it suggests, announcing the approaching deliverance. The ice has not cracked, but the murmur which precedes it is on the air. Who believes in Hindooism? Some few Europeans, the Court of Directors, the British Parliament, but certainly not the Hindoos. Suttee and widow celibacy are abolished. Polygamy is doomed, and what Hindoo knowing all this raises a hand? There is no heart left in the creed, and though it may exist for generations yet, as the corpse of the Roman paganism did, its downfall is assured.... But the greatest hope of all remains in this. Our schools and colleges, among the thousands they turn out, may yet produce a native Apostle. He will ring the knell of Hindooism.'149 ; The events of 1855-6 should have warned the British government that a suspicious electric temper, which generally precedes revolutions, was spreading in India. Reports were coming from all parts of the country that the princes and the people of India had lost faith in the good intentions and the pledged word of the British government. Dalhousie's policy of annexation had alarmed the princes and the alarm of the latter was shared not only by the people in their estates but also by those in British India. (Crowns do not crumble without a clamour from the crowd.. Even if there be no "love for a particular bearer, his name is still a flag, a symbol, the representative of some principle. This was especially true in India, with her conservative and legitimist people. Dalhousie's annexation of the Punjab after victory in battle had been stoically accepted by the people of India, but his annexation of Avadh in violation of a solemn treaty and that of Nagpur, Satara, Jhansi and Tanjore in pursuance of the doctrine of lapse was universally denounced as unjust and unfair. It was odious in principle and unpopular in practice. The Bombay Samachar spoke for millions in India when it denounced Dalhousie as 'that notorious pindaree and plunderer of the Rajas'.150 The people of India were interested in the survival of their princes not only for sentimental reasons, they considered it to be somehow a safeguard of their religion and nationality.

But the princes were panic-stricken and the people powerless. They did not dare to rise in arms. The closing years of Dalhousie's reign, however, provided sufficient evidence that the elements
which could offer armed resistance to the British authority were not entirely extinct in India. In mid-1855 the Santhals in Bihar had risen in rebellion. Whatever the causes of their rebellion might have been, their fury was at least partially directed against Europeans. The British government took almost a year to quell the Santhal rebellion and its prestige was thereby 'most seriously weakened' in India.151 In September 1855 the Moplas

149 Friend of India, 12 February 1857.

150 Quoted in Telegraph and Courier, 7 May 1855.

151 Friend of India, 16 August 1855.

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murdered the collector, H. V. Conolly,152 and terrorized Malabar. After the annexation of Avadh in February 1856, the British government did not find the task of pacification easy. The armed nobles of Avadh continued to harass their new masters for a long time. There was even a mutiny in one of the Avadh regiments. Later in the year the Rohillas were up in arms in the Deccan and the Gumsurs in Madras.

The new British dispensation in the recently acquired territories had adversely affected the economic interests of large classes and made them disaffected. Rising prices formed the subject of anxious discussion in the Indian press. The financial policy of Dalhousie—especially the conversion of the five per cent loan into four per cent—had alienated the confidence of the monied classes and they were reluctant to contribute to government loans. It was widely known that the government treasury was empty.

Far more disconcerting, however, was the repeated manifestation of a growing religious distemper in India and the widespread belief that the British meant to convert the people of India to Christianity by force or fraud. On 25 January 1855 the Friend of India reported that a rumour was current among the Muslim population of Bengal and believed by 'Mahomedans, great and small,' that the legislative council was about to pass a law, prohibiting the rite of circumcision.153 On 16 July 1855 a public meeting of the newly formed Mahomedan Association at Calcutta had to be dissolved because 12,000 excited Muslims besieged the town hall in consequence of a rumour that the government intended to convert them to Christianity by force.154 In an article, entitled 'The Sword Is the Key of Heaven and Hell', the Friend of India, dated 13 September 1855, reported how all kinds of rumours of a Muslim uprising were abroad and thousands of copies of a pamphlet had been distributed all over northern India exhorting Muslims to take up arms and do battle for the faith. From Agra and Patna came alarmist reports of alleged Muslim plots to massacre Europeans.155

In Bihar a most restless feeling was manifest in 1855. The Biharis had not taken kindly to government schools, considering them to be a means of conversion. The inspector of education in Bihar, R. B. Chapman,156 finding his efforts unsuccessful, tried to use authority. He issued a circular to the effect that it was the order of the sarkar that children should be sent to government schools. The Biharis, who were already aggrieved at an earlier government notification
restricting official employment to the English-educated, resorted to passive resistance. They designated Chapman's office 'the Shaitani daftar' ('the Devil's office') and tabooed it. While the people were already suspicious

152 B. 1806; joined East India Company's service in Madras 1824; had been nominated to be provisional member of governor's council.

153 Friend of India, 25 January 1855.

154 Ibid., 26 July 1855. For the Mahomedan Association, see below, pp. 212-16.

155 Ibid., 13 September 1855.

156 B. 1829; joined Bengal civil service 1849; secretary to government of India in finance department 1869-81; d. 1909.

157 Friend of India, 12 July 1855.

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that the government wanted to force Christianity down their throats, certain missionaries in Calcutta distributed widely in Bengal and upper India a circular which contained a vague speculation on the evidences of Christianity, a call to the heathen to embrace Christianity, and an intimation that if its warnings were disregarded and men refused to receive the gospel a day of retribution would arrive. The circular was addressed in particular to government servants, who believed that it was issued by the authorities and carried an official menace that they would be deprived of their livelihood unless they embraced Christianity. Syed Ahmed Khan later described the effect of the circular on the people as follows: 'It is no metaphor to say that men were blinded with fear at the receipt of this circular. The ground seemed at last to have given way beneath their feet. They cried out that the long-expected hour had indeed arrived. The servants of Government were first to be made Christians, then the mass of the people. This circular, it was said, was written by order of Government.' According to the Friend of India, when the circular was received in Dacca, it was at once accepted as 'a Government proclamation'. The 'native officials' assembled and after great discussion sadly resigned themselves to their fate, that 'they would at the end of a specified time become Christians'. In Behar, on the contrary, men glanced at their swords.' The paper went on to add that the evil had spread far wider than was imagined, for it was not only the people in civil employ who were 'talking of the hard alternative between starvation and apostacy', 'Sepoys in Raneegunge ... were asking questions of the same (character).'

While this excitement was yet rife, the inspector of prisons in Bihar, T. C. Loch, directed that the prisoners be deprived of their brass vessels and instead provided with earthen vessels. Here then, in the eyes of the people, was another insidious attempt to destroy their religion and caste. The prisoners resisted the change and in more than one place in Bihar manifested their resentment with a fury which was shared by the population of the towns. At Muzaffarpur, in Tirhut, the outburst of popular indignation was so formidable that the magistrate described it as 'a furious
and altogether unexpected outbreak on the part of the people of the town and district in support and sympathy with the prisoners'.162 There was serious rioting in many other places and troops had to be called in. Peace was not restored until the lieutenant-governor of Bengal

158 The circular is reprinted in S. A. Khan, The Causes of the Indian Revolt (translated into English by his two European friends, 1873), Appendix I, pp. 55-9. It is generally, though wrongly, attributed to one E. Edmond. See letter from 'The Writer of the Circular' to the editor, Friend of India, 27 December 1855.

159 B. 1817; joined East India Company's service as clerk 1837; retired as subordinate judge 1876; founded Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh 1877; member of Indian legislative council 1878-80, 1881-3; knighted 1888; d. 1898.

160 S. A. Khan, op. cit., p. 22.

161 Friend of India, 4 October 1855.


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countermanded Loch's order as being improper and an act of ignorance.163 After the Tirhut jail emeute had subsided, a correspondent of the Englishman wrote from Patna on 30 June 1855: 'Hindus both learned and unlearned stick to the opinion now, that Government has a latent intention to convert all its subjects by force ....'164 The commissioner of Patna, W. Tayler, wrote officially to the government of Bengal on 27 June 1855 that 'the minds of the people in these districts are at present in a very restless and disaffected state; and they have generally conceived the idea that there is an intention on the part of Government to commence and carry through a systematic interference with their religion, their caste, and their social customs'. He referred to the recent occurrences which had 'served to collect and strengthen the half-formed suspicions previously floating in the minds of the mass, and to bring them to a head', and he added that these suspicions were entertained by Hindus and Muslims alike, for 'in all such matters there is perfect community of feeling between these two classes, especially among the lower orders, in this province. Indeed, their respective creeds sit (as regards the other sect) so loosely upon them that the festivals, saints, and many observances, are held in mutual and undistinguishable veneration.' Tayler drew attention to the great gulf which existed between the rulers and the ruled and emphasized the need for explaining the measures and intentions of the government in order to conciliate the affection and encourage the loyalty of the people. 'Separated, as we necessarily are,' he wrote, 'from the millions around us, by our habits and ideas, we are still further, and without the same necessity, isolated from their hearts by the utter absence of all individual feeling or sympathy. The great mass see or hear of functionary after functionary coming and going, and holding for a time the destinies of the people in the hollow of their hands; but they seldom, perhaps never, know what it is to feel that the minds of their rulers have ever been directed to understand or sympathize with the great heart that is beating around them. The result is an utter absence of those ties between the governors and the governed—that "unbought loyalty", which is the strength of kings, and which, with all his faults, the native of
India is well capable of feeling.' Tayler earnestly recommended that the government should issue a proclamation to allay the apprehensions of the people.\textsuperscript{166} The lieutenant-governor of Bengal, F. J. Halliday,\textsuperscript{167} fell in with the recommendation of Tayler and a proclamation—whose

\textsuperscript{163} Englishman, 9 July 1855.

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid, 5 July 1855.

\textsuperscript{165} B. 1808; joined East India Company's service 1829; demoted for his conduct during the revolt and resigned the service 1859; wrote on Indian affairs; d. 1892.


\textsuperscript{167} B. 1806; joined East India Company's service 1825; secretary to Bengal government and later to government of India 1838-53; member of governor-general's council 1853-4; first lieutenant-governor of Bengal 1854-9; member of secretary of state's council 1868-86; d. 1901.

\textsuperscript{89} draft had been submitted by Tayler himself—in Urdu and Persian was issued early in July 1855.\textsuperscript{168} It assured the people in Bihar that the government had 'no intention of interfering in matters of religion, rites and ceremonies of the country'. It characterized as 'false and fabricated' the reports being circulated 'that all the Muharrum ceremonies, the parda system of the zenana, the rite of circumcision and other rites and ceremonies practised under Muhamadan and Hindu Laws are soon to be done away with by orders of Government'. It expressed the regret of the lieutenant-governor over the anonymous circular issued by missionaries and dissociated the government from their activities\textsubscript{1}. It pointed out that 'certain Jail Superintendents, ignorant of the customs and creeds of the country, divested prisoners of their necessary utensils used in eating and drinking, and of course without the knowledge and consent of the Government. But no sooner was this brought to the notice of the Government than orders were telegraphed to put a stop to their proceedings.' The proclamation also said that 'by the spread of English education Government is simply desirous of opening to the people of India a path to all arts and sciences and not to mislead them from their religion and time-honoured customs and habits'.

The 'Bihar proclamation' was criticized by many Anglo-Indians as an ill-looked and cowardly concession. Some of them even said that it was 'better to face an armed revolt than to make even an explanation to natives with menaces on their lips'.\textsuperscript{169} It had a soothing effect on the inflamed feelings of the people of Bihar, but this effect could not be lasting for soon afterwards some of the actions of the government appeared to belie its professions. Early in 1856 the legislative council of India passed an act legalizing the marriage of Hindu widows. True, the act was only permissive and had been passed at the instigation of the Hindu reform party in Calcutta, but it offended the feelings of the vast majority of orthodox Hindus all over India, who abhorred the change and were suspicious of any interference with their religious and social customs by an
alien government. In October 1856 the inspector of jails for Bengal proper, F. J. Mouat, issued an order which required every criminal prisoner to have his head and face close shaved once every fifteen days. The Mahomedan Association of Calcutta protested against this order as a direct interference with the religious duties enjoined on the followers of Islam.

In September 1855 an incident occurred at Bolaram, near Hyderabad (Deccan), which should have warned the government of the danger of tampering with the religion of the sepoys. The commanding officer of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, stationed at Bolaram, was Brigadier Colin Mackenzie, who was well known for his ardent evangelism. He first prohibited the Muharram procession in the cantonment on 23 September 1855 as it was a Sunday. Later when the procession was allowed, he interfered with it on the ground that it had taken a forbidden route, and grossly insulted the processionists by snatching their swords and standards and trampling on them. Mackenzie's conduct enraged his Muslim horsemen who assaulted him and other Europeans.

The mutiny at Bolaram and the conduct of Brigadier Mackenzie were widely discussed by the press in India. While some Anglo-Indian papers condemned Mackenzie, others defended him and cried for the death of the mutineers even before the official inquiry into the incident was instituted. The Englishman remarked that India was not won by missionaries or by Puritans and must not be endangered through their pranks. It considered people like Brigadier Mackenzie to be a danger to the discipline of the army and the stability of British rule in India. 'When the British power in the East was in its infancy,' wrote the Englishman, 'no Bible-bearing ambassadors were sent to the Mogul. If such had been done, it is not too much to say that Brigadier Mackenzie would never have had an opportunity of offending the religious feeling of the Moslem population of the Nizam's country, and through them the Mahomedans of all India, for in all probability we should not now have an Indian Empire ... men with consciences of this description will not do for India. Commandants of Native Troops must not only forbear from proselytism and missionary patronizing, from sheltering and supporting evangelical priests and converts, and bazar-preaching school-masters, from Bible distributing and all acts and conduct, overt or indirect, of a propagandist character, but must be prepared to go a good deal further. They must not only not interfere with nor disturb the religious practices of their soldiers, but learn to look with something akin to reverence on the creeds and religious observances of the men they command.' The Friend of India, on the contrary, maintained that there could be no excuse for mutiny, that the mutineers must be shot, even if their comrades were to rise in revolt,
and 'our right to reign unfettered' should be submitted 'once more to the decision of the sabre'.

Revolutions, said Disraeli about the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857, are not made with grease. The greased cartridges would not have alarmed the sepoy as they did, had they not confirmed his deep-rooted suspicion that the British desired to subvert his religion. The mutiny of the sepoys would not have caused the widespread rebellion of 1857 had there not been plenty of combustible material lying around in India at the time.

173 See Sutherland G. G. Orr, An Account of the Outbreak at Bolarum ... (1856), pp. 5 ff.

174 Englishman, 2 November 1855.

175 Friend of India, 11 October, 15, 29 November 1855.

176 Benjamin Disraeli, first earl of Beaconsfield (1804-81). Author and statesman; prime minister of Britain 1868, 1874-80; created earl 1876.

177 'The decline and fall of empires are not affairs of greased cartridges. Such results are occasioned by adequate causes, and by an accumulation of adequate causes.' Disraeli, in the House of Commons, 21 July 1857, Hansard, Third Series, vol. cxlvi, col. 475.

The outbreak of 1857 was not the effect of any sudden burst of fanaticism, but the result of a long train of circumstances, all of which tended to produce some discontent. Each as it occurred passed away, but added to the sulky suspiciousness of the people. Great catastrophes, it is said, come suddenly and are seldom foreseen, though historians, with the advantage of hindsight, tend to treat them as inevitable and take delight in discussing their causes. But the catastrophe of 1857 in India did not come suddenly, nor was it entirely unforeseen. The storm had been gathering for a long time and when it did burst, no attentive observer said it was unexpected. The events which we have enumerated above were duly noted by the press in India. Even between the first appearance of the symptoms of disaffection in the Bengal army at Barrackpore in January 1857 and its open defiance at Meerut in May 1857, the British had repeated warnings that something terrible was going to happen and ample time to prepare to meet it. The question may, therefore, be legitimately asked, 'Why did the British in India behave as they did in 1857?' To this question many answers can be suggested.

The British did not understand the Indian mind. There was little contact between the governors and the governed. The civilian was isolated from the people, the army officer from the sepoy. The passage of time and the spread of education had served only to widen the gulf created by race, religion and culture between the European and the Indian. To the Englishman the Indian was a barbarian, a heathen, a nigger, a liar, a rogue and a coward. To the Indian the Englishman was selfish, greedy, hypocritical, haughty and arrogant. This mutual hatred, which occasionally came to the surface, as, for example, in the controversy over the 'Black Act' early in 1857, and which contributed to the virulence manifested by both sides in the rebellion, made the task of
understanding all the more difficult. A fortnight before the outbreak at Meerut on 10 May 1857, the Friend of India confessed: 'In Bengal not only can we not rely upon native assistance, but it is seldom we can even fathom native opinion. Nobody knows what the body of the people think of the recent mutinies. Nobody is ever able to account for those movements of the native mind which we in our ignorance think sudden and spasmodic, but which are as gradual as the formation of the sand bank. This ignorance, dangerous to us is at least as dangerous to the natives.'

In early 1857 the government of India made another unsuccessful attempt, similar to that in 1849, to place European residents in the mofussil under the jurisdiction of local criminal courts. This was vehemently opposed by non-official Anglo-Indians, particularly the planters of Bengal, who coupled their criticism of the proposed measure with unmeasured abuse of Indians. The educated Indians of Calcutta tried to pay their traducers back in their own coin. For example, at a public meeting held in Calcutta in April 1857, Rajendralal Mitra denounced Anglo-Indian planters as 'adventurers' and 'sweepings of England' who had 'carried ruin and devastation to wherever they have gone'. See Bengal Hurkaru, 8 April 1857, and Corrected Report of the Proceedings of a Public Meeting ... in favour of the Extension of the Jurisdiction of the Mofussil Criminal Courts (1857), p. 78.

It was this inability—and even unwillingness—to understand the Indian mind which made the British dismiss manifestations of Indian discontent as sudden outbursts of the fanaticism and savagery inherent in Indian society.

By the fifties of the nineteenth century the British had developed an overweening confidence in their strength in India. The progress of their arms in India had been uninterrupted and unprecedented. The factory had swollen to a kingdom, the kingdom had swollen to an empire. Their supremacy was unquestioned in the subcontinent. They thought they could do anything in India which they considered to be right. Kingdoms were annexed, established rights overthrown, and ancient customs abolished often without a word of explanation. 'The member for West Riding' and 'the ten-pounders of Great Britain' were more feared than the princes and the people of India. Convinced of their righteousness and confident of their might, the British often behaved more arbitrarily in India than the worst of 'Oriental despots' Claiming to act on behalf of the masses, they seldom cared to ascertain the feelings and opinions of the latter. Proclamation, not persuasion, became their motto. 'Five lines in the Gazette I were considered to possess the magical potency of accomplishing any reform and disarming every opposition. When in 1856 the Hindu Intelligencer complained that the new law permitting the remarriage of widows 'will be enacted in spite of its being in opposition to the wishes of the great bulk of the natives', the Friend of India retorted: 'Precisely, and it is because the wishes of "the great bulk of the natives" are opposed to natural justice that British rule is beneficial. If it were not so, India might yet be administered by a native constitutional Government. So long as the subject in dispute is unimportant, the wish of the natives forms an important element in the decision. On great questions, the wise must rule the foolish here as elsewhere.'
Indians and other oriental races were inferior, degenerate and doomed, and that 'the Anglo-Saxon race, the ploughshare of the Almighty, should erase those tribes to fit the soil for nobler seed'.

The British almost ceased to realize that their dominion in India was a great anomaly. The warnings of their own earlier statesmen about the inherent impermanence and instability of the British empire in India were forgotten. By the middle of the nineteenth century the British were masters of all they surveyed in India and they persuaded themselves that it was the will of Providence that they should remain there for ever.

This belief was not entirely unreasoned. The British knew full well that they had been able to conquer India so easily because her people were badly divided by innumerable differences of caste, creed and language. They also knew that

180Commenting on a report in the Englishman that the court of directors had advised the government of India to use measures of persuasion, instead of legislation, in dealing with the practice of hook-swinging at the Charak Puja, the Friend of India, 5 March 1857, remarked: 'No persuasion is wanted. Five lines in the Gazette announcing that the ceremony would be considered a public nuisance would put an end to it.'

181 Friend of India, 5 June 1856.

182 Ibid., 12 February 1857.

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differences, instead of dying out, were persisting. And they naturally concluded that these differences were incurable and would last for ever. The acquiescence of the people of India to foreign rule was ascribed to their lack of patriotism. It became an article of faith with the British that the people of India could never unite and that they were incapable of developing a sense of nationalism.

The situation in India must have been serious for the Hindu Intelligencer to write on 19 January 1857: '... let all India, Bengallees and Punjabees, Parsees and Madrasees, Hindustanees and Mahrattas all joined together—let all India send a deep groan and waft a heavy sigh over the Atlantic waters to the foot of Her Majesty. Let the next steamer to England carry from us a mournful cry and a despairing shriek to the British people.'

183 The Friend of India, instead of worrying about the occasion or the significance of the Hindu Intelligencer's remark, taunted: 'When three natives can combine—not to speak of three nations—without the third betraying the other two, Europeans may quit India.'

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When the news of the mutinies at Barrackpore and Berhampore first reached Britain, The Times avowed its faith in the policy of 'divide and rule' and derived comfort from the thought that the disaffection was confined to Hindus. 'In the numerous and unsympathizing populations now under our command [in India]', wrote the paper on 29 April 1857, 'we possess excellent means for establishing a balance of force... '.

185 Again, a month later, the same paper remarked: 'It is reassuring, moreover, that the Mussulman, the Sikh, the Ghoorka, has no share in the prejudices of the Hindoo. The Government may always count on the votaries of Islam for support in any
tumult arising from the teaching of an idolatrous creed.'186 The Saturday Review observed in August 1857: 'A few months ago, if any intelligent person had been asked what was the great source of the stability of our Indian Empire, he would have answered without a moment’s hesitation—"The conflict of faiths; the division of national interests the improbability, if not the impossibility, of the fusion of the Hindoo and Maho-madan elements in any great movement for the subversion of our dominion. A few weeks ago, when tidings of the great revolt in the Bengal army had rudely awakened us from our sleep of security into which we had been lulled by a long unbroken season of prosperity, if anyone had asked what was the great source of hopefulness in the lamentable condition of affairs which was then beginning to develop itself, the answer, though somewhat modified, would have been still substantially the same:—"Oh! it is a Hindoo movement. The Brahmans are at the bottom of it. We do not hear that the Mussulmans have turned against us." A few days ago, when it had become unmistakably apparent that the Hindoo and the Mussulman, whatever their antipathies, were leagued together in a great

183 Hindu Intelligencer, 19 January 1857.

184 Friend of India, 29 January 1857.

185 Times, 29 April 1857.

186 Ibid 19 May 1857.

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military revolt against the authority of the Christian intruders, people began to ask whether the mutiny in Bengal was primarily a Brahim or a Mahomedan movement—whether the Hindoo had instigated the Mussulman or the Mussulman had instigated the Hindoo. And, contrary to all our foregone conclusions, the answer given by those most competent to solve the question is—"Unquestionably it is, primarily, a Mahomedan movement." ' The Saturday Review was itself inclined to favour the view that the rebellion was due mainly to the machinations of Muslims and found support for it 'from our general knowledge of the Mahomedan character, and especially of the particular aspect which Mahomedanism assumes in our Indian territories'. It concluded by saying: 'If the movement be attributable to Mahomedan influence, so much the better. The Mahomedans constitute but a comparatively small portion of the population of British India. It is not difficult to persuade the Hindoos that the Mussulman master is more intolerant than the Christian. We shall sooner re-establish our ascendancy in this case than if the Brahmans were at the root of the matter. We believe, indeed, that our old safeguard, the conflict of faiths, the mutual mistrust of Hindoo and Mahomedan, Will soon be working again mightily in our favour.'187

The Saturday Review was right in its calculation. The 'old safeguard, the conflict of faiths, the mutual mistrust of Hindoo and Mahomedan continued to work mightily in favour of the British in India. The revolt of 1857 temporarily disturbed the belief that the great source of the stability of the British empire in India lay in the divisions of the country, but it did not disprove that belief. The lesson of the revolt was that the divisions of India were not to be taken for granted, that the people of India, with all their differences, had more in common with each other than they
The spirit of imperialism was reinforced by the spirit of evangelism. Having conquered the Indian subcontinent, the British thought it was their mission to civilize it. It was loudly proclaimed that the era of conquest was to be followed by the era of civilization. And by civilization many meant christianization. The soldiers of the Cross were eager to imitate the soldiers of the Company— to complete the Christian conquest of India like its military conquest. They misinterpreted the good-humoured curiosity and tolerance with which Indians— especially Hindus— listened to their preaching as an evidence of the latter's readiness to embrace Christianity. They mistook the ferment created in Hindu society as a sign of its approaching demise. They held the British government responsible for the slow progress of Christianity in India and even commended the 'honesty and sincerity' shown by Muslim rulers 'by exerting all their military powers and influence to propagate and honour the creed which they deemed divine'.

In an interesting article, headed 'Hurdwar Mela—the Missionary in 1815 and 1855', the Friend of India in April 1855 pointed out how silly and baseless had been the fears of the British government in the past regarding the reception of Christianity in India. In 1815, it said, a solitary missionary, named John Chamberlain, who went to preach to the grand concourse of millions at the annual Hardwar fair was hastily recalled and reprimanded by the authorities for attempting to 'fire a pistol into a magazine', though he pleaded that his activities had created no disturbance, while in 1855 a dozen missionaries were permitted to address a far larger gathering at Hardwar and they did it with perfect safety to the empire. They were seen 'addressing the devotees on the absurdity of idolatry and the excellence of Christian truth, and liberally distributing tracts and copies of the Scriptures among them'. They were 'listened to with great attention' and 'obtained more than one convert'. The Friend of India concluded: 'But while
the feelings of the people are the same, the feelings of Government are changed. It has lost its morbid terrors ... and thus we are furnished, with a fresh exemplification of the fact, what various circumstances are constantly confirming, that the obstacles to improvement in India have arisen far more from the governors themselves, than from any real cause of apprehension in the native community.'192

The conclusion drawn by the Friend of India was wrong. True, the pantheist and generally tolerant Hindu had no animus against Christianity and its preachers as such. He was prepared to listen and argue, but he hated the dogmatic and declamatory tone of missionaries. He readily granted that Christianity represented one of the several paths leading to the same God, but he had no desire to change his own particular path. He did not mind adults changing their religion, but he was disgusted at the attempts made by missionaries to seduce children or to bribe the needy into accepting Christianity. Above all, he was
down to a lower deep an already lowly, grovelling herd of people. It is the mission to annihilate the last lingering hopes of a nation, to use Mr. Macaulay's words respecting the Greeks, "once the first among nations, pre-eminent in arts, pre-eminent in military glory", etc. etc.' Quoted in M. Lewin (ed.), Causes of the Indian Revolt (1857), pp. 22-3.

190 Bengal Catholic Herald, cited in Bengal Hurkaru, 26 January 1857.

191 B. 1777; sent to India by Baptist Missionary Society 1802; d. 1821.

192 Friend of India, 26 April 1855.

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alarmed by the direct and indirect support extended to missionaries by the government. As we have already noted, the operations of missionaries had aroused a spirit of active antagonism amongst Hindus. 'Diana's temple at Ephesus', wrote the Englishman on 2 April 1857, 'was crowded with quiet worshippers till Paul began to preach the true God, and then he was mobbed and narrowly escaped with his life. Why should it not be so in the nineteenth century and in India?'193

But what the Englishman was saying in accusation and warning, missionaries and their friends were saying in justification and even exultation. 'I feel satisfied that the devil would not have made so much noise if he had not been hurt,' boasted 'the writer of the circular' which had created a panic amongst the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal and Bihar in 1855.194 '[Our Saviour] came on earth not to "send peace, but a sword",' wrote the Dacca News in January 1857 and it averred that no consideration of danger ought to check or influence the Christian in his attempt to compel the heathen to come in.195 'For a hundred years', the paper added, 'Mahomedans and Hindoos have submitted willingly to a people who were always conquering and never converting. Now, when conquest has ceased,—and conversion—not merely religious, but of morals, manners, and habits—must begin, we cannot wonder that their minds should pass through a phase of disaffection.'196
How the political judgement of many Britons was warped by their proselytizing zeal was illustrated by the case of the famous 'Missionary Colonel', S.G. Wheler. Colonel Wheler was one of the dozen or so high officers in the Indian army who were ardent evangelicals and who had for years been actively engaged in preaching and converting. He was the commanding officer of the 34th Native Infantry stationed at Barrackpore, which, significantly enough, was the first to show signs of disaffection in January 1857. Wheler's conduct naturally attracted attention after the mutiny at Barrackpore and it was felt that he was to no small extent responsible for the alarm and consequent disaffection in his regiment. The Englishman wrote: 'It is obvious that the Mackenzies, the Whelers and others of the same tendencies, would be more appropriately placed at the head of a regiment of Covenanters, or at all events of nominal Christians, whose consciences they might prick without injury to discipline, and without endangering the public tranquillity. If the Government does not act promptly and decisively on his occasion, there is no saying how far the mischief may spread, nor what may be its extent.' The government did not act promptly and decisively. It was not until April 1857 that Wheler was even asked to explain his conduct.

193 Englishman, 2 April 1857.

194 Friend of India, 27 December 1855.


196 The Times, 29 June 1857.

197 Joined East India Company's military service 1819; retired as major-general 1858.

198 Englishman, 2 April 1857.

In the explanation which he gave to the authorities, Wheler vauntingly justified his endeavours 'during the last twenty years and upwards' to convert sepoys and others to Christianity as 'part of my conscientious duty towards my heavenly superior'. Lord Canning considered Wheler 'not fit to be trusted with a regiment', but did not dare to remove him from his command. What was more surprising was the vehemence with which a considerable section of the Anglo-Indian press defended Wheler's activities. The Friend of India described Wheler's conduct as being 'simply the logical consequence of religious liberty' and wrote: 'If it be right to address Hindoos at all for the purpose of conversion, it is right to address the class whose conversion would have the greatest moral weight. If it be the right of every individual to speak freely on religious topics, it is the right also of soldiers, even though they should be in the invidious position of commanding officers.... To punish Colonel Wheler for preaching, is simply to punish him for being a Christian, to assert that religious freedom to whomsoever it may belong, does not belong to British officers. It is to declare that Christianity is to be preached only where the congregations are willing to hear, or in other words to prohibit the spread of the Gospel altogether. That is not a result which in this nineteenth century Englishmen will be disposed to tolerate. ... If we cannot hold the Empire without treating Christianity as a crime, let us stake the
Empire on that issue, and stand or fall with the faith to which we pretend.'202 The Dacca News asked: 'Are men who are afraid of the introduction of Christianity, Christian?'203 The Bombay Times wrote: 'Yet a few years, and the Gospel will be as freely preached to the sepoy in the lines, as to the cooly in the bazaar, while the men who now seek to hinder it will be forgotten. You cannot stay the wheels of that chariot which is driven by the power of God, and you had better cease the effort.'204

A correspondent wrote to the Friend of India on 13 April 1857: 'The day certainly cannot be very distant, when the conversion of the natives, sepoys and all, will be accomplished; and in the interval prior to that time, there must be a transition period, when some will begin to consider, some to be alarmed, some to come forward boldly, some to shrink back, and then, gradually, the conflict between light and darkness must become more and more violent and extensive... Here is a prospect for our alarmists! But there is no help for it. Not even the Court of Directors can help it. Orders of silence; patronage of error under the name of neutrality; nothing of the sort will now answer the purpose; there is a decree of a higher Power than the Government of India in this matter, and assuredly the time will come, when even sepoys will be evangelized.

199 Ibid., 16 October 1857.


202 Friend of India, 16 April 1857.


204 Bombay Times, 28 April 1857.

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... My belief is that our empire was planted here for this very purpose, and that it will flourish just in proportion as it accomplishes God's design....'205

One of the many grandiloquent titles given to the British empire in India was 'the empire of the sepoy'. The title was not inappropriate. The British empire in India was won and maintained chiefly with the help of the sepoy. And if there was one thing which the British feared more than any other in India it was a sepoy mutiny. The story is told that when in February 1842 Lord Ellenborough, the then governor-general of India, received the disastrous tidings from Afghanistan, he observed that bad as the news of British reverses was he expected something still worse.206 That something still worse was a mutiny of the Indian army. There had been many mutinies in the Indian army before 1857—quite a few of them over some religious question—and they had been severely put down. It was generally recognized that the sepoys were extremely sensitive about their religion and that nothing should be done to annoy them on
that score. Whenever, through inadvertence or ignorance, any offence was given to their religious susceptibilities, the government was quick to realize its mistake and make suitable amends. But by the 1850s a feeling had grown in certain influential Anglo-Indian circles that the government's truckling to the religious prejudices of the sepoys was immoral, impolitic and embarrassing. Indicative of this feeling was the levity with which the Friend of India demanded in 1855 the blood of the mutineers at Bolaram even at the risk of precipitating a general Muslim uprising and the ill-advised haste with which Canning issued in 1856 the general enlistment order. Nor was the government any longer under the necessity of pandering to the religious prejudices of the high caste sepoys in the Bengal army and allowing them to interfere with their military duties when thousands of Sikhs were ready to take their places.

The sepoys in the Bengal army probably had many grievances about their pay, prospects, terms of service and the general behaviour of their white officers. But the immediate cause of their disaffection in 1857 was the cartridges smeared with the obnoxious grease, which confirmed their growing belief, shared by most of their countrymen, that it was the deliberate design of the British government, by fair means or by foul, to convert them to Christianity. Once the sepoys had known about the greased cartridges and refused to handle them, the only safe course left open to the British government was to withdraw the objectionable cartridges entirely and to reassure the sepoys by means of a soothing proclamation.

205 Friend of India, 16 April 1857.

206 Saturday Review, 30 May 1857.

207 See above, p. 90.

208 On 25 July 1856 a general order was issued by the government of India, declaring that, henceforth they would not accept the service of any 'native' recruit who would not 'at the time of his enlistment, distinctly undertake to serve beyond the sea, whether within the territories of the Company or beyond them'. Kaye, op. cit., vol. i, p. 467.

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This course the British government failed to adopt because of its failure to appreciate the seriousness of the sepoys' objections and its mistaken notions of military discipline and of its own prestige. There was another complicating factor. No sooner did the first symptoms of unrest become apparent at various military stations in northern India early in 1857 than a great panic seized the small British community in the country. It appeared as if the spectre which had haunted the British in India all these years had at last materialized. The worst was expected long before it actually happened. All sorts of rumours and alarms about a general uprising of the sepoys and of the civil population, about seditious fakirs and proclamations, about mysterious chapatis and fires, about dangerous intrigues and plots for the massacre of all Europeans, filled the air.
If the sepoys were panic-stricken, the British were no less so. Each side mistrusted and feared the other. A situation of what Herbert Butterfield has called 'Hobbesian fear' was thus created, in which each side, being desperately unsure about the intentions of the other and beset by the devils of fear and suspicion, was inclined to be a little more wilful than it ordinarily was. Not unnaturally, a simple religious scruple on the part of the sepoys was magnified by many Britons into a mutinous temper and all sorts of quacks got busy diagnosing the disease and prescribing their favourite cure. Frightened Anglo-Indians urged the government to 'at once put its feet upon the neck of the embryo mutiny and crush it in the womb' and recommended cannon instead of compliance as a remedy.

At first the government showed neither weakness nor strength, it just temporized. It was unwilling to admit and rectify its initial blunder for fear of giving an impression of weakness and encouraging the suspicions of the sepoys. It was unable to strike because it did not have sufficient troops near at hand. The uneasiness of the sepoys of the Bengal army was due to a genuine religious fear and not to disloyalty. It was the threatening language of Colonel Mitchell and his attempt later to overawe the 19th Native Infantry with the help of the cavalry and artillery which precipitated the first serious mutinous affray at Berhampore on 26 February 1857. Still, as Kaye has pointed out, it was 'Terror, rather than Revolt' which had stirred the 19th, 'in an impulse of self-preservation, to resist the premeditated outrage'. The authorities deliberately delayed punishing the 19th until the 84th British regiment, sent for from Rangoon, had arrived in Calcutta on 20 March. Weeks passed and the men of the 19th did not know what terrible doom the government was preparing for them. 'They believed that an overwhelming European force, with Cavalry and Artillery, would come suddenly upon them and destroy them.' Already the story of the greased cartridges had travelled from cantonment to cantonment and filled the minds of the sepoys with excitement and alarm. When the 34th Native Infantry at Barrackpore, which, it must be remembered, were commanded by 'the Missionary Colonel', S. G. Wheler, and were the first to object to the greased cartridges in January 1857, knew that the 19th were to be disbanded and that a British regiment had been brought across the sea to execute the punishment, they became more firmly convinced than ever that other white regiments were coming and that the government would force them to use the obnoxious cartridges or treat them like their comrades of the 19th. 'So the great terror that was driving them into rebellion grew...
stronger and stronger, and from mouth to mouth passed the significant words, "Goralogue ay a—the Europeans have come"—their excited imagination beheld vessel after vessel pouring forth its legions of English fighting-men, under a foregone design to force them all to apostatise at the point of the bayonet.'214 It was the news of the disembarkation of European troops at Barrackpore on 29 March 1857 which aggravated the excitement and apprehension of the 34th stationed there and resulted in the famous Mangal Pande episode.

The authorities still laboured under the belief that the objection to the greased cartridges was confined to the Hindu sepoys, who could be isolated and punished or coerced into submission. In April 1857 an opinion was recorded to the effect that 'the Sikhs and Mussalmans of the Thirty-fourth Regiment of Native Infantry were trustworthy soldiers of the State, but that the Hindoos generally of that corps were not to be trusted'.215 This mistaken belief and the ease with which the disbandment of the 19th had been carried out and the daring defiance of Mangal Pande of the 34th overcome, apparently emboldened the authorities to adopt a tough line with the objecting sepoys. At Ambala in April 1857 the sepoys were punished even for talking about the cartridges and though they explained their difficulties in respectful language they were ordered to use the cartridges in utter disregard of their explanation.216 The crowning blunder was committed at Lucknow early in May 1857. The biting of cartridges had been discontinued by a government order of 5 March 1857, but this order was concealed from the sepoys.217 On 2-May 1857 the sepoys of the 7th regiment at Lucknow were required to bite the cartridges and when they refused to do so they were confronted with overwhelming force, including loaded guns and a port-fire 'incautiously lighted',218 and punished severely, though it was privately admitted by the authorities that the sepoys were actuated not by any feelings of disloyalty or disaffection, but by a sincere dread of losing caste and that the officer concerned had been guilty of 'any imaginable degree of perverse manage-

214 Ibid., pp. 537-8.

215 Ibid., p. 551.

216 S. N. Sen, Eighteen Fifty-Seven (1957), pp. 52-3.


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Meanwhile, in the fourth week of April, an attempt had been made at Meerut to separate the Muslim from the Hindu sepoys in the matter of using the greased cartridges which only served to unite them in common opposition and led directly to the famous outbreak of 10 May 1857. Though the outbreak at Meerut on 10 May 1857 was the signal for a widespread rebellion, it was not the outcome of any preconcerted plan. Enraged by the humiliating punishment meted out to ninety-five of their comrades on the preceding day and alarmed by the
intelligence that the European rifles and artillery were approaching to disarm them, the sepoys had acted on the spur of the moment.220

Once the sepoys had risen in arms at Meerut, they were joined by the disaffected and discontented elements of the civilian population. By proceeding immediately and almost instinctively to capture the old imperial city of Delhi, where they restored the ageing titular Emperor Bahadur Shah to the throne of his ancestors, the sepoys proved that theirs was no ordinary military mutiny. It was not long before the contagion spread to many other parts of northern and central India.

Probably the most sophisticated and revealing comment on the revolt of 1857 was provided by the Calcutta Hindoo Patriot. The paper wrote on 21 May 1857: 'How slight is the hold the British Government has acquired upon the affection of its Indian subjects has been made painfully evident by the events of the last few weeks.... It is no longer a mutiny, but a rebellion. Perhaps, it will be said that all mutinies, when they attain a certain measure of success, rise to the dignity of rebellion. But the recent mutinies of the Bengal army have one peculiar feature—they have from the beginning drawn the sympathy of the country. The sepoys who, in accepting service under the British Government, neither relinquished the rights of citizenship nor abnegated national feelings have been led to believe their national religion in danger.... [They] are deemed by their countrymen justified in sacrificing a minor obligation to a paramount one. They have hazarded all their most valuable interests; and their countrymen view them as martyrs to a holy cause and a great national cause. The mutineers have been joined and aided by the civil population. They have hastened towards the ancient capital of the country where resides the remnant of the former dynasty to which are turned in times of political commotion the eyes of all Indian legitimists.... There is not a single native of India who does not feel the full weight of the grievances imposed upon him by the very existence of the British rule in India—grievances inseparable from subjection to a foreign rule. There is not one among the educated classes who does not feel his prospects circumscribed and his ambition restricted by the supremacy of that power. At the present moment, the conviction is ineradicably strong in the mind of every native—save the small circle in Bengal of those who have been ‘indoctrinated into the mysteries of European civilization—that the British Government is actuated by a fixed purpose of destroying the religion of the native races and of converting them to Christianity. Women and children talk of it. The delusion may seem strange to our [Anglo-Indian] readers, but it prevails nevertheless. Delusions as strange prevail among Europeans respecting the character and motives of Asiatic communities. Yet the grievances felt and the delusion believed in have not neutralized in the mass of the Indian population the feeling of loyalty which the substantial benefits of the British
rule have engendered. We believe the prevailing feeling is that any great disaster befalling the British rule would be a disastrous check to national prosperity. We do not deny that a pettish desire to see the high-handed proceedings of its officials rebuked and the insolence, as it is thought, of the Anglo-Indian community checked to some degree countervails the more sober deduction. But, on the whole, the country is sound.221 The attitude of English-educated Indians to the revolt of 1857 was perhaps nowhere more clearly and frankly expressed than in a letter by 'A Loyal Bengali' to the Friend of India. After referring to the idea widely prevalent in Anglo-Indian society that educated Bengalis were rejoicing at the rebellion and would be glad to see the British driven out of India, the correspondent remarked: 'Young Bengal is not hostile to the British Government. Young Bengal has no wish whatever to see the British Government overthrown under existing circumstances. How could he wish otherwise? Were the British Government in India overthrown, Young Bengal would, doubtless, be buried in its ruins.' The correspondent added that, though Young Bengal was 'by no means satisfied with it', he had no desire to exchange the comparatively mild rule of Britain for 'the horrors of the house of Tamerlane' or 'the barbarism of the Russian Autocracy'. Self-interest alone, therefore, induced Young Bengal to desire the continuance of British rule for the time being 'simply because if it were overturned, a better one could not take its place'. 'He would rather have done with it, and become free (and what man will blame another man for wishing to be free?), but the gods have not decreed so, at least in our days. The load must be endured, and it is Young Bengal's wish to make it as light as possible.' Young Bengal, however, looked upon the rebellion 'as a retribution of Providence' for the atrocities perpetrated by the British in India, and 'as tokens for good'. 'Young Bengal', wrote the correspondent, 'has certain grievances. ... For getting these grievances redressed he has had recourse to constitutional means, but in vain. He himself would never resort to unconstitutional means (neither, indeed, has he the power to do so); but he hopes that the unconstitutional efforts of others would produce a salutary effect on the Government. He hopes that the mutinies would exert a wholesome moral influence on the Government...

221 Hindoo Patriot, 21 May 1857.

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that, in consequence of the mutinies, the Government would be more conciliating 'towards the natives than it has hitherto been—less injustice would be done to them—and the odious distinctions of colour and creed would become obsolete in practice as they have become long ago in theory and in the Company's Regulations.' The correspondent concluded by saying: 'Blessed with an English education, having imbibed the spirit of English literature from my childhood, with English feelings, English tastes and predilections, I am to all intents and purposes an Englishman. Though as a patriotic native I cannot accord the Indian Government in the language of Father Paul to his country "Esto perpetua", yet, fully appreciating the blessings (such as they are) of British rule I can wish for its stability up to the time when we are able to govern ourselves without any fear of foreign invasion.'222

The revolt of 1857 and the attitude adopted towards it by contemporary English-educated Indians in general provided a remarkable confirmation of the -prognostication made by C.E. Trevelyan in 1838 and again in 1853, to which we have already referred.223 Two models of political change were, Trevelyan had pointed out, current in India at the time. One was the Original Hindu
and Muslim model, according to which the British being usurping foreigners were to be swept off the face of India in a day by violent means. The other was the new and improved model, inculcated by English education, according to which constitutional self-government was to be ultimately attained for India, by a gradual and slow process of regeneration, under the protection of the British.

The revolt of 1857 represented an attempt to gain political independence according to the old Indian model, while the activities of the three presidency associations represented the influence of the new English model. These two models of political change continued to compete for ascendancy in India in the years which followed, and though the new model gained steadily in popularity and finally triumphed in 1947, the old never entirely lost its appeal. Reactivated by revolutionary currents from Europe, the latter time and again challenged the former and claimed many adherents even amongst English-educated Indians.

Meredith Townsend,224 who was in India during the revolt, recalled in 1882: 'There was not an Indian on the vast continent who did not consider the Sepoys Nationalists, and did not, even if he dreaded their success, feel proud of their few victories. An old Hindoo scholar, definitely and openly on the English side, actually cried with rage and pain, in the writer's presence, over a report that Delhi was to be razed. He had never seen Delhi, but to him it was "our beautiful city, such a possession for our country".225 The attitude

222 Friend of India, 4 June 1857. See also the same correspondent's letter to the editor, Hindoo Patriot, 25 June 1857.

223 See above, p. 77.

224 B. 1831; joined Friend of India as sub-editor 1848; succeeded J. C. Marshman as editor 1852; also official translator to Bengal government and correspondent of The Times; returned to Britain 1860; editor of Spectator until 1898; d. 1911.


104 of contemporary English-educated Indians towards the revolt of 1857 was far more ambivalent than Townsend's remark would suggest. They thought the rebels to be misguided, but they sympathized with them as their brethren and admired their courage for rising in a just cause. They too disliked the Feringhees and, though not wishing to see them swept into the sea, derived some satisfaction from their troubles. Even to this day a similar ambivalence continues to characterize the attitude of most Indians to the revolt of 1857. '

A Madras civilian wrote in 1857 that 'there was disaffection enough in the land for half-a-dozen rebellions, but ... the community was composed of so many diverse and discordant castes and creeds that they could not unite against the common enemy'.226 The vastness, diversity and divisions of India prevented the revolt of 1857 from becoming a united national effort and enabled the British, with their superior organization and resources, to suppress it easily. But the
revolt had not been entirely in vain. It taught the British many lessons and influenced their future policy in India in many ways.

The first lesson which the British government learnt from the revolt of 1857 was that it was dangerous to meddle with Indian religions-and customs and to identify itself too closely and ostensibly with the evangelization of the country. Strict-religious neutrality, in practice as well as in theory, greater caution in aiding missionary efforts, and an extreme reluctance to promote social reform became the watchwords of the British administration in India after 1857.

The second lesson which the revolt taught the British government was that the political value of maintaining the princely states in India far out weighed any moral or administrative shortcomings they might possess. Dalhousie's policy of annexation had created widespread alarm and disaffection and the dispossessed princes had provided leadership to the revolt. The remaining princely states, on the other hand, had proved themselves 'breakwaters to the storm which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave'.227 An attempt was, therefore, made in the years which followed the revolt, to reassure the princes by abandoning the policy of annexation and conceding to them the right of adoption, and so to enlist their influence and loyalty—in the interests of the British empire.

The third lesson which was brought home to the British government by the revolt of 1857—especially the form which it took in Avadh and parts of Bihar—was that the zamindars and talukdars were the natural leaders of Indian society and that they supplied an essential link in the chain as valuable to the peasant as to the state. The policy of reducing Indian society to a dead level had, it was realized, created disaffection and left the state without active defenders. British policy in India after the revolt acquired a marked aristocratic bias,


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aimed at conciliating the landed gentry and turning them into a great bulwark for the state.228

The fourth lesson which the British government learnt from the revolt of 1857 was that it should no longer implicitly rely upon the loyalty of the Indian element in the army. It was, however, not possible to rule India without a large army of which Indians were bound to form a substantial proportion. Hence great care was taken in the military reorganization that took place after the revolt to ensure that the Indian element in the army should, while continuing to serve imperial purposes both in India and overseas, never again threaten the security and stability of the raj. The Indian element in the army was, accordingly, drastically reduced (from 238,000 in 1857 to 140,000 by 1863), and the European element increased (from 45,000 to 65,000). The personnel of the army was modified. The Brahman element from what is now called Uttar Pradesh, the core of the original mutiny, was heavily reduced and its place taken by 'the martial races' from the Punjab and Nepal who had proved their loyalty during the revolt. The ratio of European to
Indian troops in northern India was raised to parity, and nearly one to two for the country as a whole. The separation of the three armies of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras was retained, as it seemed well calculated to prevent the spread of the mutiny virus from one to the other armies. In order to prevent the growth of any common feeling amongst the different components of the army, separate units were formed on the basis of caste or community. As Wood told Canning: 'I never wish to see again a great Army, very much the same in its feelings and prejudices and connections, confident of its strength, and so disposed to unite in rebellion together. If one regiment mutinies, I should like to have the next regiment so alien that it would be ready to fire into it.'

As a further precaution, all artillery was retained exclusively in British hands and all important stations were garrisoned with British as well as Indian troops.

The fifth lesson which the British government learnt from the revolt of 1857 was that it was dangerous to continue 'to legislate for millions of people with few means of knowing, except by rebellion, whether the laws suit them or not.' The revolt had revealed the gulf of ignorance and misunderstanding that yawned wide and turbulent between the rulers and the ruled. An attempt was, therefore, made, by the Indian Councils Act of 1861, to associate the ruled with the process of law-making. The Act provided for the inclusion of a few carefully handpicked Indians in the central and provincial legislative councils. The reformed legislative councils were, however, more like darbars than representative institutions.

228 On this point, see ibid., pp. 134 ff.

229 Wood to Canning, 8 April 1861, Wood Papers, MSS. Eur. F. 78/L.B. 7. To Sir William Denison, governor of Madras (1861-6), Wood wrote the same day: '... as regards Armies and Regiments in India, I am for "Divide et impera".' Ibid. See also Wood to Elgin, viceroy of India, 10, 19 May 1862, ibid., L.B. 10.


231 See below, pp. 234-5.

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The revolt of 1857 led, as the Saturday Review had predicted, 'not to the downfall, but to the consolidation and permanence of our empire in the East.' But from the Indian point of view it was not entirely a failure. It assured them of two things: first, that the British government would not interfere with their religions; and second, that no more Indian princely states would be annexed by the British raj under any pretext. 'The people of India', wrote Sir George Clerk in 1870, 'obtained fully the two great objects for which in 1857-58 they rebelled, and the Sepoys, almost always the exponents of the people's sentiments, mutinied.'

232 Saturday Review, 4 July 1857.

233 B. 1800; joined East India Company's service 1817; lieutenant-governor of North-Western Provinces 1843; member of governor-general's council 1844-7; governor of Bombay 1847-8 and
CHAPTER THREE The Growth of Indian Nationalism, 1858-80

THE FIRE OF the revolt of 1857 had hardly been extinguished when the Calcutta Englishman wrote: 'Now that by our annexation policy, we have nationalized all India and throughout its length and breadth caused all minor differences to be swallowed up, in the ineffaceable distinctions of white and black, master and subject, henceforth and for ever, we stand forth in bold relief aliens in country, color, and creed . . . in truth the Providence which determined this work, has irremediably committed us to a struggle with nationalized India. . . .' The leader-writer of the Englishman was obviously more far-seeing than the vast majority of his own countrymen, for, though many Britons feared a repetition in the future of the violent outbreak which had just been suppressed, very few of them apprehended in 1859 'a struggle with nationalized India'. Had not the failure of the recent revolt itself demonstrated that India was not 'nationalized' and that its divisions were too many and too deep to be easily obliterated?

The revolt of 1857 demolished many popular British notions about India and its people, but it also reinforced certain others. The localized character of the revolt, its failure to throw up any outstanding 'national' leader, and the relative ease with which they were able to make use of Indians against Indians in order to put down the revolt confirmed many Britons in their old belief that the people of India had 'no conception of national independence' or patriotism.2 In subsequent years, with British power more firmly rivetted on India than ever before and the memories of the dark days of the revolt fading out, some of the old and popular British cliches about India gained increased currency. The favourite British description of India in the latter half of the nineteenth century was a congeries of tribes, religion and castes'. It was commonly asserted that the word 'patriotism' had no place in the Indian vocabulary, that Indians did not mind being ruled by foreigners because they had been accustomed to foreign rule for centuries and that they had no capacity for self-government

For most people patriotism is synonymous with hatred of the foreigner.

'The only patriotism', wrote the Friend of India in January 1857, 'we have yet encountered [in Asia] is in Canton. The rabble of that city seem to have a genuine
heartfelt contempt for the barbarians, which in Spartans we should admire.' It probably never
occurred to the editor of the Friend of India that if Indians, for example, did not have the same
'genuine heartfelt contempt for the barbarians' as did the Chinese, it was mainly because the
former had had greater experience of 'the barbarians' than the latter. That the rabble in some of
the Indian cities had no more love for 'the barbarians' than had that in Canton was a fact of which
the editor of the Friend of India and his countrymen were made painfully aware only a few
months later.

Nations, it has been said, are made in solitude. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, India
seldom had the solitude to become a nation. Moreover, the country was too vast. All-India
empires were a rare phenomenon, and they were short-lived. The integrative process in India was
again and again interrupted by foreign invasions. Even if there had been no foreign invasions, it
is doubtful whether a country of the size of India could have become a nation before the
development of the modern means of communication in the nineteenth century. It is, therefore,
not at all surprising that India was not a nation when the British first arrived there as traders. But
it would be wrong to conclude, as so many British observers tended to do, that India was entirely
lacking in the essentials of nationalism, or that the vastness and diversity of India ruled out the
possibility of the emergence of a united Indian nation.

India was a compact territory. Nature had given her a distinct geographical unity and well-
defined frontiers. And from very early times the people of India had been conscious of this fact.4
Communication between different parts of India was frequent. Pilgrims travelled great distances
to visit shrines distributed throughout the country. So did merchants and scholars. The physical
and administrative barriers within the country never impeded the free flow of men or goods or
ideas. The two major religious communities in India—the Hindu and the Muslim—were
dispersed all over the subcontinent. The sense of belonging to an all-India community cut across
regional and linguistic loyalties. Despite the apparent diversity of language, custom, race and
religion, India, from the Indus to the Brahmaputra and from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin,
possessed a certain underlying uniformity of life which distinguished it from the rest of the
world. The web of Indian life was woven of diverse but interlocking patterns. The divisions of
India were many, but they were neither rigid nor exclusive. A Bengali Muslim, for example,
though he differed from his Hindu neighbour in religion, spoke the same language as did the
latter and shared with him in a common regional culture, while as a Muslim he was part of a
wider community. Similarly, though the Maharashtrian and the Tamil Hindu were linguistically
and racially different, they belonged to the same religion. Nor was the ideal of Indian political
unity entirely lacking. The ancient Hindu ideal of a chakravartin was that of a monarch who
ruled over the entire subcontinent.5

3Friend of India, 22 January 1857.
This ideal was only briefly realized under the Mauryas in the fourth century B.C. and under the Guptas in the fourth century A.D., but what is significant is the fact that the ideal was firmly implanted in the Indian mind. The result was that later when the Mughals succeeded in the sixteenth century in bringing almost the entire subcontinent under one political umbrella, the emperor of Delhi began to be looked upon by the people as the paramount ruler of India. If the East India Company kept up for long the fiction of being the agent of the Mughal emperor in Delhi, it was mainly because the fiction was useful to it and acceptable to the people of India. When the sepoys mutinied in 1857, they, both Hindu and Muslim, naturally turned, as the Hindoo Patriot remarked at the time, 'towards the ancient capital of the country where resides the remnant of the former dynasty to which are turned in times of political commotion the eyes of all Indian legitimists'.

Reflective Indians hailed the political unification of India brought about by British rule as the realization of India's age-old aspiration for political unity. It is not entirely without significance that the Indian press compared the darbar held at Delhi on 1 January 1877, to mark the assumption by Queen Victoria of the title of Kaiser-i-Hind, to the rajsuya yajna of Yudhisthira and the assemblage of nobles from all parts of India at the Mughal court.

India was far from being a nation in the nineteenth century—she is even to this day only a nation in the making----but she was not entirely lacking in some of those basic elements which are essential for the making of any nation, and given favourable circumstances she could become a nation. Some of these favourable circumstances were provided by British rule. The British once again gave political unity to India. They recreated a sort of all-India state. By 1849 the military conquest of India was almost complete and though the numerous princely states were allowed a good deal of autonomy, by and large, the whole country came under British sway. Common subjection, common laws and institutions began to shape the people of India in a common mould. Indian patriotism could now fix upon a single state system Communal, linguistic and regional loyalties did not disappear. In fact, they were reinforced and reinvigorated in many ways. But pan-Indianism also grew and it acquired a new meaning and content.

British rule gave India a long period of peace and security. India was, in a way, isolated and insulated from the rest of the world. The integrative process had now full operation within India. To borrow Edwyn Bevan's famous analogy, the British raj was like a steel frame which held the injured body of India together till the gradual process of internal growth had joined the dislocated bones, knit up the torn fibres, and enabled the patient to regain inner coherence and unity.

The introduction of the modern means of communication—the press, the new postal system and the railways—which followed the establishment of British

6 Hindoo Patriot, 21 May 1857.
rule in India, linked the metropolitan centres with the mofussil and one province with another in a closer, more intimate and living unity. We have already referred in passing to the significant role played by the press in India in criticizing the acts of the administration, in ventilating the grievances of the public, in creating political consciousness, and in promoting a sense of national unity. In a vast country like India, which had few representative institutions and where other forms of agitation were either undeveloped or only resorted to spasmodically, the press provided a regular, easy and potent means of constitutional agitation. It was not long before the Fourth Estate in India established itself as a tribune of the people and a permanent opposition to the government. The ability and courage with which many of the Anglo-Indian newspapers in India carried out their self-imposed duty made them a power in the land. The government of India had to reckon with them and the people of India were glad to follow in their footsteps. Both in their spirit and in their style of writing Indian newspapers, especially those in English, were modelled on their Anglo-Indian contemporaries. Like the latter, they fearlessly criticized official policies and gave expression to the wants and views of the people. In this particular respect Indians were better placed than the people of many countries in Europe, where the freedom of the press was severely restricted. Like their Anglo-Indian counterparts, Indian newspapers developed an all-India outlook. Not only did they take note of happenings in all parts of India, they circulated freely in all parts of the country. The practice of exchanging free copies enabled the editor of, say, a paper in Madras to easily obtain dozens of other newspapers published in different parts of the subcontinent. One has only to glance through the periodically published subscription lists of, for example, the Hindoo Patriot and the Amrita Bazar Patrika to realize that, though published from Calcutta, they had their readers in almost every important town of India. The horizon of the vernacular newspapers was naturally more limited and their circulation was not as wide as that of English newspapers. But even they did not confine themselves to purely parochial matters. Their editors were very often English-educated and they closely followed the example of their English contemporaries. Nor was the circulation of the vernacular newspapers as restricted as is generally supposed. For example, Urdu newspapers, published from Lahore, Delhi, Aligarh, Luck-now, Patna, Calcutta, Bombay, or Madras, circulated throughout the length and breadth of India. Similarly, Bengali newspapers were read not only in Bengal, but also by Bengalis in other parts of northern India, and Marathi newspapers from Bombay or Poona found subscribers among the Marathi-speaking population scattered all over northern, central and southern India. Some Indian newspapers, like the Indian Mirror of Calcutta, made it their conscious policy to inculcate an all-India outlook in their readers.

The importance of the press, therefore, in promoting a pan-Indian consciousness cannot be exaggerated. It broke down internal barriers and encouraged

8 Indian Minor, 1 August 1861, 1 April 1862, 1 August 1863.
inter-regional solidarity. It enabled the people in one part of the country to become aware of the existence of those in other parts of the country and of their feelings and aspiration. Because of the press, the efforts of an Isriwarchandra Vidyasagar\(^9\) to promote the cause of social reform in Bengal became easily known to people in other parts of India and stimulated them to follow His noble example in their respective provinces. The news of a protest meeting in Calcutta against the imposition of income tax led to similar meetings in the other towns of India. 'Whenever I came across anything in the Bengal papers regarding the doings of that energetic and influential body at Calcutta, the British Indian Association', said Mangaldas Nathubhai\(^10\) at a meeting held in Bombay on 14 December 1867 for the purpose of re-establishing the Bombay Association, 'I always felt ashamed of our inactivity. Let us therefore wipe away the blot upon our patriotism.'\(^11\) Thanks to the press, public men such as Harishchandra Mukerji,\(^12\) Dadabhai Naoroji, Syed Ahmed Khan, Kristodas Pal\(^13\) and Surendranath Banerjea\(^14\) became all-India figures. More than any other single factor, the press helped to unite the country and to create a community of thought and feeling, both within each province and between one province and another.\(^15\) This was most vividly illustrated by the unanimity with which public opinion in all parts of India condemned the government of India's handling of the Baroda affair in 1875 and sympathized with the fate of the deposed Gaikwar Malharrao. The wide publicity which the press gave to the affair not only helped to originate a movement throughout India demanding that the British government adhere to its declared policy of non-annexation of princely states, it also aroused, as

9 B. 1820; educationist and social reformer; d. 1891.

10 B. 1832; businessman and philanthropist; member of Bombay legislative council 1866-74; president of Bombay Association 1867-75; knighted 1875; d. 1890.

11 Proceedings of a Meeting, Held on the 14th December 1867, at the Residence of the Hon'ble Munguldass Nathoobhoy, for the Purpose of Re-establishing the Bombay Association . . . (1868), p. 2.

12 B. 1824; employed in military auditor-general's office, Calcutta; editor of Hindoo Patriot from 1855 until his death in 1861. Places as far away from Calcutta as Indore and Bombay contributed funds for his memorial (Bengal Hurkaru, 28 September 1861; Hindoo Patriot, 23 December 1861) and a Parsi from Bombay wrote his biography (Framji Bomanji, Light and Shades of the East. A Study of the Life of Baboo Harrischunder: and Passing Thoughts on India and Its People, Their Present and Future, 1863).

13 B. 1838; assistant secretary and later secretary of British Indian Association 1857-84; member of Bengal legislative council 1874-82 and of Indian legislative council 1883-4; editor of Hindoo Patriot from 1861 until his death in 1884.

14 B. 1848; entered Indian civil service 1871; dismissed from Indian civil service 1874; teacher and journalist; president of Indian National Congress 1895, 1902; minister in Bengal government 1921-3; d. 1925.
The Reverend James Long noted this in 1860. Giving evidence before the indigo commission in June that year, he remarked that the Indian press was 'welding the natives of the different Presidencies into one patriotic mass, with a community of feeling on Indian subjects'. Report of the Indigo Commission, Parliamentary Papers, 1861, vol. xliv, no. 72-1, p. 95. See also his 'Early Bengali Literature and Newspapers', Calcutta Review, 1850, vol. xiii, no. 25, pp. 144-5.

the Bombay Gazette noted, the 'latent patriotism' of the Indian people.

The steady improvement of the postal system of India under British rule, notably the introduction of a cheap uniform rate of postage in 1854, served to unify the country. It placed the privilege of communicating freely with all parts of India within the reach of the poorest. It annihilated distance and lessened isolation. It helped in enlarging the circulation of newspapers, in extending commerce, and in promoting the social and intellectual advancement of the people in various ways. It enabled public men in different parts of India, who had few opportunities of meeting together, to remain in close and regular contact with each other. Thanks to the post office, the Bombay Association found it easy, even during the rebellion of 1857-9, to correspond and exchange notes with the British Indian Association of Calcutta on political questions of mutual interest.

Railways were another potent means of unifying the country. The construction of railways in India commenced in the early fifties of the nineteenth century. Progress was rather slow in the beginning, but its pace was quickened in the next two decades by the lesson of the rebellion, the demands of British commerce and the need to prevent recurrent famines in India. By the early 'eighties, about 10,000 miles of railway had been constructed in India. The coming of the 'steam horse to India not only meant increased and rapid communication between different parts of the country, it also brought about a profound change in the habits and outlook of the people. Noticing in January 1855 how all the seventeen carriages of the Pandua-Calcutta train were 'full to the brim' with Indian passengers, the Friend of India remarked: 'It is one of the wonders of the age to see how the people of India have suddenly changed the stereotyped habits of twenty centuries.' Indeed, the railway compartment, in which people of all castes, creeds and provinces were huddled together, became the symbol of a new and united India in the making. 'Railways may do for India', the prescient Edwin Arnold wrote in 1865, 'what dynasties have never done—what the genius of Akbar the Magnificent could not effect by government, nor the cruelty of Tippoo Saheb by violence; they may make India a nation.' Twenty years later Madhav

Bombay Gazette, 13 February 1875.

On the growth of the postal system in India, see A.G. Sen, The Post Office of India (1875) and G. Clarke, The Post Office of India audits Story (1921).

As early as 1822 Indian public men in Calcutta were known to be in correspondence with their counterparts in Bombay. See M, Elphinstone to E. Strachey, 23 March 1822, quoted in T. E. Colebrooke, Life of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone (1884), vol. ii, p. 135.
19 See, for example, the correspondence between the two associations in late 1858, published in Englishman, 29 January 1859.

20 On the growth of the railways in India in the nineteenth century, see Report from the Select Committee on East Indian Railway Communication, Parliamentary Papers, 1884, vol. xi, no. 284; N. Sanyal, Development of Indian Railways (1930) and J. N. Sahni, Indian Railways, One Hundred Years, 1853 to 1953 (1953).

21 Friend of India, 25 January 1855.


113 Rao23 remarked: 'What a glorious change the railway has made in old and long neglected India! The young generation cannot fully realize it. In passing from the banks of the Tambrapurny to those of the Ganges, what varied scenes, what successive nationalities and languages flit across the view! Tamil, Telugu, Canarese, Marathi, Guzerati, Hindustani, Bengali,—populations which had been isolated for unmeasured ages, now easily mingle in civilized confusion. In my various long journeys it has repeatedly struck me that if India is to become a homogeneous nation, and is ever to achieve solidarity, it must be by means of the Railways as a means of transport, and by means of the English language as a medium of communication.'24

Travel over one's own country is usually a great educational patriotism. It heightens one's awareness of the geography, history and culture of one's native land. The knowledge gained through books, newspapers and hearsay acquires a new meaning and definitiveness. There is a widening of sympathy and a broadening of outlook.25 One's understanding of and attachment to one's country and people grow. This was especially true of the travels in India of English-educated Indians in the latter half of the nineteenth century. We can see it clearly in the cases of Bhau Daji, Keshavchandra Sen26 and Surendranath Banerjea in the 'sixties and 'seventies. Their extensive travels in India, which were made easy by steamers and railways, helped them, so to speak, to discover their own country, and added a new dimension to their sense of patriotism. When Sen, for example, visited Madras and Bombay for the first time in 1864, he appears to have been agreeably surprised to find that, despite local peculiarities, the people of Madras and Bombay were not very different from those in Bengal, and that in the religious, social and political spheres they were facing the same problems as were the Bengalis. In private conversations and public addresses, therefore, Sen told his admiring and inquisitive audiences more about Young Bengal, and himself tried to probe deeper into the minds of Young Madras and Young Bombay.27 Not surprisingly, Sen's trip to Madras and Bombay in 1864 made him realize more vividly than ever before the basic unity of Indian life and encouraged him in his project of an all-India union for religious and social reform.28

Narrating the experiences of his journey in 1868 from Calcutta to Bombay,
a Bengali wrote: ‘Without acquaintanceship, there is a sort of free masonry amongst the educated Indians, which dispenses with the ceremony of introduction, and disposes them to be friendly to one another whenever they happen to meet.’ The remark was particularly true of English-educated Indians from the three presidencies—Bombay, Madras and Bengal—between whom there existed no competition or conflict of interests. Whenever English-educated Indians from different parts of the country chanced to meet, they invariably discussed problems of mutual interest and expressed a desire for greater concert and co-operation between themselves. For example, when the Maharaja of Patiala visited Calcutta in 1871, an address was presented to him ‘on behalf of the Bengalee and Punjaabee inhabitants of Calcutta’ which praised him for his ‘enlightened and successful administration’ and expressed the hope that his visit to Bengal might ‘serve as a lasting link of connection between . . . the Bengalee and the Punjaabee, sprung from the same Aryan stock, proud of the same ancient traditions, and animated by the same fervent loyalty and attachment to Her Gracious Majesty, the Queen of Britain’. Speaking at a public meeting in Bombay on 29 December 1872, P. C. Majumdar, the famous Bengali missionary of the Brahma Samaj, remarked: ‘Bengal spreads her hands far and wide to you; will you not spread your hands widely to Bengal? The Punjaabees stand up and want . . . a response of brotherhood . . . Behold the dusky sons of Dravid calling out to you to combine with them in that great task of brotherhood which God has in view for the regeneration of India.’ While Majumdar was interested in promoting the religious and social unity of India, there were others who were more interested in promoting the political unity of the country. ‘National Unity’ was the theme of a public lecture at Poona by K. C. Banerji in 1877. But, unlike Majumdar, Banerji was of the view that religious and social unity was impossible in India, and that political sympathy provided the only basis of Indian unity. It was with the object of promoting the political unity of India that some members of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, headed by Ganesh Vasudev Joshi, journeyed to Calcutta and other places in upper India early in 1877 and again in 1878.
rare, they were given wide publicity by the press and attracted a great deal of attention throughout the country. Distingui-

30 'From Calcutta to Bombay', Englishman's Saturday Evening Journal, 23 September 1871, p. 745.

31 Indian Daily News, 15 February 1871.

32 B. 1840; visited Britain 1874, 1883, and America 1883, 1899; d. 1905.

33 Times of India, 4 January 1873.

34 B. 1847; baptized 1864; teacher and lawyer; member of Bengal legislative council 1897-9; d. 1907.

35 K. C. Banarji, National Unity (1877), pp. 5-12.

36 B. 1828; lawyer; founder and secretary of Poona Sarvajanik Sabha; d. 1880.

37 See below, pp. 201-4.

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shed visitors from other parts of India were lionized and feted by the local people. Friendships were easily made and they often proved enduring, being constantly renewed through correspondence and return visits. There was a quality of freshness, cordiality and innocence about these early contacts between Indian patriots of different provinces. The condition of India and the means to ameliorate it formed the staple of their conversation and correspondence. On the death of Ganesh Vasudev Joshi in 1880, Shishir Kumar Ghose,38 the editor of the Amrita Bazar Patrika, recalled an episode which is extremely revealing. In the autumn of 1877 Ghose had paid a visit to the western presidency. While in Poona, he had stayed with Joshi, whom he had known for long 'by fame' and whose acquaintance he had made during the latter's visit to Calcutta earlier in the same year, and come to know the great Maratha patriot 'intimately'. 'When leaving that historical city,' Ghose recalled three years later, 'Mr. Joshi took hold of our arm and inquired: "You are going away; but tell me, before you go, what will become of India?" When he told this, tears began to trickle down his wrinkled cheeks. What could we say in reply? The destiny of India was not in our keeping and we could not, therefore, give a satisfactory reply to his earnest query. "What will become of India?" and this thought oppressed him all the days of his life.'39 The number of public men was not large in India in the 'sixties and' seventies, but the fact that at least some of them were known to their counterparts in the other provinces proved to be of great consequence. For, as we shall see later, it was the network of interprovincial contacts and friendships which provided the basis for the organization of the Indian National Congress in 1885.

History is replete with examples of common subjection to foreign rule having welded together people of different races, regions and religions into one nation. A common subjection to British
rule produced the same result in India. The people of India had known many foreign rulers, but none so foreign, and determined to remain foreign, as the British. Other foreign rulers of India settled down in the country and gradually became parts of Indian society. The British came to India from thousands of miles away and they always remained mere sojourners in that country. And the longer they remained in India the more the gulf between them and the people of India widened. 'There are few instances in history', wrote the Englishman on 17 September 1873, 'of such a complete and deep gulf separating the conquerors from the conquered as exists between us and the natives of India.'

Difference in political situation, colour, language, religion, and social habits shut the British out almost completely from an acquaintance with the real life and feelings of the Indian people. In the early years of British rule in India, the necessity of conciliating the newly conquered people, and the general conditions of their stay in alien surroundings had compelled Anglo-Indians to take at least some interest in the country. But this interest declined as British rule became more firmly established, the number of British men and women in India multiplied, the opportunities of getting back home increased, and the problems of governing the country became more difficult.

People tend to idealize the past and to exaggerate its contrast with the present. But there was more than a grain of truth in what the Englishman wrote in 1871 about 'Anglo-Indians Past and Present': 'The Briton now in India is a very different creature from what he was, even half a century ago. . . . In those days people came out to India with very hazy ideas as to getting back again. . . . Steamers and the Suez Canal, Railways and Telegraphs, have well-nigh demolished both time and space, and the only idea of the modern exile is to get back again as soon as possible; his sympathies have no time to get indianized; he looks upon the country as a place where he is condemned to pass a certain number of years of penal servitude, and directly he has made a competence, either in the shape of pension or accumulations, he is off to Europe to spend it. . . . There is a widespread and general dislike of India on other grounds beside. Whether it is that we cannot forget the mutiny, or whether we are irritated by the weekly epitome of Home pleasures and jollities which we are kept from sharing in, we do not know; but the fact remains, that we are getting more and more impatient of our prison-house, and are fast getting to hate the country we used to like so well. In times of old, a young man coming to India, whether civilian, soldier or merchant, knew that he had many years of Oriental residence before him, with but small chance of getting a run back again before the end of his career; and so he took an interest in the country and the people; he tried, moreover, to make himself comfortable, and to that end spent a goodly portion of his earnings. India to him was more than a caravanserai, to leave which as soon as possible was the great aim of life, it was a home for years—in many cases a home for ever—and he made himself at home. How different is everything now! Diogenes would hunt in
vain for the man who thought or cared for his adopted country otherwise than as a place in which to haste to be rich, and then to run away from as fast as possible. Every year the mischief increases; we take more out of the country—we leave less in it. We are fast getting to think that our only duty in India is duty to ourselves. . . . It is too late, of course, to go back to the old ways: we must march with the times, but unless some remedy is found for the present distress, we augur but badly for the future of the British in India.'41

In another article on the same subject, the Englishman pointed out that there was a time, 'within living man's memory', when the British were 'really liked' and 'respected' by Indians, but now they were only 'endured' and 'feared' by the latter. 'In lieu of kindly sympathy and ready help on the one side, we have ignorance of feelings and prejudices and the irritable hastiness caused by a high-pressure system of all sorts of incongruous work. Instead of

41 Ibid., 18 August 1871.

respectful admiration, and loving obedience on the other, we have distrust; and where there has been much of what is called high education, a puffed-up self-assumption which would be painful if it were not so ridiculous.'42

Whether there ever was a time when the British were 'really liked' by Indians, it is difficult to say. But most competent observers agreed that the gulf between the British and Indians had been steadily widening, instead of narrowing Professor William Wordsworth,43 a grandson of the famous poet and principal of the Elphinstone College in Bombay, wrote to the Bombay Gazette in 1876 that 'the existing breach between the two societies . . . is a wider one than it was when I first came to this country [in 1861]'.44

With all their differences, the people of India had far more in common with each other than with their foreign rulers. And occasions were not wanting when the 'Natives' were united in common opposition to the 'Feringhees'. 'It is a mistake to suppose', W. C. Bonnerjee,45 later to become the first president of the Indian National Congress, told a meeting of the East India Association in 1867, 'that the natives of India have no points of union and common feeling among them. They are doubtless very jealous of one another. As a recent writer truly remarks, "the Mahomedan will fight against the Hindoo, the Mahratta against the Bengalee, the Seikh against the Hindoostani, with as much animosity as the English against the French". But there are causes which would unite all these contending parties, and make a common and harmonious and homogeneous whole of them, and they will fight together. Their antagonism to Christianity would seem to be one of these. Besides, in times of national trouble or calamity they all unite and make joint demonstrations. Even in political matters they are able to, and have made common cause, as is exemplified in the personnel of the misguided rebels of 1857.'46

The British had been able to conquer India mainly because the country was divided. They knew that their raj would last only as long as India remained divided. 'Depend upon it', wrote Wood privately to the viceroy, Lord Elgin,47 in 1862, 'the natural antagonism of races [amongst Indians] is no inconsiderable element of our strength. If all India was to unite against us how
long could we maintain ourselves?'48 James Geddes49 remarked publicly in 1871: 'The strength of the English dominion in India lies in Native disunion. Positive powers of its

42 Ibid., 19 August 1871.

43 B. 1835; joined Bombay education service 1861; principal of Deccan College, Poona 1862-72 and of Elphinstone College, Bombay 1872-90; d. 1917.

44 Bombay Gazette, 29 August 1876.

45 B. 1844; called to the bar 1867; standing counsel to Bengal government 1882, 1884, 1886-7; president of Indian National Congress 1885, 1892; member of Bengal legislative council 1893; d. in Britain 1906.


47 James Bruce, eighth earl of Elgin (1811-63). Governor-general of Canada 1847-54; envoy to China 1860-1; viceroy of India 1862-3.


49 Positivist; entered Indian civil service 1861; d. 1880.

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own it has only two—hard cash and sharp bayonets.'50 Reflective Britons and Indians realized that nature itself had set a limit to the duration of British rule in India, for a vast and populous country like India could not be governed indefinitely by relays of Britons from 6,000 miles across the sea. They also realized that once the people of India had developed sufficient sense of national unity, not all the material and moral superiority claimed or actually possessed by the British would suffice to enable them to hold down the country. By subjecting the population of the entire subcontinent to a common yoke, the British themselves aided, however unwittingly, the development of a sense of national unity in India. A common yoke imposed common disabilities and occasioned common grievances. Common disabilities and grievances, in their turn, created common interests and sympathies, and served to unite the heterogeneous population of India in a common hatred of its foreign rulers.

History knows of few conquerors who treated the conquered, especially if the latter differed in race, language or religion, as their equals and liked them. It is probably impossible to conquer and rule over an alien people without treating them as inferiors and hating them to some extent. The British rulers of India were no exception to this general rule. They were not only conscious of their racial and cultural superiority, but also anxious that the people of India should recognize it. The ordinary Briton in India behaved as if he were a demigod. He had an ill-concealed contempt for Indians and for their character, customs and religions. He resented travelling in the same railway compartment with an Indian or being tried by an Indian magistrate. He expected to
be salaamed by Indians, high or low. He went about cuffing and kicking Indians, and if, as it occasionally happened, the Indian succumbed to his injury, the assailant generally escaped his due punishment on the ground that the victim had an enlarged spleen. Those who were thus abused and insulted naturally united in their common humiliation and even developed a xenophobia of their own. 'The natives', Dadabhai Naoroji warned a meeting of the London East India Association in 1867, 'have had enough of abuse and reviling. It is time that this thoughtless course should cease, especially on the part of those who are men of influence, position, and authority. The natives are as much human beings as others. They feel as others feel. It is not possible that you should call them liars and rascals, and yet expect that they should love you any more than you would in similar circumstances. . . . The natives . . . have their shortcomings, no doubt, but they deserve your pity and assistance, and not your abuse and your kicks. . . . The meanest worm when trodden upon dashes its head against your foot. Of all dangers, those that arise from outraging the feelings of a nation are the most to be dreaded, and the most disastrous in their results.'51 The more responsible and cultured Britons repeatedly tried to curb this

50 Quoted in Englishman, 22 March 1871.

51 D. Naoroji, 'England's Duties to India', Journal of the East India Association, 1867, vol. i, no. 1, p. 44. See also N. Furdoonjee, The Personal Bearing of Europeans in India towards the Natives (1874).

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'rampant Anglo-Saxonism',52 as the Reverend J. Long53 called it, on the part of their countrymen in India, but the evil went on increasing. The Anglo-Indian storm which burst over Lord Ripon's54 head in 1883 in connexion with the famous Ilbert Bill55 was no isolated or novel occurrence. Whenever during the nineteenth century the government of India attempted to do away with racial distinctions in the administration of justice, as, for example, in 1836, 1850 and 1857, non-official Anglo-Indians created such a furore both in India and in Britain that the government was forced to retreat. Any governor-general, be he Canning, Lytton56 or Curzon,57 who tried to hold the scales even between the British and the Indian at once became unpopular with his own countrymen in India. It would almost seem that the one right which the 'indomitable Anglo-Saxon' in India valued most highly was to be permitted to abuse and thrash with impunity anyone of 'the conquered race', and that the one thing which he considered to be most humiliating was to be tried by a magistrate who was 'a copper-complexioned pagan'. Disgusted at the conduct of his 'kicking and cuffing' compatriots in India, especially their fury over Lord Lytton's minute in the notorious Fuller case,58 a liberal Anglo-Indian remarked in 1876 that Englishmen 'exhibit fewer traces of special Christian influences than any nation in Europe', and he added in solemn warning: '. . . the cold unsocial pride of Englishmen, that "implacable pride" . . . to borrow the words of a great English historian and moralist (Sir F. Palgrave, speaking of the English dominion in Ireland)—is still day by day, and hour by hour, building up a dividing wall of bitter memories and unsuperable [sic] hate [in India].'59

52 Englishman, 25 July 1860.
53 B. 1814; missionary of Church Missionary Society; author; jailed for his part in the Nil Darpan affair 1861; d. 1887.

54 George Frederick Samuel Robinson, second earl and first marquis of Ripon (1827-1909). Secretary of state for India 1866; viceroy of India 1880-4; colonial secretary 1892-5; lord privy seal 1905-8.

55 See chapter six, below.

56 Edward Robert Bulwer, first earl of Lytton (1831-91). Author and diplomatist; viceroy of India 1876-80.


58 In 1876 R. A. Fuller, a British barrister at Agra, struck his groom who died of the injuries. The joint magistrate of Agra, R. J. Leeds, sentenced Fuller to a fine of thirty rupees! Notices in the Indian press drew the attention of Lytton to the case and he directed the provincial authorities to look into it. But the Allahabad high court held that the sentence was not specially open to objection and the lieutenant-governor of the North-Western Provinces opined that the case did not call for any further action. In a communication to the government of the North-Western Provinces, 7 July 1876, which was made public, the government of India deplored Fuller's conduct, censured Leeds, and criticized both the provincial government and high court. See Copies of All Correspondence relating to the Case of Mr. Fuller and the Case of Mr. Leeds . . . , Parliamentary Papers, 1877, vol. lxii, no. 173, pp. 9-11.

59 W. Wordsworth, in a letter to the editor, Bombay Gazette, 29 August 1876. For some interesting reflections on the conduct of his countrymen towards Indians by a liberal-minded Briton visiting India for the first time, see C. W. Dilke, Greater Britain (1868), vol. ii, pt. iv, passim.

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It has been common to blame the growth of racial bitterness between the British and Indians almost entirely on the 'mutiny' of 1857. There can be no doubt that the terrible experience of the 'mutiny' did much to exacerbate racial bitterness between the two communities. But, in fact, the 'mutiny' itself was, at least in part, the result of a racial bitterness which had long, and not unnaturally, existed in India between the conqueror and the conquered, who were separated from each other by blood, speech and creed. The Bengal Hurkaru wrote in 1862: 'That an antagonism of race has existed ever since the British rule was first established in India, is unquestionable, and Indian history abounds with examples, which go clearly to prove it; for how were it possible that two races so dissimilar in every respect could become as one people, the one all courage and veracity, the other cowardly and dissembling. Thus it will be perceived that the phrase "antagonism of race" existed long before the mutiny and well it might.'60 Even the superciliousness betrayed by the Hurkaru was no sudden, post-'mutiny' development. As early as
the 1820s Bishop Reginald Heber61 had condemned ‘that exclusive and intolerant spirit, which makes the English, wherever they go, a caste by themselves, disliking and disliked by all their neighbours’, and added: 'Of this foolish, surly, national pride, I see but too many instances daily [in India], and I am convinced it does us much harm in this country. We are not guilty of injustice, or wilful oppression, but we shut out the natives from our society, and a bullying, insolent manner is continually assumed in speaking to them.'62

If there was little social and moral amalgamation between the British and Indians, not all the blame for it should lie with the former. Indians themselves were an extremely exclusive and proud people. Nor were they free from silly prejudices against the British. To the average Indian, a Briton was an unclean, irreligious, bullying crafty, ferocious, haughty and greedy man. Placed as they were, the people of India could not always, as the British did, give free expression to their inmost thoughts and feelings. But those who could read the language of their eyes or hear their private conversations were left in no doubt about their real sentiments towards their alien masters. In course of time these sentiments began to find vent in the press and on the platform. Anglo-Indians had, by their incessant and indiscriminate abuse of Indians, sowed the wind; they were now to reap the whirlwind.

A common hatred probably serves to bind a people more effectively than a common love. The growing antagonism of race in India did not fail to aid the cause of Indian nationalism. The rudeness shown by an ill-mannered European to an Indian fellow-passenger in a railway carriage, the accidental death of an Indian at the hands of an ill-tempered or careless British soldier, the excesses

60 Bengal Hurkaru, 26 July 1862.

61 B. 1783; bishop of Calcutta from 1822 till his death in 1826.


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committed by British planters on raiyats, the miscarriage of justice in a case involving a Briton and an Indian, and the indiscreet remarks of a British official about Indian character, all tended to unite Indians of different classes, creeds and provinces in common protest. Nothing was more remarkable than the unanimity with which educated Indians all over the country supported 'Clemency Canning' against his Anglo-Indian critics and vilifiers during and after the revolt. Strange though it might appear, the revolt of 1857 had the paradoxical effect of dividing Anglo-Indians and uniting educated Indians. Knowing that the theory of the British constitution, the better feelings of the British people and even the sympathies of enlightened British officials were on the side of equality and justice, educated Indians began increasingly to unite in opposing 'rampant Anglo-Saxonism' and demanding equal rights and privileges with their British fellow-subjects. In 1850, and again in 1857, when non-official Anglo-Indians organized a movement in protest against the government of India's attempt to deprive them of the special privileges which
they had hitherto enjoyed in judicial matters, the educated Indians of Calcutta organized a counter-movement in support of the government's policy and in order to defend themselves against the calumnies of their opponents. It is a measure of the growth in Indian public opinion and national feeling that a similar situation in 1883 evoked a united demonstration on the part of educated Indians throughout the country. In 1861 all sections of the Indian community in Calcutta combined, as a matter of 'national' duty, to hold a 'most numerously attended' meeting in order to register their protest against the 'frequent and indiscriminate attacks on the character of the natives of this country' by Sir Mordaunt Wells,63 a judge of the local supreme court.64 While the majority of the Anglo-Indian press condemned the intervention of Lytton in the Fuller case in 1876, the Indian press unanimously applauded the viceroy's action. Even the victims of 'rampant Anglo-Saxonism' in other parts of the world elicited the sympathy of educated Indians. For example, the brutal suppression of the Jamaica rebellion in 1865 by Edward John Eyre, the local governor, reminded the Hindoo Patriot of 'the proceedings of General Neil in the North-Western Provinces during the late mutiny' and 'the leading Native gentlemen of Bengal' subscribed to 'the Eyre Prosecution Fund'.65

The British not only claimed that they were superior to Indians, they also claimed that Europeans were superior to all Asians. The nineteenth century witnessed the increasing predominance of European powers in Asia, and there were many Britons—as well as other Europeans—who attributed the phenomenon to the inherent superiority of Europeans over Asians. 'The Europeans', Meredith Townsend, then editor of the Friend of India, was reported to have told a public meeting in Calcutta on 11 January 1858, 'were destined to rule the world, and the reason of that was the superiority of race, but to do so it was incumbent on them to keep themselves separate and aloof from the natives.'66 This easy assumption of European superiority was reinforced by the then current pseudo-scientific racial theories, and it added to the already existing contempt of the conqueror for the conquered, of the white for the coloured, of the Christian for the heathen. One has only to glance through the English press of the latter half of the nineteenth century—both in India and in Britain—to realize how it combined intemperate assertions of European superiority with indiscriminate abuse of Asians in general. The latter were openly reviled as being inferior, weak, cowardly, cunning, dirty, mean, lying, sensuous, immoral and uncultured. The aggressive manifestation of Europeanism—both in word and deed—could not fail to bring forth a counter-manifestation of Asianism. In 1866 K. C. Sen reminded those Europeans who hated Asians and traduced Asian character that Jesus Christ, too, was 'an Asiatic', and added: 'I rejoice, yea, I am proud, that I am an Asiatic.'67 In 1874 the Amrita Bazar Patrika published an article, entitled 'The Chinese and the English', in which it mentioned in detail the injuries done to the Chinese by the English and concluded by saying that

63 B. 1817; puisne judge of Calcutta supreme (later high) court 1859-63; d. 1885.
64 Bengal Hurkani, 27 August 1861.
65 Hindoo Patriot, 17, 24 December 1866, 6 May 1867; also editorial notice in Englishman, 13 March 1867.
the former were justified in regarding the latter people as 'satanic'. In 1876 the Nibandhamala of Poona attempted to counter European ideas of physical or military superiority by recalling that the Arabs, the Turks and the Afghans had in the past humbled the pride of European armies and that the British conquest of India had been made and was being sustained mainly with the help of the sepoys. During the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8, both the Hindus and Muslims of India united to express their sympathy for Turkey. This united demonstration of sympathy for Turkey surprised Anglo-Indians, who wanted to know particularly why Hindus were supporting the cause of a Muslim power from whom they had little to gain. In their replies to the Anglo-Indian query, Hindu newspapers frankly maintained that the sympathies of Hindus were in favour of Turkey primarily because Turkey was an Asian power.

There was another aspect of British rule which aided the growth of Indian nationalism. The British went to India not only as traders and rulers, but also as bearers of an alien religion and culture. We have already seen how repeatedly during the 1830s, '40s and '50s various parts of India were thrown into a state of great alarm because of some action of missionaries or of the government which was interpreted by the Indian people as an attack on their ancient religions and customs, and how the common dread of Christianity tended to unite not only the Hindus, Muslims and Parsis of a particular province, but also the people of one province with that of another. We have also seen how the feeling that their religion was at stake lay at the root of the revolt of 1857.

The great fear of forcible conversion to Christianity decreased after the revolt. The guarantee of religious toleration, contained in the Queen's proclamation of 1858, proved extremely reassuring to the Indian people. British officials in general, having learnt the lesson of the revolt only too well, became more cautious than ever before in aiding missionary efforts or in interfering with Indian religions and customs. But missionaries and their friends, both in India and in Britain, refused to be enlightened or depressed by the revolt. They maintained that, far from having been
caused by their indiscreet zeal for the conversion of Indians, the revolt of 1857 was a 'visitation of Jehovah's displeasure' on the British for the latter's shameful and criminal negligence in the performance of their Christian duty. They pointed to the loyalty of the 'native Christians' in the North-Western Provinces during the revolt and argued that had the government not secluded the sepoys from missionary preaching the latter would not have mutinied.73

Almost unaffected by the revolt of 1857, missionaries and their lay friends continued their violent and abusive denunciation of Indian religions. They kept on insisting that the great end of British dominion in India was the christianization of her teeming millions, and that, though it might take a century of more, it was bound to be fulfilled. They did not relax their pressure on the authorities for the adoption of measures, such as the introduction of the Bible into government schools, which would aid the spread of Christianity in India. They never ceased to assert, despite historical precedents elsewhere and even current indications in India itself to the contrary, that Christianity meant loyalty, and to warn the British government that its possession of India could not be secure until Indians were all converted to the faith of their rulers. They continued to insist that THE ONE THING74 which India needed, and without which everything else must fail, for her regeneration was Christianity. They repeatedly told the Indian people that the latter could never hope to become 'civilized' or to gain political rights unless and until they exchanged their 'false religions for 'the only true religion' of Christ.

The views expressed by the 'missionary party' were not those of a small or insignificant body of fanatical evangelists and Pharisees alone. They were echoed by the vast majority of the British press, both in India and in Britain, and a large number of influential and otherwise most liberal-minded Britons.

71 See above, pp. 33-50.

72 See above, pp. 84-90, 94-101.


74 Bengal Hurkaru, 17 October 1861.

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'There is not', wrote the Friend of India in 1863, 'an Englishman in India, however indifferent he may be to missionaries and their work, who would not look upon the entire christianization of our native subjects as a great political gain. There are few who do not believe that the accomplishment of this result is only a work of time. . . . Lord Palmerston has officially expressed his desire for the realization of what is at present little more than a hope. Acts of Parliament have from time to time pledged the English nation to the same opinion. Her Majesty as boldly hinted at it as was proper in a Proclamation intended to complete and solidify the work of pacification. There is hardly a Governor-General who in private, by purse, by the expression of good wishes, and through the personal efforts of members of his family, has not shewn the same desire. And the most remarkable feature in the progress of Christianity in India since the Proclamation of 1858, has been the boldness with which the highest officials in every province . .
. have shewn their Christianity to the people whom they ruled, in public meetings, in statements, in official addresses, in personal labours and sacrifices.'75 Rarely was a British voice raised in favour of religious toleration and an entirely secular education in India in the nineteenth century except on the ground of political expediency. 'We may assume without much fear of contradiction', remarked the Englishman, which in the past, under W. C. Hurry, consistently opposed the views of the proselytizing party, in 1860, 'that the great majority, even of those who most widely differ as to the expediency of offering religious instructions to the Native, will yet admit that the Christian faith is a purer and more elevating faith than that of the Shastras or Koran, and that, were there no fear of political embarrassment, it would be a good thing to give Hindoos and Mahomedans the opportunity at least of satisfying their minds, by a study of the Bible. We have not yet met with any who are disposed to deny this, and consequently all the objections against religious teaching, in whatever phraseology it may be expressed, or whatever variety of form it may assume, is in fact, an objection founded on the fear of consequences . . . the real, and in fact, the only obstacle to the open progress of religious instruction is the fear of consequences to ourselves . . . .'76 It was no fanatical evangelist like Herbert Edwardes, but Robert Knight, one of the most liberal-minded journalists in India who avowed that he did not have 'the slightest feeling of proselytism', who wrote in 1872: 'Our own conviction is profound that India will never possess Home rule, until she has cast away and abjured the false systems of religion that have been the cause of her degradation, and become Christian.'78

The sayings and doings of missionaries and their friends could not but create uneasiness in the minds of the Indian people. In a petition to Parliament in

75 Friend of India, 12 March 1863.

76 Englishman, 16 February 1860.

77 B. 1826; editor successively of Bombay Times, Times of India, Indian Statesman, Indian Economist, Friend of India, and Statesman; d. 1890.

78 Indian Statesman, 13 December 1872.

1860, for example, the British Indian Association of Calcutta made a pointed reference to the support extended by 'influential sections of the British community in England' to the missionary movement in favour of the introduction of the Bible in government schools and colleges and how it had 'filled with apprehension and alarm many of the native community' in India.79 As before the revolt of 1857, it was not the menace of missionaries so much as the possibility of their being aided by the government that gave Indians cause for concern. The efforts of the Indian press and public bodies in the post-rebellion period were, therefore, directed not only to countering the activities of missionaries, but also to ensuring that the government adhered strictly to its declared policy of religious neutrality. Every action of the government which appeared to facilitate conversion or to interfere with Indian religions and customs was at once condemned by the Indian press and public associations.
The activities of the 'missionary party' were not only a constant source of alarm and irritation to the people of India, they also aroused the smouldering embers of religious fanaticism in the country. Professor Wordsworth noted in 1876 how the proceedings of missionaries were tending 'to widen the existing breach' between the rulers and the ruled, and remarked: 'No theology, or mythology, let apologists say what they may, ever has succeeded, or ever will succeed, in establishing a claim to more than a relative value; and all intemperate assertions of the absolute worth of any one simply strengthen the case of its antagonist, besides exasperating those who feel the charm of their own legends and the dogmas associated with them as no alien can ever feel it.'80 Partly in opposition to missionaries, and partly in emulation of them, the votaries of Indian religions adopted tactics which served only to poison the stream of social life in the country. The task of the Indian religious and social reformer was made extremely difficult. What Bernard Shaw wrote about the difficulty of an Irish patriot, under British rule, fighting against clerical obscurantism in his own country,81 was doubly true of the Indian situation in the nineteenth century.

As the fire of the 'missionary party' was directed mainly against Hinduism, it was Hindu society which felt most threatened in the nineteenth century. For a very long time Hindu society remained almost entirely on the defensive. Both Christianity and Islam continued to gain converts at its expense. The growth of heterodox sects like the Brahma Samaj made it a house divided against itself. The prospect was indeed grim for Hindu society in the nineteenth century, and there were many who predicted its early disintegration and demise. But Hindu society managed to survive. The frankly hostile attitude of the 'missionary party' helped it in containing its internal schisms, while the growth of education and of the means of communication gave it a greater unity of action in repelling external attacks than it had possessed ever before. By the 1870s there were clear signs that Hinduism had developed a good deal of self-confidence and was no longer content to remain merely on the defensive. The lecture of Rajnarain Bose82 at Calcutta in 1872 on the superiority of Hinduism over other religions83 and the establishment of the Arya Samaj at Bombay in 1875 by Swami Dayanand84 were symbolic of the new self-assertive phase of Hinduism. It was this phase of Hinduism which received encouragement from the writings and utterances of western Orientalists like F. Max Muller85 and of western Theosophists like Henry S. Olcott.86

Those Britons who at times despaired of the Christian missions taking 'the impregnable Sebastapol of Heathendom'87 in India by storm were still inclined to believe that it was slowly but surely being undermined by western education and institutions. 'We believe', said an Anglo-
Indian writer in the Calcutta Review of 1865, 'that the combined influence of Railways and Education will prove to have brought about the long-wished-for result.'88 In an article in the Fortnightly Review of 1872, A. C. Lyall,89 the great Anglo-Indian administrator and scholar, analysed the current religious malaise in India and concluded: 'I suppose that the old gods of Hinduism will die in these new elements of intellectual light and air as quickly as a net-full of fish lifted up out of the water . . . .'90 It was confidently predicted that the impact of western culture must in the long run result in persuading Indians to turn their backs on their past. India, wrote Isaac Taylor,91 'must learn to be ashamed of what it has been during these four thousand years'.92

There was a good deal of wishful thinking in this kind of reasoning. The Impact of western culture did create a profound disquiet in Indian society. It even made a number of English-educated Indians dissatisfied with the existing state of their religious and social institutions. But no people can, even if it wishes, turn its back on its past! Nor can it live on borrowed culture alone. To be ashamed

82 B. 1826; teacher; 'conservative' Brahmo; d. 1899.
83 National Paper, 18, 25 September 1872; Friend of India, 3 October 1872.
84 B. 1824; d. 1883.
85 B. at Dessau 1823; appointed professor of comparative philology at Oxford 1868; d. 1900. In a letter to Dr. Ramdas Sen of Berhampore Max Muller gave the following advice: 'What I want to see in India is the rising of a national spirit, an honest pride in your past history, a discriminating love of your ancient literature. . . . Take all that is good from Europe, only do not try to become Europeans, but remain what you are, sons of Manu . . . .' Quoted in Native Opinion, 15 July 1877; also in Bengalee, 3 December 1881.
86 B. 1832; founded, with H. P. Blavatsky, Theosophical Society 1875; arrived in India 1879; d. at Adyar 1907.
87 Bengal Hurkaru, 14 February 1863.
89 B. 1835; joined East India Company's service 1856; lieutenant-governor of North-Western Provinces 1882-7; member of secretary of state's council 1887-1902; d. 1911.
90 A. C. Lyall, 'The Religious Situation in India', Fortnightly Review. 1 August 1872, p. 160.
91 B. 1787; artist, author and inventor; d. 1865.
92 Quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 24 January 1862.
of one's past is often the surest way to commit suicide. Moreover, what India had been 'during these four thousand years' was not entirely a matter of shame to her children. If the British were proud of their culture, so were Indians of their own, even while admitting the excellence of British culture in certain respects. It is probably not in human nature to accept total and permanent inferiority to others. Even in the first half of the nineteenth century it had been clear that the people of India were too deeply attached to their traditional culture to exchange it for that of their new rulers. The vast majority of English-educated Indians, who had imbibed many western ideas and manners and were dissatisfied with the existing state of Indian society, were unwilling to leave the ancestral fold. Even those Indians who had renounced the faith of their fathers and accepted Christianity were conscious of their national origins. The Reverend Lal Bihari Dey93 averred in 1861 that he had not ceased to be Indian because he had become Christian and that he had 'as ardent longings after national liberty as any of our countrymen can have'.94 Gyanendramohan Tagore was proud of the fact that he was 'a Brahmin-Christian'.95 The severe criticism of the racial exclusiveness of his European colleagues by the Reverend Golaknath96 at the Lahore missionary conference in 1863 made even the Friend of India remark that 'with the Hindoo, loyalty to England is not the invariable accompaniment of the reception of Christianity'.97 It was a Bengali Christian who told a gathering of Maharashtrians at Poona in 1877: 'I must say I feel proud that I am a fellow-countryman of the natives of Poona. It is simply impossible for any one rejoicing in the Indian name to reflect on the hallowed associations of this historical city, without feeling himself ennobled in the company of its inhabitants.'98 'I have had', J. T. Zorn99 disclosed at a meeting of the East India Association in London on 25 July 1867, 'converted Mahometans and Brahmins and Parsees in my house, and I have found that they have all the same national pride, to make India one nation . . . .'100

Instead of turning their backs on the past, Indian reformers began increasingly to turn to the past in order to derive inspiration and sanction for their progressive views. There was greater emphasis on reform 'on national lines'. Existing religious and social abuses were denounced as being latter-day accretions due entirely to undesirable foreign influences. The 'denationalized', English-educated

93 B. 1824; baptized 1843; teacher and journalist; d. 1894.

94 Indian Reformer, 10 January 1861; also quoted in Bombay Times and Standard, 28 January 1861.

95 'Future Prospects of India', Report of the Canning Institute, for the Sessions 1866-68 (1869), p. 47; also his Thoughts by a Christian Brahmin on the Position and Prospects of Religion in India (1871).

96 B. 1816; first Brahman convert of American Presbyterian Church in India 1835; head of Jullunder mission; d. 1891.

97 Friend of India, 12 March 1863.

Indian was very often the most vocal and determined champion of indigenous culture. In 1866 Henry S. Maine, then law member of the viceroy's council and vice-chancellor of Calcutta university, publicly rebuked 'the most highly educated class of Natives', who had 'broken for ever with much in their history, much in their customs, much in their creed', for making 'elaborate attempts . . . to persuade themselves and others, that there is a sense in which these rejected portions of Native history, and usage, and belief, are perfectly in harmony with the modern knowledge, which the educated class has acquired, and with the modern civilization to which it aspires'. He was quick to add that he was not complaining 'of the romantic light in which educated Hindoos sometimes read their past history', for he admitted: 'It is very difficult for any people to feel self-respect if they have no pride in their own annals.' But, in his view, this feeling, which was healthy when reasonably indulged, had become unwholesome and absurd in India because of its being pushed to an extravagant length. 'I myself believe', Maine added, 'that European influences are, in great measure, the source of these delusions. The value attached in Europe to ancient Hindoo literature, and deservedly attached for its poetical and philological interest, has very naturally caused the Native to look back with pride and fondness on the era at which the great Sanscrit poems were composed and great philosophical systems evolved. But unquestionably this tendency has its chief root in this,—that the Natives of India have caught from us Europeans our modern trick of constructing by means of works of fiction, an imaginary past out of the present, taking from the past its externals, its outward furniture, but building in the sympathies, the susceptibilities and even (for it sometimes comes to that) the knowledge of the present time.' This practice, he believed, was all very well in Europe, for there the exuberance of social life was so great that it prevented any serious evil arising from 'our pleasing ourselves with pictures of past centuries, more or less unreal and untrue', but here in India its effect was 'unmixedly deleterious'. 'On the educated Native of India,' Maine argued, 'the past presses with too awful and terrible a power for it to be safe for him to play or palter with it. The clouds which overshadow his household, the doubts which beset his mind, the impotence of progressive advance which he struggles against, are all part of an inheritance of nearly unmixed evil which he has received from the Past. The Past cannot be coloured by him in this way, without his misreading the Present and endangering the Future.' He warned English-educated Indians against using their knowledge for the 'irrationally reactionary purposes' of glorifying their past and defending their 'abominable' social usages, and advised them to realize that 'their real affinities are with Europe and the Future, not with India and the Past'.

The eminent British legal luminary and sociologist obviously had no appreciation

101 B. 1822; jurist; law member of viceroy's council 1862-9; member of secretary of state's council 1871-88; d. 1888.

102 Englishman, 19 March 1866. Address to Calcutta university convocation on 17 March 1866.
of what has recently been called 'the modernity of tradition'. Nor does he seem to have realized that nationalism is both aspiration and memory. Even the Calcutta Englishman ridiculed his telling English-educated Indians that their own national inheritance was an 'unmixed evil' and that 'their real affinities are with Europe and the Future, not with India and the Past'. But the tendency which Maine chose to condemn in English-educated Indians in 1866 was a fact, and it became increasingly marked as the years rolled by. Noticing the 'great change' that had come over Young Bengal during the last eight years of its existence, the National Paper of Calcutta wrote on 7 August 1872: ‘The tide of denationalization has sustained an ebb. A happy reaction has taken place in native feelings. People have begun to disbelieve in the theory, that for a nation's progress they have simply to learn the art of borrowing. They have firmly begun to believe, in the doctrine, that, to secure everlasting good to themselves, they should have a basis of their own.’ In the same year the Hindoo Patriot confidently asserted that English education would not disorganize Hindu society or make the Hindu a 'wanderer on the earth'. The English-educated Bengali of today, the paper noted with evident satisfaction, did not have the same indiscriminate admiration for western culture, or contempt for his own, which characterized his predecessor a few decades ago. If Old Bengal had become more tolerant, Young Bengal had learnt to be more discriminating and compromising.


104 Englishman, 2 August 1866.

105 Max Muller showed a correct understanding of this tendency when he remarked in 1874: 'A people that cannot feel some pride in the past, in its history and literature, loses the mainstay of its national character. When Germany was in the very depth of its political degradation, it turned to its ancient literature, and drew hope for the future from the study of the past. Something of the same kind is now passing in India. A new taste, not without some political ingredients, has sprung up for the ancient literature of the country. . . . . Transactions of the Second Session of the International Congress of Orientalists. Held in London, in September 1874 (1876), p. 188. Also quoted in Bengalee, 17 October 1874.

106 National Paper, 1 August 1872.
than by a spirit of reckless go-aheadism.'\(^{107}\) In 1877 the editor of the Indian Mirror, Narendranath Sen,\(^ {108}\) complained that the young men of the present generation, unlike those of the past, took less interest in social than in political questions, and that they were inclined to be more chauvinistic and xenophobic. His observations on this point, which like all other observations of this kind are to be taken with a grain of salt, are so significant that they deserve to be quoted at some length. 'The brave band of striplings that first emerged from the threshold of the Hindu College', wrote Sen, 'had their heads full of the great ideas of social and moral reformation. Their hearts were shocked to see the dense cloud of ignorance and superstition which enveloped the face of society, and they wept to contemplate the thousand ills which the country was heir to. . . . Those were days of youthful enthusiasm, radical reform, and earnest warfare against superstition. . . . In our younger days, we say, the first voice of the early reformers was extended in a long, deep echo, and we still felt the power of earnestness and faith and saw the necessity of a power to upset the existing arrangements of a society decrepit and worn with age. We spoke of female education, of widow marriage, of the evils of polygamy and early marriage, of caste and of education, and these were the stock subjects that afforded food for many a long-winded discussion and lecture in our debating societies. Of satire and invective we had enough in our midst; but those were more often directed against ourselves, against the cowardice of our lip-reformers, and against the hypocrisies and inconsistencies of our orthodox countrymen . . . The most effective philippics of our patriots were levelled against that tyrant of denationalization which clothed us with an English outside without informing the mind with the strength and vitality of western thought and western culture. Alas! those days are gone. The days when we were condemned and when we learnt to condemn ourselves, the days of unrest and reaction, the days of the upheaval of national thought and national aspirations—they are gone; and what have we in exchange for them? . . . The society in which we live is almost as backward as it was two decades ago; our women are in the same abject condition as before; the widows are the same melancholy beings as ever; superstition raises its hydra-head in the same defiant style, and caste is still an unmitigated curse. But our young men take no delight in these things. They have beheld their faces in the mirror long enough to have been convinced of their ugliness, and now they have gone to examine their neighbours' faces and to find out by sheer contrast that their own must be infinitely more graceful than those of their opponents. Talk of female education! Look, they say, to the condition of European women, and is it not as bad as ours. You speak of caste, but there is a caste in England where the rich man is the Brahmin at whose feet the poverty-stricken Sudra falls in abject servility. You tell us of superstitions, yet even at the present day there are clowns in the provinces of England who believe in witchcraft and palmistry. Thus having by an ingenious stretch of imagination brought down

107 Quoted in Indian Statesman, 2 April 1872.

108 B. 1847; journalist and lawyer; d. 1911.

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the western nations to their own level, our young men are taught to believe in their own equality; and in every discussion in which they take part they are always harping upon their superiority and immunity from criticism. The numerous journals, in Bengali and English, which form so remarkable a feature of the present day, are always speaking to them of the cruelty and insolence
of their rulers and preaching the necessity of the assertion of their rights. It is this political 
outgrowth which forms the characteristic element of young Bengal at the present day. Our young 
men are nothing, if not political. A false independence and stout assertion of self, a vicious 
absence of manners and continual twaddle about their rights, a tendency to abuse Englishmen 
and the loud affirmation of their capacity to resent their rudeness—these form the young man of 
the period; and we shall not be very much mistaken if to these cannot also safely be added a 
considerable amount of self-conceit and self-sufficiency. The complaint has become general that 
our young men, in their desire to regenerate the country, mistake insolence for independence, 
condemnation of foreigners for patriotism and rudeness for manhood. . . . Is there an angry 
speech on the inferiority of Hindu society? There rises the spouting orator who patriotically 
recalls the glorious days of the Aryans and their freedom and culture. In every discussion and 
conversation that you hear, there is this tall talk about patriotism, this hankering after the ancient 
days, this denunciation of English tyranny and this constant assertion of self.'109

The growth of chauvinism and xenophobia, which Sen was complaining of, was not a peculiarly 
Bengali aberration. The editor of the Nibandhamala of Poona, Vishnu Krishna Chiplunkar,110 
was not a Bengali. But this is what he wrote in 1876: 'Last year a great ruler in India was tried 
like a common cutpurse, and hundreds of our Sirdars were sacrificed in order to do honour to the 
Heir-Apparent;—today, a guard seizes a Deputy Collector and drags him from a railway 
carriage; tomorrow some son of Christ before going to see his heavenly father kills his groom 
outright—and this sort of thing is continually going on and demonstrating what idea they [the 
British] have of human rights. . . . They like to pry into the religions of this and that country, and 
thoroughly enjoy ridiculing them; but if a stranger goes into one of their churches, he has to sit 
quite still in a corner like a thief—and to shut his eyes with the dear people of God;—and well 
may he close them, for to any one reading the Holy Bible with his eyes open, its childishness, 
worthlessness, ignorance, and vileness would be too apparent. Then, too, in every street, 
shameless and incorrigible outcastes are allowed to revile the religion of this country as much as 
they like under the protection of the police, but if any one attempts to refute what they say, he is 
punished by the Government for shaking the Christian faith. . . . Our readers will remember what 
tyranny was practised on Mr. Melvill about two years ago, because he adopted the Mahomedan 
religion. This of itself will show how much reality there is in the liberty of conscience which our 
rulers make such boast

109 Indian Mirror, quoted in Bombay Gazette, 30 May 1877.

110 B. 1850; journalist and teacher; d. 1882.

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of! . . . The people who, before they discovered Asia, with difficulty obtained the necessaries of 
life, who, on first seeing fields of sugarcane were intoxicated with delight and fell upon it like 
wild beasts, who, having no idea of an elephant, ran away terror-stricken from the first they saw, 
whose richest soil is no better than our sterile ground, in whose country there is perpetual rain 
and snow and where the sun never shines to perfection—they forsooth pretend to turn up their 
nose at the real splendour of this rich and pleasant country! Yes, people whose country is only a 
span square and in which all the works of nature are on such a pigmy scale that the highest
mountains are no bigger than one of our hillocks, whose mighty rivers, such as the Thames, are of the dimensions of one of our streamlets, whose most costly mineral productions are tin and lead, whose sweetest fruits are like our jungle fruits, and amongst whom poverty so reigns that notwithstanding an incessant flow of wealth from this country for hundreds of years, there are still hundreds of thousands who have nothing better than potatoes to toss into their mouth—these dare to compare their country with affluent India!'111

British rule also encouraged in India the growth of what is called economic nationalism. Complaints about the increasing pauperization of India, the ruination of her manufactures and trade, the inordinate expensiveness of foreign civil and military establishments, the enormity of the 'home charges', the steady drain of Indian capital, the saddling of India with unjust economic burdens, the selfish manipulation of Indian currency and tariffs, and the sacrifice of India's economic interests in order to satisfy British capitalists, had begun to be made early in the nineteenth century. With the passage of time they only grew in volume and intensity. Those who made these complaints were not always Indians. In fact, some of the earliest and most vehement critics of British economic and financial policies in India were Anglo-Indians themselves.112 Nor were these complaints confined to Indians who were ignorant or irresponsible agitators. Men like Bholanath Chandra,113 Dadabhai Naoroji and Mahadev Govind Ranade,114 who knew what they were talking about and who were otherwise fully appreciative of the manifold benefits of British rule to India, were convinced that the economic and financial policies pursued by the British in India were extremely unjust and deleterious to their country.115

111 Quoted in Bombay Gazette, 3 October 1876.


113 B. 1822; businessman and author; d. 1910.

114 B. 1841; entered Bombay judicial service 1871; author and social reformer; member of Bombay legislative council 1885-7, 1891-2; judge of Bombay high court from 1893 until his death in 1901.

115 [Bholanath Chandra], 'A Voice for the Commerce and Manufactures of India', Mookerjee's

While experts produced facts and figures in support of their complaints, the press indulged in general and loud lamentations over the economic exploitation of India at the hands of the British. India, before the coming of the British, was a prosperous country. Her arts, industries and manufactures were the envy of the whole world. Her soil was rich and her peasants lightly taxed and happy. British rule had impoverished India. Manchester had ruined Indian handicrafts.
British economic and financial policies were designed to suck India of her life-blood. The country was steadily being drained of her wealth. Her trade was declining and her agriculture languishing. India was becoming increasingly dependent on foreign-made goods and a prey to recurrent famines. There was widespread and heart-rending misery on all sides. While all sections of the Indian population were adversely affected, it was the middle classes who suffered most. These and similar other complaints had, by the 1860s and '70s, become the stock-in-trade of the Indian press. They were encouraged by an increased awareness of poverty, the lack of employment opportunities for a steadily growing educated class, the decay of certain old families and professions, a series of severe famines and natural calamities in various parts of the country during the 'sixties and 'seventies, Manchester's ill-concealed jealousy of the nascent cotton industry of Bombay and its attempts to influence the economic and fiscal policies of the government of India, the writings of western economic nationalists such as Friedrich List and Matthew Carey, and the protectionist policies pursued by western countries like France and America. Lamentations over the economic plight of the country in the Indian press were often coupled with demands that the government of India should encourage and protect Indian industries and provide facilities to Indians for technical education, and with patriotic appeals to fellow-countrymen to patronize home-made goods in preference to foreign-made goods, to take to trade and commerce as a vocation instead of hankering after ill-paid government jobs, and to go abroad to acquire modern technical skills.

Attempts were simultaneously made to translate the ideas of economic nationalism into action. The promotion of indigenous arts and manufactures was one of the objectives for which a band of patriotic men in Calcutta, headed by Navgopal Mitra, inaugurated in 1867 an annual 'Mela' and in 1870 a 'National Society'. In 1873 a student of the local college took the lead in organizing


116 B. 1840; editor of National Paper; d. 1894.

117 National Paper, 20 March, 10, 17 April, 19 June 1867, 11 March, 15 April, 19 August 1868, 25 August 1869, 23 February, 2, 9, 16 March, 26 October, 16 November 1870, 10 May, 2 August 1871, 7, 14 August, 11, 18 September, 4 December 1872; J. C. Bagal, Hindu Melar Itibritta (1968). According to the Englishman, 15 January 1870, the original inspiration for the Mela (variously called 'National', 'Chaitra' or 'Hindu') came from the agricultural exhibition organized by the government at Alipur, Calcutta, in 1864.

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a 'Swadeshi Sabha' in Lahore for the same purpose. The western presidency witnessed in the 1870s the birth of a popular and organized movement which foreshadowed the swadeshi movement of later years. Beginning with Poona in 1872, thanks mainly to the zealous efforts of G. V. Joshi, the movement soon spread to other parts of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Societies for 'the revival and encouragement of native arts and industries' were established in many large
towns, whose members took an oath not to use European articles where the corresponding indigenous ones could be procured without any marked difference of price. Some enthusiastic members of these societies, of whom G. V. Joshi was one, even 'vowed not to use any foreign-manufactured article under any conditions'. Shops upon the co-operative or joint-stock principle were opened in many towns to sell indigenous goods. The manufacture of simple articles like ink, candles, soap, etc., was encouraged. Exhibitions of indigenous arts and manufactures were organized. Joshi and his friends made excellent use of popular lectures and songs to spread the message of swadeshi amongst the people.119

The immediate economic results of the swadeshi movement in India were not very remarkable. The movement owed its inception to and derived most of its support then and in later years from English-educated classes whose patriotic ardour was matched only by their lack of material resources and vocational skill. But the vague and general ideas which gave birth to the swadeshi movement in India were calculated to appeal to the popular imagination and they provided a powerful stimulus to Indian nationalism by giving it an economic edge. The nascent indigenous industrial community in India, especially that of Bombay, was not the product of the swadeshi movement and did little to encourage that movement, but it developed a sullen resentment to foreign rule, due mainly to the current swadeshi ideas which it imbibed and its own experience of the step-motherly treatment from the government of India.

The highly centralized character of British rule in India in the nineteenth century, especially after the Charter Act of 1833, also aided the growth of a pan-Indian nationalism. Centralization meant not only the subordination of the governments of the various provinces and 'princely states to the central government at Calcutta, it also meant uniform, arid sometimes even' common, laws, institutions and taxes for the whole country. 'The very fact that we have established a central government for India,' Ripon pointed out in 1885, 'and that with the present facilities for communication and the spread of news, the eyes of men, from the Punjab to Adam's Bridge and from Bombay to Madras, are turned upon the Supreme Government as the final arbiter of their fate, brings them more together among themselves, and gives, as it were, a common

118 Tribune, 24 October 1905.

119 See letter of 'M.G.R.' (M. G. Ranade?) to the editor, Times of India, 20 October 1875, giving a history of the movement; also Dnyan Prakash, cited in Indian Statesman, 21 May 1873; Times of India, 29 October 1873; and letter of George Birdwood to the editor, The Times, 14 October 1880.

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centre for their political thoughts, and a rallying point for their political action. The Government of India is constantly struggling against this tendency, and labours honestly to maintain the authority of the local governments. But the force of things is too strong for them, and the welding process will go on, whether they like it or not; for it is not only the existence of a central government which favours that process—more potent yet is the effect of a common law. . . . In every part of India, people are getting to know that they have definite rights enjoyed by all the subjects of the British Crown, and that there is but one law for Hindoo and Mohammedan, for
Sikh and Bengalee—and with this knowledge comes, and necessarily must come, an increased feeling of unity among those who look up to a common Government, and are restrained and protected by common Taws. The government of India was 'one and indivisible', and its actions had often the effect of encouraging its subjects to feel that they too were, or should be, one and indivisible. How an action of the central government in India could serve to unite the people of various classes, creeds and provinces in common protest against it was illustrated by the imposition of the income tax. When the income tax was first levied for a temporary period all over British India immediately after the rebellion of 1857, there was a general outcry against it from various parts of the country. The same phenomenon was witnessed in an aggravated form when the tax was reintroduced, after a lapse of five years, in 1869. The Indian Daily News of Calcutta noted at the time: 'Amongst so many different tribes [in India], using different tongues, there is a radical divergence of interests, which reduces the chances of a general combination to a minimum. . . . In the mutiny we were not more loved in Bombay and Madras than in Bengal. But those presidencies had no sympathy with such centres as Delhi and Lucknow, and no interests to serve by an alliance with the rebel leaders. Even a community of religion has not been able to bind the Mussulmans of the South to the co-believers of the North. Diversity of race, of language, religion, and interests has, however, been powerless before the spell of the Income-tax. . . . The Income-tax has afforded the native races of the Empire a common point of union—a thing never before known in the history of India. The men of the Deccan—no less than the men of Behar, the ryots of Bengal, the peasants of the Punjab and Guzerat—have one common and all-absorbing illustration of the oppression of the stranger who rules over them all, to engage their attention and guide their conversation."

British rule had another peculiarity which served to unite the people of the country in common opposition to it. Probably no other foreign rule in India ever excluded the sons of the soil so completely from higher offices in the stated—both civil and military—as did the British in the nineteenth century. Here was a common grievance which united Indians of all creeds and provinces against their alien rulers. From the days of Lord Cornwallis, who pushed the policy of

120 Ripon's address to the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, 10 November 1885: supplement to Voice of India, December 1885, p. v.

121 Indian Daily News, 22 November 1870.

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anglicizing the administration to the extreme, this had been the single greatest grievance of the people of India against British rule. Enlightened Anglo-Indians such as Thomas Munro, Mountstuart Elphinstone and John Malcolm had warned against the dangers and drawbacks of a policy of systematic exclusion of Indians from higher appointments. 'Our Government', Munro had written in 1818, 'will always be respected from the influence of our Military Power but it will never be popular while it offers no Employment to the Natives that can stimulate the ambition of the better classes of them. Foreign conquerors have treated the Natives with violence and often with great cruelty, but none has treated them with so much scorn as we have done. None has stigmatised a whole people as unworthy of trust, as incapable of honesty and as fit to be employed only when we cannot do without them. It seems to me not only
ungenerous but impolitic to debase the character of a people fallen under our dominion. And nothing can more certainly produce this effect than our avowing our want of confidence in them and on that account excluding them as much as possible from every office of importance.'125 The Cornwallis policy was relaxed a bit in later years, especially under Bentinck and Hardinge,126 and some of the subordinate but moderately well-paid jobs were given to English-educated Indians, but almost all the most important and best paid offices continued to be monopolized by the British. In 1843 the Friend of India was constrained to remark sarcastically that 'the highest native officer on the establishment received as much as a [British] Civilian usually spent on his hookah'.127 There was not much improvement in the situation during the next thirty years, though the number of English-educated Indians aspiring for higher jobs had increased enormously in the meantime. As the Indian Statesman of Bombay wrote in 1872: 'From Peshawur to Cape Comorin, throughout an empire of 150 millions of people, there is hardly a native of the country, we say, in any position of real dignity or large emolument. As the governing race, we have engrossed everything. Governors, commissioners, ministers, judges, magistrates, soldiers, police,—all are Englishmen, wherever the position to be filled is one of influence, dignity, or emolument. . . . The man must be altogether wanting in imagination and sympathy, who can look abroad upon this country, teeming with men capable of filling the highest positions with advantage and honour, thus completely shut out from all part in the administration of their own affairs, without some generous regret; and we remark in passing that the position is so unprecedented

122 B. 1761; joined East India Company's service 1780; governor of Madras from 1820 until his death in 1827.

123 B. 1779; joined East India Company's service 1795; governor of Bombay 1819-27; d. 1859.

124 B. 1769; joined East India Company's service 1782; served mainly in political department; author; d.1833.

125 Quoted in T. H. Beaglehole, Thomas Munro and the Development of Administrative Policy in Madras 1792-1818 (1966), p. 120.

126 Henry Hardinge, first viscount (1785-1856). Governor-general of India 1844-8.

127 Friend of India, 27 April 1843.

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and so false, that it cannot last. . . . The exclusion of the people from the higher ranks of the service is a real scandal and in our own eyes the most patent blot in our administration of the country. . . .'128

What made the exclusion particularly galling to Indians was the fact that it was practised by a government which solemnly and repeatedly professed that it made no distinction, in the matter of employment, on grounds of race, colour, or creed. It is true that from 1853 on, appointments to the Indian civil service were, in theory, thrown open to all classes of Her Majesty's subjects, who
were all invited to compete for the privilege. But the conditions of the competition were such as practically to exclude Indians there from altogether. The examination for the civil service was held in London and the sacrifices and expense of sending Indian youths to appear thereat were such as not one man out of a million would think it wise to incur. This palpable injustice did more than anything else to weaken the moral basis of British rule in India. Here at least was a point on which the British could not claim superiority over the Mughals or the Marathas, the Russians or the Austrians. It provided Indians with one of their most potent, persistent and popular demands, in favour of which they could easily mobilize public opinion all over the country.129 The fact that what Indians demanded was not patronage or favour, but equality of treatment and a fair field, that is the holding of the civil service examinations simultaneously in India and in Britain, only served to increase the efficacy of their demand as a rallying point of Indian nationalism.

Probably the greatest contribution of British rule to the growth of Indian nationalism lay in the encouragement which it gave to the dissemination of English education in the country. A good deal has been written about the numerous ways in which English education stimulated the growth of national consciousness in India in the nineteenth century. Dr. B. T. McCully has examined the whole subject in great detail in a fair-sized volume.130 We shall, therefore, confine ourselves here to noticing very briefly some of the most salient ways in which (English education aided the cause of pan-Indian nationalism.) English education familiarized a steadily growing number of Indians in the nineteenth century with European history, literature and political thought. It inculcated in them new European ideas of patriotism and public service, of the duties of governments and the rights of subjects. It did not create in India the love of country, the consciousness of nationality or the desire for liberty, for these already existed, but it did stimulate them and give them a new direction. As early as 1838 C. E. Trevelyan had noted how English education, which was then confined to the presidency towns, was giving an entirely new direction to the Indian mind. Those Indians, he had written, who had been educated in English schools ceased to strive for independence according to the old indigenous model. They did not continually meditate and hatch plots and conspiracies with the object of sweeping the infidel usurpers of their country off the face of India in a day by force. Instead, they subscribed to the new British model of political change and aimed at the ultimate establishment of constitutional self-government in India by gradually improving and regenerating their country with the help of their foreign rulers.131 In 1859 Dr. Bhau Daji told a public meeting in Bombay, attended by many Englishmen: 'If we are today anxious for participation in the rights you claim by virtue of your birth, it is you Englishmen who have taught us to aspire after them. . . . If it shall ever come to pass that by the advance of civilization in my country, it shall be her fitting task to undertake her own government, I have sufficient faith

128 Indian Statesman, 16 May 1872.

129 See chapter five, below.

130 B. T. McCully, English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism (1940).

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in the progress of humanity to believe, that England will come to recognize the fact, and
generously disencumber herself of the gift of Empire, and will remain content with the glory of
having educated my people into a nation of free men.'132 In 1861 Lal Bihari Dey avowed his
'profound conviction' that Britain was 'consciously or unconsciously . . . preparing India for a
higher and nobler state of national life' and added: 'We are loyal to the British Government
because we aspire after national freedom.'133 Conscious of their own weaknesses and of the
risks involved in a sudden termination of British rule, English-educated Indians tried to make the
best of the situation. They deemed discretion to be the better part of valour and tried to reconcile
their patriotism with their loyalty to the raj. As S. Rangachari134 remarked in 1864: 'Love for
our country can exist side by side with love for the Government to which we owe our allegiance.
Loyalty and Patriotism are not irreconcilable elements in a country like India. On the contrary, it
is my firm belief that India's welfare mainly depends upon the stability of British sway over her,
for let the British quit India tomorrow, anarchy, discord, and confusion will be the inevitable
result. . . . If by the exertions of the Hindu Patriot, India regains her former position and prestige,
her independence may follow as a natural and necessary consequence. For . . . as soon as their
wards are of age, they [the British] will be ready to rid themselves of their trust.'135

Those whose minds had been nurtured on the writings of Milton, Mill and Mazzini, who read
about the War of American Independence, the French Revolution, the development of
constitutional freedom in England and her white colonies, and the struggles for national
independence and unity in Europe, could not but be encouraged to cherish aspirations for the
ultimate emergence of an independent and united India. These aspirations had begun to be
expressed even in the first half of the nineteenth century. They were only more frequently and
generally expressed in the second half of the century. They were encouraged by the
pronouncements of some liberal-minded British statesmen themselves about the ultimate result
of their rule in India. In 1871 the Indian Daily News

131 Trevelyan, On the Education of the People of India (1838), pp. 187 ff.
132 Bombay Times, 13 October 1859.
133 Indian Reformer, 25 January 1861.
134 Graduate of Madras University 1863; Veda Sarnajist.
135 Athenaeum and Daily News, 20 August 1864.

of Calcutta noted: 'The political aspirations of the English-speaking natives on both sides of
India seem insensibly drifting towards a common hope, or day-dream. They are qualifying for a
place in that strange European society of extremists who preach up an universal republic. In
Bombay and Bengal the tendency of the English-speaking natives is away from the English.
They have imbibed the most exalted notions of their intellectual capacity, and resent with secret
bitterness the practical superiority of the English race. . . . Further, this same class professes a
sort of Indian patriotism. They claim a right to act as interpreters of the feelings, hopes, and
English education not only enabled Indians to absorb European ideas, it also provided them with new and powerful means of inter-regional solidarity. The system of English education was more or less uniform throughout India, and it imposed a common set of standards and a common cultural discipline. English-educated Indians in the different provinces thus came to possess a common stock of ideas and aspirations. They also had a common medium of intercourse. English steadily replaced Sanskrit, Persian, or Hindustani as the lingua franca of the educated classes in India.136 When Lal Bihari Dey visited Bombay in early 1860, he could communicate with his fellow-countrymen of that presidency only in English. The Bombay Guardian remarked at the time: 'We have had an illustration this last week of the extent to which the English language is becoming a medium of communication between the natives of the different Presidencies. A representative of Bengal was among us, and as there was a considerable desire to hear him speak on some topic of general interest, he delivered a lecture; but the only language in which he could communicate with a Bombay audience was the English.'137 Commenting on K. C. Sen's recent 'mission' to Madras and Bombay, the Hindoo Patriot wrote on 9 May 1864: 'English education has opened a new tie of fellowship between the different races of India. The Bengallee, the Maharatha, the Madrassree, the Parsee, the Hindooostani, and the Seikh are united in one common brotherhood by the freemasonry of English education. They now all breathe the same breath of life and regeneration and share in one common feeling for the good of their common country.'138

136 Indian Daily News, 16 September 1871.
137 Quoted in Bombay Times and Standard, 8 February 1860.
138 Hindoo Patriot, 9 May 1864.
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The number of English-educated Indians at the end of the 1870s probably did not exceed 400,000.139 In relation to the teeming millions of the country they were undoubtedly a 'microscopic minority'.140 But in absolute terms the number was fairly large, and it was rapidly increasing. Moreover, as a rising social group, concentrated mostly in towns, imbued with common ideas and aspirations, controlling the professions, educational institutions and newspapers, and capable of concerted action, English-educated Indians wielded an influence in society which was out of all proportion to their numerical strength. Even in the 1840s and 1850s there had been signs of nascent solidarity within the ranks of the widely scattered English-
educated class in India, as was evidenced by the agitation against the Lex Loci Act and that in connexion with the renewal of the Company's charter. With the rapid spread of education and the increase in the circulation of newspapers in the 1860s and 1870s, the English-educated class in India began to display greater unity of thought and action. In November 1861 the Hindoo Patriot recalled how the death of Harishchandra Mukerji and the imprisonment of the Reverend James Long earlier in the year had evoked sorrow and sympathy from educated Indians throughout the country and remarked that the two events 'unmistakably showed that the people of India, of all creeds, colors and languages, have learnt to feel as one nation'. In 1867 Dadabhai Naoroji told a meeting of the East India Association in London: 'The universities are sending out hundreds and will soon begin to send out thousands of educated natives. . . . The native papers are mostly in their hands. . . . The native press is beginning to exercise a large influence on the mass of the people. The educated class are becoming their natural leaders. . . . The isolation of thousands of years is now being broken through. Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and other places of importance, now freely and fully exchange ideas. A common language among the educated is forging strong bonds of nationality. The railways are producing a similar effect on the mass of the population. They see and know more of each other, and so at least politically their sympathies are growing stronger towards each other.' Bholanath Chandra, a Bengali who travelled in upper India in the 1860s, noted how, because of the spread of English education, the centuries-old gulf between the public life of Bengal and that of upper India was being bridged. 'Under the auspices of a liberal education, and the growth of enlightened sentiments,' he wrote, 'races of one parentage, but separated from each other by hereditary prejudices of fifty or more generations,

139 This estimate is based on the figures given in 1888 by Lord Dufferin, then viceroy of India, who got repeated inquiries made into the matter. In his notorious speech at the St. Andrew's dinner, Calcutta, 30 November 1888, Dufferin remarked: 'During the last twenty-five years probably not more than half a million students have passed out of our schools with a good knowledge of English, and perhaps a million more with some smattering of it.' Statesman and Friend of India, 31 November 1888.

140 The phrase is Dufferin's. See ibid.

141 Hindoo Patriot, 14 November 1861.


143 Returning from his first visit to Bombay in 1870, Narendranath Sen, editor of the Indian Mirror of Calcutta, wrote: 'The educated young native gentlemen of Bombay have exactly the same noble ambition as we here have got. They feel for their country according to their way, and we according to ours, but they perhaps feel more sincerely than we [do] . . . .'
The growing consciousness of national solidarity brought about by English education, which became increasingly visible in the decidedly uniform tone of the Indian press and in the sympathy and pecuniary assistance extended to the people of any province afflicted by famine by those of the other provinces, found an impressive demonstration in the agitation over the civil service question in 1877-8. The spirit of co-operation and united action manifested by educated Indians throughout the country during the agitation made the Hindoo Patriot write: 'Englishmen who saw India twenty years ago on return can scarcely recognize what they had seen before—all have been so many changes . . . . English education is binding the whole population of India with a golden chain. It is breaking down provincial jealousies, tribal exclusiveness, caste antipathies. The natives of the different provinces are visiting each other and interchanging each other's thoughts and feelings. . . . We have had a most splendid manifestation of this united feeling on the civil service question. From one end of the country to the other the people, Hindus, Mahomedans, Jains, Buddhists and Christians, have to a man echoed the cry from Calcutta.'145

S. N. Banerjea, who took a leading part in organizing the agitation over the civil service question and travelled all over India in that connexion, was speaking from personal experience when he told a Calcutta audience in 1878: 'English education has uplifted all who have come under its influence to a common platform of thoughts, feelings and aspirations. Educated Indians, whether of Bengal, Madras, Bombay or the North-Western Provinces, are brought up under the same intellectual, moral, and political influences. Kindred hopes, feelings, and ideas are thus generated. The educated classes of India are thus brought nearer together.'146

It was a common accusation of Anglo-Indians, as well as of some Indians, that English-educated Indians were 'denationalized' and isolated from the mass of their countrymen. There is some truth in the accusation, though it was very often made by those who were antipathetic to English-educated Indians. Foreign acculturation was implicit in the whole system of English education in India. Those Indians who imbibed the exotic flavour of English education often became ostensibly, even ostentatiously, anglicized in their thought, speech and action, and were to that extent 'denationalized!'. Not every

143 Bholanauth Chunder, The Travels of a Hindoo to Various Parts of Bengal and Upper India' (1869), vol. i, p. 388.

144 Indian Mirror, 9 September 1870, quoted in Indian Daily News, 10 September 1870.

145 Hindoo Patriot, 1 January 1878.


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English educated Indian became necessarily 'denationalized'. Nor was the process of 'denationalization' confined to the English-educated in India. The impact of western culture was felt, to a greater or lesser degree, by almost every class in India. Even those in India who had never crossed the portals of an English school and were otherwise considered quite orthodox were not infrequently found drinking champagne, using foreign-made goods, or criticizing the established religious and social institutions of their own country. However, as a class, English-
The educated have, in all ages and climes, been more or less isolated from the uneducated. The isolation is increased when education is combined with economic and political power. In traditional Indian society the isolation of the educated from the uneducated was mitigated by the fact that the former were not always wealthy or politically influential, and also by the absence of class divisions similar to those in the west. As E. C. Bayley remarked in 1870: 'The one feature of oriental life which strikes all European observers most forcibly and pleasantly, is the comparative social equality of rich and poor, and the close identity of their feelings and sympathies. Even in India, inhabited as it is by "men of many races, languages and religions", and in spite of barriers of some peculiar customs, I think that this remark holds good; and that
within the various circles into which society is divided, there is far less distance between the highest and the smallest than is commonly the case in the Western world."151 English education brought about a change in the situation, first, because it was foreign, and secondly, because it became increasingly the passport to positions of profit and influence. But even English education did not succeed in completely divorcing its recipients in India from their family and social matrix. Moreover, the very fact of their relative alienation from the mass of their countrymen seems to have prompted the English-educated in India to seek new modes of identifying themselves with the latter.152 This was encouraged not only by the new ideas of rights and responsibilities which they had imbibed from English education, but also by the necessity of competing with both indigenous and foreign rivals for influence with the bulk of the population.

In an ably written article in October 1876 the Hindoo Patriot tried to refute the allegation that English education tended to estrange its beneficiaries from the mass of their countrymen. 'It is true', said the paper, 'that English education saps the foundation of old-world notions and prejudices, and draws the man, who receives the benefit of it, nearer to the level of the enlightened intellect of the civilized world of the present day, but instead of destroying in him the love of his country it strengthens and intensifies it, instead of diminishing his sympathy "with the mass of his countrymen" it increases and vivifies it, instead of weakening his hold upon the confidence of his poor and uneducated countrymen, it gives him a stronger hold upon it than ever, because it enables him to give a tongue to their voice, and to defend their rights, interests and character with greater ability and power.' The paper gave a long list of names of highly educated and even 'anglicized' Bengalis from Rammohan Roy on who had


150 B. 1821; joined Indian civil service 1842; served in North-Western Provinces and Punjab; foreign secretary 1862-72; member of viceroy's council 1873-8; vice-chancellor of Calcutta university 1869-74; d. 1884.

151 Englishman, 28 February 1870.

152 For some interesting reflections on the 'alienation' of educated Indians from their society and their anxiety to mitigate it, see a speech made by Madhav Rao at Madras in Native Opinion, 18 May 1884.

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cherished the warmest sympathy for the mass of their countrymen and laboured strenuously for the amelioration of the latter's condition.153

The Hindoo Patriot did not content itself with denying that English education had a 'tendency to estrange the educated natives as a body from the mass of their countrymen', it went on to assert that English education had 'proved a golden bond of union between the Indians in different parts of the country'. 'There is now growing rapidly', it added, 'a national feeling between the educated natives in the different provinces, between the Bengali, the Hindustani, the Maharathi, the
Punjabi, the Madrassi, the Parsi, &c, tending to a common desire for the common good of the country.'154

The growth of a national feeling in India was a fact of which even some of the Anglo-Indians were beginning to be aware in the 'sixties and 'seventies. An ex-judge of the high court of Agra, William Edwards, wrote in 1866 that 'a feeling of nationality has sprung up in India.' The result of long years of internal tranquillity and good order, under a powerful government,' he added, 'has been to fuse into a whole the previously discordant elements of native society, and to bind together, by a bond of common country, colour, and language, those whom we have been in the habit of considering as effectually and for ever separated by diversity of race and religion, and the insurmountable barrier of caste. . . . We ought also to bear in mind, that as facilities for communication by post and telegraph, and for personal intercourse by railway, increase in India, the people will become still more united, and the feeling of nationality and dislike to the conquering race will certainly increase and be more deeply rooted in the minds of the people of that vast continent.'155 William Knighton, late assistant commissioner in Avadh, observed in 1867: 'The educated Bengalee and the educated Sikh, the educated alumnus of the Canning College in Lucknow, and the educated native of Travancore, all alike regard themselves as natives of India, and are all ready to make common cause against foreigners. . . . It is entirely a new feature, and will lead in the future to great results.'156 Writing confidentially to the government of India in 1878, the then commissioner of Berar, W. B. Jones, remarked: '. . . within the 20 years of my own recollection, a feeling of nationality, which formerly had no existence, or was but faintly felt, has grown up . . . . Now . . . we . . . are beginning to find ourselves face to face, not with the population of individual provinces, but with 200 millions of people united by sympathies and intercourse which we have ourselves created and fostered. This seems to me to be the great political fact of the day.'157 Anglo-Indians had reason to get alarmed at the growth of a pan-Indian nationalism, or to continue indulging, as most of them did, in the make-believe that such a thing was impossible. They already knew what the Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, John Robert Seeley, was at pains to emphasize in the second course of his celebrated lectures in the spring of 1881, namely that 'if the feeling of a common nationality began to exist there [in India] only feebly, if, without inspiring any active desire to drive out the foreigner, it only

153 Hindoo Patriot, 23 October 1876.

154 Ibid.


created a notion that it was shameful to assist him in maintaining his dominion, from that day almost our Empire would cease to exist'.158


CHAPTER FOUR The Politics of the Associations, 1858-80

OF THE THREE presidency associations established in India in 1851-2, the one at Calcutta—the British Indian Association—proved to be the most active, efficient, influential and long-lived. It had certain obvious advantages over the associations at Bombay and Madras. It was located at the seat of imperial authority and the fountain-head of political action in the country. Both English education and journalistic activity were far more advanced in Calcutta than in Bombay or Madras. Calcutta also had a larger concentration of official and non-official Britons, who, by their help or hostility, provided the local Indian community with a constant source of stimulus to political action. Moreover, Calcutta possessed, thanks to the permanent settlement of the land revenue in Bengal, a class, which was not so conspicuous in Bombay or Madras, of wealthy and independent zamindars who had the leisure to devote themselves to public questions. The rights and interests of this class were being constantly assailed from all quarters. It had, therefore, of necessity, to organize itself in self-defence. The ceaseless activity of the pressure groups organized in Calcutta by the British commercial and planting interests of Bengal, such as the Trade Association, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the Indigo Planters' Association, and the Landholders and Commercial Association, also compelled the British Indian Association always to remain watchful of the interests of its constituents.

The membership of the British Indian Association was not large. Perhaps, at no time, during the first thirty years of the Association’s existence, did it exceed two hundred. Though a vast majority of these belonged to Calcutta, there were also some from the mofussil and even such far-off places as Aligarh.1 The number of those who took an active interest in the proceedings of the Association was probably not more than fifty. But it included some of the wealthiest, ablest and most influential figures of the Indian community in Calcutta, representing all creeds and professions. The Association had a regular establishment and ample funds. Its affairs were conducted with a ‘practical and painstaking perseverance’2 by a high-powered committee. Though predominantly an organization of the Hindu zamindars residing in Calcutta, the British Indian Association,

1 The Fourteenth Annual General Meeting of the British Indian Association, 14 February 1866 (1866), p. 9.

2 Bengal Hurkaru, 23 June 1857.
by its able and zealous advocacy of Indian interests, soon established itself as a power in the
land. The authorities often sought its advice and assistance, and the people of Bengal looked
upon it as their 'Parliament'. The activity and influence of its leaders became the envy of public
men in other parts of India and a source of great annoyance to unfriendly Anglo-Indians.

Amongst those who sat upon the committee of the Association during the first thirty years of its
existence are to be found the names of some of the most prominent and public-spirited men in
Calcutta, representing both the aristocracy of wealth and the aristocracy of talent. Its organ, the
Hindoo Patriot, was one of the most ably conducted and widely read weekly newspapers of the
time in India. It tried to maintain contact not only with public men and bodies in Bengal and the
other parts of India, but also with those in Britain. Though the Association appears to have
abandoned in 1857 the experiment of maintaining a regular, paid British 'agent' of its own in
London, it continued its efforts to influence the British Demos in favour of its objectives through
the assistance of associations such as the India Reform Society, the Aborigines Protection
Society and the East India Association, and of parliamentarians such as John Bright, Henry
Fawcett4 and F. H. O'Donnell,5 who took a sympathetic interest in Indian affairs.

The British Indian Association directed its attention to almost every important question, political,
social or economic, affecting Bengal in particular and the country in general. Even a bare
enumeration of the numerous memorials and petitions submitted by it to the authorities in India
or in Britain would make a long and impressive list.6 Broadly speaking, these memorials and
petitions fall under two categories: those reviewing government legislation, and those demanding
certain specific reforms in the administration. No sooner was the draft of any bill published,
whether it related to land, education, municipal affairs, additional taxation, the procedure of the
courts, or the administration of justice and police, than the British Indian Association forwarded
to the proper authorities its well-considered views on the proposed legislation. In 1863 the
Englishman complained that the British Indian Association 'snaps and snarls at every measure'
emanating from the government.7 Five years later the Indian Daily News was making the same
complaint. 'The "humble memorials" of the British Indian Association', it wrote in 1868, 'are
becoming as "plentiful as blackberries" . . . the Association venture an opinion in the shape of a
memorial upon almost every bill that is brought before the Council.'8 At a time when

3 Hindoo Patriot, 22 May 1861; Amrita Bazar Patrika, 6 July, 10 November 1870.

4 B. 1833; lost his eyesight by a shooting accident 1858; professor of political economy at
Cambridge 1863-84; M.P. 1865-80; popularly known as 'member for India'; d. 1884.

5 B. 1848; Irish M.P. 1874, 1877-85; d. 1916.

6 The activities of the British Indian Association in the second half of the nineteenth century are
conveniently summarized in Hindoo Patriot, 6, 16, 24 September 1895, and S. Ghosh, 'The
Ixxvii, no. 144, pp. 99-119.

7 Englishman, 9 November 1863.

8 Indian Daily News, 17 April 1868.
Indians were either not represented or inadequately represented in the legislative councils, the British Indian Association, by thus gratuitously but ably reviewing official legislation, performed a most useful function and occasionally elicited the reluctant tribute of even its hostile Anglo-Indian critics. Its memorials served as much to enlighten the government as to educate the public. Some of the principal reforms for which the British Indian Association petitioned the authorities in India or in England were the reconstitution of the legislative councils on a wider and more liberal basis; the increased employment of Indians in the higher services; the holding of the Indian civil service examination simultaneously in India and in England; a parliamentary inquiry into the affairs of India; the reduction of government expenditure and of the 'home charges'; the injustice of imposing on India the cost of the Afghan War (1878-9) and of reducing the duties on imported cotton goods; the extension of the permanent settlement of the land revenue to the other provinces of British India; the separation of the judicial and the executive functions; increased grants for education; a separate legislative council and governor for Bengal; the necessity of giving sufficient publicity to the legislative measures of the government; the propriety of establishing a consultative council for advising the government on financial matters; the submission of the Indian budget to Parliament in the early part of the session and not, as was the custom, at the fag-end of the session, to enable a fair discussion of Indian affairs; the elimination of racial distinctions in the administration of justice; the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in India; a low rate of postage for newspapers; the prevention of famines and epidemics; the removal of the grievances of railway passengers; the promotion of agricultural exhibitions; and improvements in the administration of police, justice and municipal affairs. Nothing could be more loyal, moderate and sensible than the proceedings of the British Indian Association, and they were generally so regarded by the highest authorities, though this did not prevent the Anglo-Indian newspapers of Calcutta from frequently denouncing the Association as being 'anti-British', 'insolent' and 'silly'.

The British Indian Association was catholic in its professed aims. In its ranks were included men of various creeds and classes. It claimed to speak on behalf of the entire Indian community of Bengal. Nor did it always behave, at least in its early years, as merely an interest group or a local association. It aspired to be 'a distinct and well-organized national party which would strive for self-government, and represent the wants and wishes of the various peoples of this

9 See, for example, Bengal Hurkaru, 28 May 1859, 7 March 1863. For the appreciation of a friendly Anglo-Indian, see J. Routledge, English Rule and Native Opinion in India (1874), pp. 219-22.

10 See, for example, Bengal Hurkaru, 26 June 1863; Englishman, 6 November 1858, 20 July 1859, 21 February 1866; Friend of India, 31 March, 8 September 1864, 12 March, 6 August 1868.

11 Though in its early years the Association consisted entirely of Hindus, from 1859 on it had Muslim members and from 1864 on Muslims sat on its managing committee as well. See Englishman, 15 September 1859, and The Twelfth Annual General Meeting of the British Indian Association. . . , 24 February 1864 (1864), p. 9.
vast country'. 12 The wide range of its interests and activities apparently justified its claims and aspirations. But the British Indian Association was far from being a popular or a representative organization. Its membership was small and it was restricted to those who paid an annual subscription of Rs. 50. The Association was dominated by the wealthy zamindars of Calcutta who not only formed the vast majority of its membership but also its chief financial support. The few lawyers, traders, journalists and other professional men who were members of the Association were also zamindars themselves or the dependents of zamindars. Indian society in Calcutta, or for that matter in Bengal as a whole, was, in the nineteenth century, dominated by zamindars. As the Hindoo Patriot rightly remarked in 1871: ‘... there is not a native of Bengal, worth anything, who does not own lands.' 13 That the leaders of the British Indian Association were enlightened, patriotic and public-spirited men is undeniable, but they were, after all, zamindars and their primary objective was to safeguard and promote their own interests through the instrumentality of the Association. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that they devoted a great deal of their attention to matters which affected their zamindari interests and often gave expression to the narrow and selfish views of their class. Nor is it surprising that the politics of the British Indian Association remained confined to petitioning the authorities and the occasional holding of a public meeting in order to reinforce its demands.

The rapidly growing middle class community in Bengal was, however, developing new ideas of patriotism and politics. By the sixties of the nineteenth century, this community, composed mainly of clerks, government employees, shopkeepers, teachers, lawyers, journalists and doctors, formed a substantial part of the population of the large towns. Its members were very often not entirely divorced from land, but their education, occupation and the social and political influences of the times had cast them in a different mould. Their outlook and aspirations were not always those of zamindars and they were gradually becoming conscious of their separate identity and interests. They had talent and ambition, and they were naturally eager to play a part, consistent with their intelligence and numbers, in the public life of the country. They were no longer prepared to remain mere hangers-on of wealthy zamindars, as their counterparts of the earlier generation had been, or to allow the latter to continue dominating the political scene.

The British Indian Association failed to secure any substantial advantages for the educated middle classes of Bengal. The latter had, therefore, little reason to feel grateful to it. Their dissatisfaction with the British Indian Association began to find expression in the press early in the 'sixties. For example, in October 1860 the Som Prakash strongly urged the British Indian Association to conduct

12 See remark of K.C. Mitra in Englishman, 12 March 1867 and The Fifteenth Annual General Meeting of the British Indian Association . . . . 6 March 1867 (1867), p. 8. In 1870 an attempt by the government to get the Association interested in promoting cotton cultivation was met with the reply that 'the object and aim of the British Indian Association was not the cultivation of cotton, but the political elevation of the country'. See Englishman, 19 April 1870.

13 Hindoo Patriot, 28 August 1871.
its proceedings in Bengali, instead of English, so as to enable 'the majority even of the influential inhabitants of Bengal' to take an active interest in them.\textsuperscript{14} In January 1863 the Indian Reformer, while admiring the public-spirited activity of the British Indian Association and the salutary influence which it, by and large, exerted on 'the political interests of the nation', regretted that it was composed 'for the most part' of zamindars, whose 'interests often clash with those of the peasantry', and that it took no interest in questions of religious and social reform. The paper condemned the apathy manifested by the Association to the cause of the peasants in the recent rent struggle in the indigo districts and revealed that 'some public-spirited individuals conceived, at the time, the idea of forming an Association for the protection of Ryots'.\textsuperscript{15} In July of the same year the Bengalee complained that the Association which affects to represent the people of Bengal is guided at present by men who are not exactly the pick of Bengali society nor the most able to interpret its views and sentiments to Government or the public'.\textsuperscript{16} As the years passed by, the dissatisfaction of the educated middle classes of Bengal with the British Indian Association grew. 'Public voice is too much against the British Indian Association,' noted the National Paper in May 1867. The paper attributed the unpopularity of the Association to the following causes. The Association had 'become a party affair altogether' and was 'considered a chartered monopoly of only a few men'. It had failed to move with the times and to enlist the co-operation of many useful elements in society, particularly 'the numerous Editors of Vernacular Papers, who as buffers between the rich class and the poor are competent to pass opinions on many grave questions'. It was too preoccupied with questions of zamindari interest and took up those of 'national interest' only 'by fits and starts'.\textsuperscript{17} In 1868 a move was made by some lawyers and journalists in Calcutta to organize a body, called 'the Representative Association of India', in opposition to the British Indian Association, but it failed to get adequate support.\textsuperscript{18} A similar move was made in 1871, but it met with no greater success.\textsuperscript{19} It would appear that, despite their growing dissatisfaction with the British Indian Association in the 'sixties and the early 'seventies, the leading members of the middle class community in Calcutta were still not ready or willing to form a separate association of their own. They were weak and divided. They were also afraid of offending the wealthy and influential leaders of the British Indian Association and of creating another schism in the ranks of Indian society in Calcutta. Moreover, the British Indian Association had been in existence for quite some time. It had money and it had

\textsuperscript{14} Cited in ibid., 10 October 1860.

\textsuperscript{15} Indian Reformer, 16 January 1863, quoted in Times of India, 28 January 1863.

\textsuperscript{16} Bengalee, 8 July 1863; also reproduced in M.N. Ghosh (ed.), Selections from the Writings of Grish Chunder Ghose (1912), p. 523.

\textsuperscript{17} National Paper, 15 May 1867; also 29 May 1867.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 29 April, 6 May 1868; Amrita Bazar Patrika, 16, 23 April, 5 June 1868, cited in Report on Native Papers [of Bengal], 9 May, 14 June 1868.
Kristodas Pal, were not lacking in ability or energy, but they were not as popular or liberal-minded as their predecessors had been, and it began to be commonly complained that the Association was dominated by a 'clique'. Personal jealousies and factionalism also marred the image of the Association and deprived it of the support of some talented individuals and influential families in Calcutta. In order to meet the charge of 'cliquism', the Association, at its annual meeting in March 1870, made a slight change in its constitution by which the number of vice-presidents was increased from two to four and the managing committee was enlarged so as to include fresh members. In welcoming the change, the National Paper wrote: 'There was loud demand for reform in all quarters. Whether rightly founded or wrongly founded, the impression has gone too far abroad, that the operations of the Association are conducted by a limited number of men, and that limited number representing only one particular section of the vast Hindoo community.' The paper advised the Association to eschew 'cliquism' and to enlist the sympathy and co-operation of the steadily increasing number of educated men who took an interest in public affairs. The reform of 1870 probably succeeded in placating the vanity of certain prominent orthodox families in Calcutta who felt excluded from the councils of the Association. It failed, however, to satisfy what the National Paper had called, 'the rising generation' and 'that powerful class . . . the middle class of the population'.

The inadequacy of the British Indian Association to provide effective leadership in apolitical campaign was further revealed in 1870 during the agitation against the decision of the government to withdraw from the field of higher education. On 15 December 1870 the Amrita Bazar Patrika published a letter from an apparently influential correspondent in Dacca which recounted the failure of his attempts made 'some years ago' and again 'in June last' to persuade the British Indian Association to lower its subscription, and emphasized the inability of the British Indian Association 'to give coherence to the scattered elements for political agitation all over the country'. The letter went on to add: 'If another association had been formed at Calcutta, with men of respectability at its head, such as Bhidyasagore or so, as was once proposed, its branches should be established at different places. In the absence of such a central body at Calcutta the difficulties of having political organizations in the Muffasil are very greatly increased.' Commenting on this letter the Amrita Bazar Patrika wrote that 'we have been knocking for years in vain to get an entrance into the British Indian Association. It, however, suggested that a few district association should be established first 'and then we shall compel the British Indian

and its president 1873-5, 1878-9; member of Bengal legislative council 1864-6, 1870-2, 1873-5 made Raja 1877; d. 1879.

28 National Paper, 6 April 1870.

29 Ibid., 13 April 1870.
Association to give a more popular character to itself.31 District associations were established in a few places in Bengal such as Dacca, Burdwan, Krishnanagar, Jessore, Berhampore and Rajshahi during 1871-2, and yet another attempt was made in 1872 to persuade the leaders of the British Indian Association to reduce the annual subscription of the Association from Rs. 50 to Rs. 10 or 5. The proposal for the reduction of the annual subscription of the British Indian Association, which had the backing of some of the members of the Association itself, was formally discussed by the leaders of the Association at two private meetings and turned down on the ground that its acceptance would be 'not safe for the very existence of the Association'. To the query, 'Where are then those talented men who cannot afford to spare rupees fifty to go?', the leaders of the British Indian Association gave no reply. But when they were asked, 'Will you then allow us to form another association?', their reply was, 'Most assuredly. The more the better.'32

After this final rebuff from the leaders of the British Indian Association in 1872, the organization of a separate association of the educated middle classes in Calcutta was only a matter of time. It only needed leadership and an opportunity. These came in 1875. Early in that year the Bengal government proposed to introduce fresh legislation for reorganizing the Calcutta municipality with a view to improving its functioning and bringing it under stricter governmental supervision. The Calcutta municipality had hitherto been composed of justices of the peace—both British and Indian—nominated for life by the government. The educated middle classes, who were virtually unrepresented in the municipality, took advantage of the occasion to demand that the majority of the members of the Calcutta municipality should be elected by the ratepayers, as was the practice in Bombay and even in some of the mofussil towns. Their demand was supported by many Anglo-Indians in Calcutta who were opposed to the then chairman of the municipality, Stuart Hogg,33 who was an able but an extremely unpopular man. The cry raised by Indian papers like the Amrita Bazar Patrika found an echo in the columns of Anglo-Indian papers like the Indian Daily News. The British Indian Association and its organ, the Hindoo Patriot, though not openly hostile to the idea of election, were not very enthusiastic about it and pleaded practical difficulties. The behaviour of certain leaders of the British Indian Association during the election of the vice-chairman of the Calcutta municipality later in the year was also severely criticized by the public. As in Bombay in 1870-3, the controversy over municipal affairs in Calcutta in 1875-6 created great excitement and led to a serious split in the ranks of the local Indian community.

In September 1875 the leaders of the British Indian Association took a step which made them extremely unpopular with the general public in Calcutta.

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 30 September 1875.
33 B. 1833; joined East India Company's service 1853; served mainly in political department; commissioner of police and chairman of Calcutta municipality 1863-77.
On the eleventh of that month they convened a public meeting in the hall of the Association to make arrangements for giving a suitable reception to the Prince of Wales on behalf of the Indian community during his forthcoming visit to Calcutta. Though it was meant to be a public meeting, private notices were issued to selected individuals to attend and about 50-60 people gathered. The meeting adopted a resolution to the effect that only those should be invited to attend the reception to be given in honour of the Prince who paid a minimum subscription of Rs. 50. The mover of the resolution, Rajendralal Mitra, pointed out that at the reception given to the Duke of Edinburgh when he visited Calcutta in 1869, there was such a big crowd that the Duke was literally mobbed. It was, therefore, necessary, he said, to keep down the number of invitees at the proposed reception to the Prince, and one way of doing so was to fix the subscription high. He, however, made it clear that poor but otherwise eligible gentlemen would be exempted from paying this high subscription. The manner in which the meeting was called and its decision to restrict admission to the reception to be given to the Prince on behalf of the Indian community to only those who paid a minimum subscription of Rs. 50 caused widespread resentment amongst the general public in Calcutta. In a letter to the editor of the Indian Daily News, 'A Poor Native' described the decision of the leaders of the British Indian Association as 'a fresh proof of the character of that Association' and 'a direct and downright insult to the native community' against which it was their duty to protest. 'Who', asked the correspondent, 'invested the Mitras and Bahadoors . . . of the [British Indian] Association, with the power to recommend to or reject from the presence of the Prince of Wales any persons they chose?' He went on to add: "British Indian Association" is altogether a misnomer. The so-called Association has been all along an association of a few zemindars and a number of their proteges or parasites among English-speaking natives; and its proceedings for years have fully testified that it is so. Why should it pretend to represent the native community? It is high time for the native community to resent this impertinent representation . . . . The native population should declare in distinct terms that the British Indian Association does not represent the natives in general. It has been always clamorous about matters affecting the interests of zemindars and rich men; but the poorer part of the population, it not only never represents; but often ignores altogether. . . . The scandal of the British Indian Association has been tolerated long enough.'  

34 For the proceedings of the meeting, see Indian Daily News, 13 September 1875, and Amrita Bazar Patrika, 16 September 1875.  

35 Indian Daily News, 14 September 1875.  

enjoy the entertainment of the Bahadurs but let him not disappoint the millions. The paper warned: 'It will cause discontent from one end of the country to the other and render the Prince
extremely unpopular in a province which leads the political thought of the Empire.'36 The Indian Mirror wrote: 'The British Indian Association has acquired the reputation of being a too exclusive body—a coterie of a few zemindars and their creatures. The exclusiveness of this body has led, if report be true, to a movement for the establishment of a counter-native political Association in Bengal.' The Indian Mirror, however, advised the more sensible leaders of the British Indian Association to take note of the direction in which the wind was blowing and 'exert themselves to divest the Association of its exclusive character and widen its sphere of usefulness'.37 Sir Richard Temple,38 the then lieutenant-governor of Bengal, was one of the cleverest British civilians in India. He found in the existing state of public feeling in Calcutta an excellent opportunity to wipe out the common reproach against him that he relied too exclusively upon the advice and support of the party represented by the British Indian Association, to reorganize the Calcutta municipality according to his heart's desire and in a manner that would make him popular with the great mass of the ordinary citizens in Calcutta, and to secure a really popular demonstration in honour of the Prince of Wales. He apparently decided, therefore, to encourage those sections of the Indian community in Calcutta which were opposed to the British Indian Association. Surprisingly enough, the man whom Temple used as the instrument of his purpose was the editor of the Amrita Bazar Patrika, Shishir Kumar Ghose, who was a fierce and outspoken critic of British rule in India. Ghose hailed from the district of Jessore in east Bengal and was an orthodox Hindu of the Vaishnav persuasion. He had only recently settled in Calcutta. His Anglo-Bengali weekly gave expression to the wants and views of the middle and lower middle classes in Bengal. It often sided with peasants in their disputes with zamindars. It made no secret of the desire of Indians for 'independence' and 'Home Rule'.39 It advocated the formation of a comprehensive all-India political organization, with its headquarters in Calcutta and branches all over the country.40 Its sustained and uninhibited criticism of the British government made it extremely popular with the newspaper-reading Indian public throughout the country and extremely unpopular with Anglo-Indians.41 But the Patrika was a great

36 Amrita Bazar Patrika, 16 September 1875.

37 Indian Mirror, quoted in Indian Daily News, 17 September 1875.

38 B. 1826; joined East India Company's service 1847; chief commissioner of Central Provinces 1862-7; lieutenant-governor of Bengal 1874-7; governor of Bombay 1877-80; M.P. 1885-95; d. 1902.

39 See, for example, Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1, 8 September, 10 November 1870.

40 Ibid., 16, 23 April, 5 June 1868 (cited in Report on Native Papers [of Bengal], 9 May, 14 June 1868), 10 November 1870.

41 A liberal Anglo-Indian, however, wrote: 'I know of only one native paper on the Bengal side which fearlessly puts Indian questions from the native point of view, and that is the Amrita Bazar Patrika . . . . I have, I think, learned more from its columns respecting India and her

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admirer of Temple. In 1869-72 when Temple was almost universally condemned in India—both by Indians and non-official Anglo-Indians—for his income tax levy, the Patrika was probably the only Indian newspaper which defended him and his taxation policy. Both as finance member in the government of India and later as lieutenant-governor of Bengal, Temple got a very bad press. He was, therefore, all the more appreciative of the friendly notices he received in the Patrika. Ghose, soon established himself as a sort of unofficial adviser to Temple. In 1875 the Patrika, which was then considered by many Anglo-Indians to be the most seditious journal in India, was rewarded by Temple, obviously for the services rendered to him personally, with the privilege of being included in the list of newspapers in Bengal to which official information was to be supplied.42 Both Temple and Ghose used each other for their own advantage. Rulers see with their ears, says an ancient Indian proverb. Ghose not only defended and praised Temple in his paper, he also supplied him with useful information about Indian life. Ghose was an outsider in Calcutta society. Possessing neither the advantage of birth nor that of wealth, he had little influence in 'the city of palaces'. The fact that he had the ear of the lieutenant-governor of Bengal enabled Ghose not only to gain prominence in the eyes of his fellow-citizens, but also to influence official policies to some extent. He was not on good terms with the leaders of the British Indian Association. As we have already noted, he had long been agitating, but in vain, for the British Indian Association to transform itself into a popular and representative organization. In 1875 Ghose's newspaper was one of the severest critics of the leaders of the British Indian Association for their behaviour in the matter of municipal reorganization and the reception for the Prince of Wales. It demanded that the members of the Calcutta municipality should be popularly elected and that the public should not be excluded from the reception to be given to the Prince. Ghose privately secured from Temple an assurance that the latter would be willing to concede, at least partially, the elective principle in the constitution of the Calcutta municipality, provided a representation to that end was made to him on behalf of the local populace.43 Thus assured by Temple, Ghose set to work to organize an association whose immediate concern would be to mobilize public opinion for presenting a memorial to the lieutenant-governor, praying that the ratepayers of Calcutta be allowed to elect their representatives to the municipality. Some of the younger and more progressive men in Calcutta, led by A. M. Bose,44 a Cambridge Wrangler and barrister, were at this very time planning to establish a patriotic association on people than from all the books I have read.' Colonel R.D. Osborn, in Statesman and Friend of India, 12 March 1881.

42 Ibid., 23 September 1875.


44 B. 1846; secretary of Indian Association 1876-85 and later its president; member of Bengal legislative council 1886-7, 1895-7; president of Indian National Congress 1898; d. 1906.

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the model of Giuseppe Mazzini's Young Italy. Instead of co-operating with these men, Ghose decided to steal a march on them.
Early in August 1875 the National Paper of Calcutta disclosed that it was 'in contemplation' to establish a new political association in the metropolis, to be called 'the Calcutta Association'. The chief 'projector' of the association was the editor of the Amrita Bazar Patrika and its objects would be: 'to represent the views of the people on all questions bearing on their material and political advancement'; 'to discuss and initiate all measures for the promotion of general good and dissemination of political knowledge amongst the people'; 'to maintain by all legitimate means the rights of the different classes of the community'; 'to create by all legitimate means a feeling of nationality in the minds of the people'; and 'to initiate measures for the development of the resources of the country'. If adequate support, 'financial and otherwise', was forthcoming, the National Paper added, the proposed association 'will be within the course of a short time an accomplished fact; if not, the projectors will come to the painful conclusion that the time has not yet come for such an institution and will anxiously wait for better times'.45 The immediate response to Ghose's project does not seem to have been very encouraging and nothing was heard of it during the weeks which followed. The project was, however, revived towards the end of the next month, amidst the general outcry in Calcutta against the unpopular decision of the leaders of the British Indian Association regarding the reception to be accorded to the Prince of Wales during his forthcoming visit to the city. On the morning of 25 September 1875 an anonymous advertisement appeared in the Indian Daily News, the Englishman, and probably some other daily newspapers of Calcutta, saying that a public meeting of 'Native Gentlemen' would be held on the same day at 3.30 p.m. at the Pavilion, No. 6 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 'for the purpose of founding a standing organization, and appointing the office-bearers thereof, in view of representing and furthering by all legitimate efforts, within the bounds of the constitution and loyalty, the genuine wants, deliberate wishes and aspirations, political, commercial and administrative, of all classes of Her Majesty's native subjects, and considering whether any steps or what steps, should be taken in connection with the auspicious advent of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales towards an expression of the loyalty of the native community in general'.46 In noticing the advertisement, the Indian Daily News, whose editor was obviously well informed on the subject, wrote that the purpose of the meeting would be to establish a 'truly national' and 'comprehensive' association, instead of the 'sectional' and 'exclusive' ones at present existing, which might 'be able to furnish Government with sound native opinion, and also expound the policy of Government to the people'.47 About 200-300 people gathered at the Pavilion in the afternoon for the meeting, which


46 Indian Daily News, 25 September 1875.

47 Ibid.

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was presided over by Shambhuchandra Mukerji,48 editor of Mookerjee's Magazine and later of the Reis and Rayyet. Speakers at the meeting49 referred to 'the great services rendered to the country' by the British Indian Association in the past, but regretted that it had of late 'surrendered its true function and become 'a family preserve', 'a Mutual Admiration and Arrangement
Association or an Address-giving and Honors-earning Machinery'. They emphasized the great need for an organization of 'the middle classes', who were precluded from joining the British Indian Association because of 'its constitution, its exclusiveness, [and] the high fees it demanded from its members', in order to promote the 'political education of the people' and to 'assist the millions of our fellow-subjects in the acquisition of those rights . . . to which they are entitled in the terms and spirit of that Proclamation [of 1858]'. The meeting resolved to found 'a Society for representing and furthering, by all legitimate means, within the bounds of the constitution and loyalty, the genuine wants and deliberate Wishes and aspirations—political, commercial and administrative—of all classes of Her Majesty's subjects under the name and style of "The Indian League"'. Membership of the League was to be open to all who paid an annual subscription of Rs. 5. A committee of thirty-eight, mostly journalists and lawyers, with power to add to their number, was appointed to manage the affairs of the League. It was also charged with making arrangements in connexion with the forthcoming visit of the Prince of Wales to Calcutta. The following were elected office-bearers of the League: Shambhuchandra Mukerji, provisional chairman; Kalimohan Das50 and Jogeshchandra Datt,51 secretaries; and Shishir Kumar Ghose, assistant secretary.

The organizers of the Indian League admitted that their association 'was formed by a coup d'etat', without adequate notice or canvassing, but they tried to justify their proceedings on the ground that it was necessary not to give time for the opposition to their 'project, especially from the leaders of the British Indian Association, to become organized.52 But there appear to have been two other reasons which compelled the organizers of the League to act with such indecent haste: first, the urgency to submit a memorial to the lieutenant-governor demanding the grant of elective franchise to the ratepayers before the bill dealing with the reorganization of the Calcutta municipality came up for discussion in the legislative council in November 1875; and second, the need to forestall the association, with similar objectives, which A. M. Bose and his associates, most of whom were Brahmos and far more radical in their political outlook, were already considering setting up in Calcutta. But for these additional reasons,

48 B. 1839; editor successively of Hindoo Patriot, Mookerjee's Magazine and Reis and Rayyet; d. 1894.

49 For the proceedings of the meeting, see Englishman, 27 September and 2 October 1875.

50 Landlord and lawyer; member of managing committee of British Indian Association.

51 B. 1847; landlord, lawyer and journalist; d. 1915?

52 See the editorial of Amrita Bazar Patria, 30 September 1875, and the remarks of S.C. Mukerji at the meeting of 25 September 1875 in Englishman, 2 October 1875.

it would be difficult to explain why the promoters of the Indian League should have knowingly chosen such an apparently inopportune time as the commencement of the Durga Puja holidays,
when the courts and educational institutions were closed and a good many professional men had left town, to hold a public meeting and launch a political organization.

The establishment of the Indian League precipitated a storm of controversy in Calcutta. The leaders of the British Indian Association made no secret of their displeasure with it. The Hindoo Patriot and the Bengalee treated it with scornful silence. The Indian Mirror, the Som Prakash, the Saptahik Samachar, the Hitkari, etc., openly condemned it as a farce. Its origins were said to be shrouded in mystery and its promoters were accused of having acted with base personal motives. Probably the only prominent Indian newspaper which supported the League was Ghose's Amrita Bazar Patrika. 'This is the first instance', wrote the Patrika on 30 September 1875, 'of a political body formed by public announcement and a call upon the nation to attend it and mould it to their liking.' The Patrika maintained that the League would give an opportunity to men of talent to develop, it would enable 'the Government to learn the genuine wishes of the nation, and . . . the nation to let known their wishes to the Government'. 'We live', the paper added, 'under a constitutional government, but have not taken advantage of the blessings of British rule. Knock and it shall be opened unto thee.' The Patrika invited the British Indian Association to vie with the League in working for the welfare of the country, for 'our aim and object tend to the same direction'. The Indian League found its warmest supporters in the two leading Anglo-Indian dailies of Calcutta, the Englishman and the Indian Daily News, both of whom detested the British Indian Association and the existing administration of the Calcutta municipality. They hailed the League as a promising association of the 'middle classes' which would 'furnish some test of national life'. They attributed its origin to the reaction against the exclusive and sectional character of the British Indian Association under the dominance of "a self-seeking plutocracy and to the natural desire on the part of the rising class of English-educated Indians for recognition at the hands of their rulers and for playing their due part in the public life of the country. They defended the League against the hostile criticism of its adversaries. They gave it friendly advice and encouraged it in its endeavours in various ways.

The Indian League had a short and stormy life of a little over two years. Within a month of its establishment, it called a meeting of the ratepayers of Calcutta on 23 October 1875, with James Wilson, editor of the Indian Daily News, in the chair, to memorialize the Bengal government for improvements in the municipal administration of Calcutta, especially for the introduction of the elective system. It collected a sum of about Rs. 11/2 lakhs for establishing an institution for the teaching of technical sciences in commemoration of the visit of the Prince of Wales and persuaded Temple to bless the project at a public meeting called for that purpose in Calcutta on 25 December 1875. Early in 1876 the Bengal government brought forward a new municipal
bill in the local legislature which, while conceding a modified electoral system, attempted to secure an almost absolute control over the acts of the proposed municipal commissioners. The British Indian Association called a public meeting in Calcutta on 12 February 1876 at which prominent citizens, both British and Indian, denounced the pretended boon as 'a delusion and a gigantic show'. The Indian League, however, organized on the same day, in the Calcutta town hall, a counter-demonstration to the meeting of the British Indian Association, in order to express its gratitude to Temple for the grant of the elective principle. The position taken by the leaders of the League was that the concession of the principle of election was so intrinsically valuable that the imperfections of the bill were insignificant by comparison. As the Calcutta correspondent of the Pioneer wrote at the time: 'Young Bengal is very grateful to the local Government for granting the boon of election in matters municipal. He is quite willing to accept the concession, even burdened by the accompanying restrictions, as a foretaste of something better to follow. The thin end of the wedge once introduced there is no reason why in turn representatives to the Indian and local Councils may not be sent there by the voice of the people.' After the municipal bill was passed, the League naturally became anxious to ensure that the newly introduced elective system should prove to be a success, more so because it was opposed by certain prominent sections of the local population, both British and Indian. The League, therefore, encouraged its own members and persuaded other respectable citizens to seek election to the municipality later in the year. It also tried to mobilize public opinion in favour of the demand for a more responsible municipal administration in the suburbs of Calcutta. On 25 March 1876 the League called a public meeting to protest against certain provisions of an official bill which sought to invest the presidency magistrates with some of the powers of the high court. On 27 May 1876 the League called another public meeting in Calcutta to celebrate the assumption of the title of 'Empress of India' by Queen Victoria. A significant feature of this meeting was that it was carefully planned and widely advertised. Letters and telegrams expressing approval of the object of the meeting, which were read out on the occasion, came from public men and associations belonging to such distant places as Dacca, Bombay, Poona, Ahmedabad and Rajkot. The meeting resolved to present an address to the Queen-Empress 'embodying the national joy and gratefulness on that event, and giving expression to those feelings of reverence and loyalty for Her Majesty's office and person, and those hopes and aspirations for the future of India which the occasion is calculated to evoke.'

56 Englishman, 25 October 1875.

57 Indian Daily News, 27 December 1875.

58 Ibid., 14 February 1876.

59 Ibid., 15 February 1876.

60 Pioneer, 17 February 1876.

61 Indian Daily News, 27 March 1876.

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The address, bearing 5,000 signatures, was submitted to the viceroy, Lord Lytton, on the occasion of the Delhi darbar in January 1877. In this address the League suggested that the elective system, already introduced in the municipalities of the presidency and other towns, should be adapted 'for returning by popular election the non-official members of the supreme and provincial legislatures of India'.63 In October 1877 three prominent members of the League, Shishir Kumar Ghose, Kalicharan Banerji and Brajendra Kumar Roy,64 travelled to Bombay in order to present a laudatory address to Temple, now governor of Bombay. The address was on behalf of the inhabitants of Bengal and it was signed by about 20,000 people.65 Both in Bombay and in Poona, which city they also visited, Ghose and his friends established valuable contacts with the leaders of the Bombay Association and of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, and discussed with them the possibility of closer political co-operation between the two presidencies. Kalicharan Banerji, who was one of the best orators of his time in India, also addressed public gatherings in Bombay and Poona. Significantly enough, the subject of his address in Poona was 'National Unity'.66 In January 1878 the leaders of the Indian League, along with those of the British Indian Association and the Indian Association, cooperated with a visiting delegation of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha in holding a 'Native Press Conference' in Calcutta.67

The foregoing account almost exhausts the list of the activities of the Indian League of which we have any information from the contemporary press.

The Indian community of Calcutta even in those days was notorious for its internecine strife.68 Petty jealousies and hatreds prevented the leading families of the town from co-operating with each other for any purpose whatsoever. There was hardly any individual or organization who could fairly claim to speak on behalf of the entire community. The British Indian Association was respectable but it had ceased to be representative of anything but a very small section of the Calcutta aristocracy. The rising English-educated and professional classes had challenged the pretensions of the British Indian Association to represent the Indian community, but they had yet to provide an alternative leadership of their own. A great majority of the orthodox Hindus of Calcutta still looked

62 Ibid., 29 May 1876.
63 Ibid., 5 January 1877.
64 Landlord; president of Dacca People's Association.
65 Times of India, 3 November 1877.
66 See above, p. 114.
67 Indian Mirror, 15 January 1878, See also below, p. 203.
68 For some interesting information about the leading factions in Calcutta, see a letter to the editor, Indian Daily News, 1 August 1875.

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upon Raja Kamalkrishna Bahadur69 of the Shobhabazar family as their leader, especially in matters religious and social. The conservative Brahmos, led by Devendranath Tagore, were arrayed against the progressive Brahmos, led by Keshavchandra Sen. The Indian Christians had their leaders in Krishnamohan Banerji and Kalicharan Banerji. The Muslims were divided into two main factions: the one led by Maulvi Abdul Latif70 and the other by Nawab Amir Ali Khan.71

Factionalism had combined with patriotism to bring about the birth of the Indian League. A common opposition to the existing leadership of the British Indian Association and a widespread desire for a 'national' organization had brought together at least for the time being many diverse and antagonistic elements of Calcutta society on a common platform. The early supporters of the League included men of all classes and creeds: the wealthy Maliks (of Muktaram Babu Street) and Dattas (of Wellington Square), journalists like Shambhuchandra Mukerji and Shishir Kumar Ghose, lawyers like Kalimohan Das and Rasbihari Ghose,72 conservative Brahmos like Navgopal Mitra, progressive Brahmos like Anandmohan Bose, teachers like Surendranath Banerjea Indian Christians like Krishnamohan Banerji and Kalicharan Banerji, Muslims like Zahirul Haq,73 zamindars like Raja Kamalkrishna Bahadur, and Anglo-Indians like James Wilson. But the League had powerful enemies and it was not long before many of its own early supporters turned against it.

The manner in which the Indian League was launched—the anonymous advertisement, the haste with which it was organized, the mystery which surrounded its origin, and the desire to forestall a rival group which was thinking on similar lines—prejudiced many people against it. Some of the office-bearers of the League did not inspire confidence in the public. Objection was particularly taken to its provisional chairman, Shambhuchandra Mukerji, a talented but tactless and whimsical man, and to its assistant secretary, Shishir Kumar Ghose, whose manners and growing influence had earned him many enemies in Calcutta. In January 1876 Mukerji resigned his office in favour of the Reverend Krishnamohan Banerji,74 but the change failed to satisfy the objectors who demanded a total reorganization of the managing committee of the League. The British Indian Association frowned upon the League and most of the big zamindars of Calcutta kept aloof from it either for fear of annoying the leaders of the British Indian Association or because of their dissatisfaction with the office-

69 B. 1820; cousin of Radhakant Deb and brother of Kalikrishna Deb; president of Sanatan Dharma Rakshini Sabha; author; d. 1885.

70 B. 1828; began life as teacher but appointed deputy magistrate 1849; founder and secretary of Mahomedan Literary Society; member of Bengal legislative council 1862-4, 1870-4; made Nawab 1887; d. 1893.

71 B. 1810; lawyer; made Nawab 1875; member of Bengal legislative council 1864-6; d. 1879.

72 B. 1845; jurist; member of Bengal legislative council 1888-90 and of Indian legislative council 1891-3, 1907-8; president of Indian National Congress 1907, 1908; d. 1921.
bearers of the League. No sooner was the League established than a rumour spread that it was organized with the connivance of Temple and in order to subserve his purposes. Both Anglo-Indian and Indian newspapers openly referred to the League as the 'Temple League' and criticized the lieutenant-governor for patronizing and favouring it. The Som Prakash described the lieutenant-governor as the 'KallaSekra [evil genius] of the Indian League' and accused the latter of acting as 'second fiddlers to Sir Richard Temple'. 'We predict', added the Som Prakash, 'that if the members of the Indian League do not speedily sever this connection with the Lieutenant-Governor the same causes which contributed to their aggrandizement will also hasten their downfall. All the attraction which the League possesses is because it proposes to supply the desideratum of an independent association which shall be the mouthpiece of the middle classes, if the League parts with that independence and individuality it will at no distant date come to an end.'75 The Bengalee referred to the rumour 'in many quarters' that Temple was 'the string-puller' of the League, and remarked: 'If so, it is the beginning of the end of the League as an institution affecting the welfare of the people.'76 The League was composed of discordant elements who did not find it possible to work harmoniously together. The first serious split in the ranks of the League occurred over the memorial to be presented to the government in connexion with the Calcutta municipal bill and some of its most prominent members resigned after complaining of irregularities on the part of its provisional chairman and assistant secretary.77 The seceders proceeded to organize a separate association of their own. The election of the moderate Krishnamohan Banerji was not liked by some of the radical leaders of the League. The behaviour of the latter at the Northbrook memorial meeting in Calcutta on 8 April 1876—where they tried to oppose a resolution in favour of erecting a statue to the ex-viceroy—created further dissension in the League.78 In May 1876 the doves and the hawks of the League again clashed over the question of including Indian grievances in the proposed congratulatory address to the Queen-Empress.79 The League's decision to establish a technical institution in Calcutta to commemorate the visit of the Prince of Wales was widely criticized as an attempt to dish Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar,80 who had been working towards the same end since 1869. Party spirit was raging in Calcutta at the time and the League's attempt to run its own candidates for the municipal election in September 1876 added fuel to the fire. The enemies of Shishir Kumar Ghose succeeded in getting him disqualified as an elector. Ghose himself ascribed the vehement prejudice against him in Calcutta to the 'Cockney versus Country'

75 Quoted in Hindoo Patriot, 28 February 1876.
76 Bengalee, 19 February 1876.
77 Indian Daily News, 20 November, 2, 24-5 December 1875.
78 Ibid., 12 April, 1, 5 May 1876.
spirited. Overwhelmed with difficulties and differences almost since the day of its establishment, the leaders of the League could hardly find time to develop a suitable organization. The serious and prolonged illness in 1876 of its assistant secretary, Ghose, who was the real leader of the League, also hampered its activities. The League was overshadowed by the establishment in Calcutta in July 1876 of a rival organization of the educated middle classes—the Indian Association—and gradually faded away. On the establishment of this rival organization, the Amrita Bazar Patrika had written: ‘. . . the new Association is an intruder and cannot exist unless the League is destroyed . . . we apprehend scenes which will bleed the hearts of those who love India with a disinterested love.’ The Patrika was proved right, if only in part. The League was 'destroyed' by the Indian Association, but no bloody scenes were enacted. It was almost a take-over. Most of the prominent members of the rump League, including its chairman, Krishnamohan Banerji, gradually went over to the new association. But a small faction, headed by Shishir Kumar Ghose, stayed aloof and never forgave the organizers of the Indian Association for having 'destroyed' the League.

We have noted earlier how the founders of the Indian League had in September 1875 forestalled some of the younger men in Calcutta, headed by A. M. Bose, who were already planning to organize a broad-based political association. Bose and his associates could not, therefore, have been friendly to the League. However, once the League was established, they apparently decided to join it in the hope that they might be able to control it and mould it as they liked. But they were soon disillusioned and seceded from the League in December 1875.86 In July 1876 they issued a prospectus of a new association with the object of 'representing the people, of educating the people on all industrial, educational, and other topics of general interest, and of teaching them to work for themselves'. The proposed association, said the prospectus, would 'discuss all topics of general interest, and thus help . . . towards the formation of a healthy public opinion'. Its operations would be 'extensive'. It would seek members in the mofussil and its travelling agents would visit different parts of the country. The promoters hoped to secure the support of all parties for their broad platform, which, they assured, would not conflict with that of the existing associations.87

The association was inaugurated at 'a very largely attended meeting' in the Albert Hall, Calcutta, on 26 July 1876.88 It was named 'The Indian Association'.

81 Letter to the editor, Indian Daily News, 6 September 1876.

82 Ibid.

83 See below.

84 Amrita Bazar Patrika, 3 August 1876.
85 In March 1884 it took a leading part in organizing the Calcutta Indian Union. See below, p. 394.

86 Indian Daily News, 24 December 1875.

87 Ibid., 26 July 1876.

88 For the proceedings of the meeting, see ibid., 28 July 1876, Amrita Bazar Patrika, 3 August 1876, Bengalee, 5 August 1876, and Hindoo Patriot, 31 July 1876.

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Its objects were declared to be 'to represent the people, and promote by every legitimate means, the political, intellectual, and national advancement of the people'. An executive committee of twenty-eight, consisting mainly of lawyers, journalists and teachers, was appointed, with A. M. Bose as secretary and A. C. Sarkar89 and J. N. Vidyabhushan90 as assistant secretaries. Later M. M. Ghose,91 a leading barrister, was elected president of the association. Speakers at the inaugural meeting, chief amongst whom was Surendranath Banerjea, tried to justify the establishment of yet another association in Calcutta on the ground that none of the existing associations represented 'the oppressed cooly or the oppressed ryot' or had an organization 'capable of keeping up and stimulating public opinion'. Two members of the Indian League, who were present at the meeting, questioned the necessity of forming another association with objects similar to those of the League. This led to an ugly incident and resolutions had to be 'carried almost at the point of the bayonet'.

The establishment of the Indian Association encountered proposition from others besides the supporters of the Indian League. Another group of educated Bengalis in Calcutta also appears to have been dissatisfied with it. The latter projected in November 1876 another association, called the Bengal Association. The prospectus of the Bengal Association, published in the National Paper, stated the objects of the proposed association, to be 'to interpret the views of Government to the people, to cement union between the Europeans and Natives, as well as to represent to Government the wants and wishes of the people'. Its proceedings were to be conducted in Bengali, not in English, and 'just in the style debates amongst villagemen, when they have any important object to carry out, are held—that is to say, there will be less of speeches, and more of action'. 'None blinded by race feeling or prejudices' was to be admitted as a member of the association. All communications by the association to the government were to be made in Bengali, with translations in English attached to them.92 We have no evidence to suggest that the projected Bengal Association was ever actually established. Its projectors appear to have been motivated by some hostility to the Brahmos and Anglicized Hindus who dominated the Indian Association, and they believed that 'institutions based on exotic models cannot (however popular and liberal in their views) grow in this country'.93

The leaders of the British Indian Association looked upon the Indian Association with feelings of benevolent neutrality. The assistant secretary of the British Indian Association, K. D. Pal, attended the inaugural meeting of the Indian Association. He welcomed the formation of the new
association in his paper and gave it friendly advice. 'The list of the Committee [of the Indian Association]', wrote the Hindoo Patriot, 'contains the names of some of our

89 B. 1846; journalist and lawyer; d. 1917.

90 B. 1845; journalist and teacher; appointed deputy magistrate 1880; d. 1904.

91 B. 1844; barrister of Calcutta high court; d. 1896.

92 Quoted in Englishman, 18 November 1876.

93 See letter by Kisori Laul Mookerjee to the editor, Englishman, 23 November 1876.

well-educated young countrymen, and if they conduct their operations with judgement and moderation, they may both deserve and command success. If they be less a petitioning body, and more an agency for the education of the rising generation in political matters, and for the direction of their political thoughts and aspirations through right channels, they may prove useful co-operators of the existing Associations. They cannot have a better model than the East India Association, which generally invites thoughtful men to discuss important questions, publishes the discussions for general information, and thus helps in the moulding and maturing of public opinion on those questions, and petitions to Parliament or Her Majesty's Government on exceptional occasions.'94 But the young leaders of the Indian Association, whom a critic described as 'England-returned, hatted, coated gentlemen',95 had their own ideas on politics. Their prophet was Mazzini and they took Young Italy for their model of a political organization. As S. N. Banerjea, one of the leading promoters of the Indian Association, wrote later: '. . . the idea that was working in our minds was that the Association was to be the centre of an all-India movement. For even then, the conception of a united India, derived from the inspiration of Mazzini, or, at any rate, of bringing all India upon the same common platform, had taken firm possession of the minds of the Indian leaders in Bengal.'96 Probably the most perceptive contemporary comment on the establishment of the Indian Association came from the Indian Daily News, The paper pointed out how during the last few years an increasing number of young Bengalis had been to England and had returned home inoculated with political aspirations. They desired to awaken in their own land something of the public life which they had seen in England. 'The youths who have seen political life in England', wrote the Indian Daily News, 'naturally look to find the same thing here, on their return to their native land; and not finding it, what so natural as that they should seek to create the feeling through such institutions as they have seen in England? They look around and find in existence one Association which, though very powerful in wealth and numbers, yet represents only one section, and leaves still greater numbers without a voice in the community. Another Association is started which professes to be more comprehensive in its character, to embrace the unrepresented millions of the land, and to speak in their name. Whether rightly or wrongly, an impression gets abroad that this Association does not fulfil its pretended mission. It is suspected of having allowed itself to be diverted from its primary objects, and to have allowed itself to be used for little party ends. Now, if such a feeling prevails, it is quite open to those who hold that opinion to endeavour to call into existen
another body that will fulfill the objects that they desire to serve.' The paper added: 'Probably the new Association may be no more successful. Indeed, we are half inclined to think that this will prove to be the case for many years to come. The fact is

94 Hindoo Patriot, 31 July 1876.

95 See letter of 'A Citizen' to the editor, Indian Daily News, 17 March 1877.

96 S.N. Banerjea, A Nation in Making (1925), p. 41.

that the political education of the people is only just beginning, and there will be many slips and tumbles before the alphabet is learnt which shall prove the key to the constitutional volume. We find no fault with the movements of any of these associations, and regard them as the tentative efforts of the people or sections of them to break the shell that is to usher them into political life, under the incubating influence of a "paternal government".97

Consistent with its objective of promoting a national movement, the Indian Association tended, at least in its early years, to concentrate its attention mainly on those questions which were unlikely to be controversial and on which it could hope easily to unite all sections of the educated community in Bengal and elsewhere in the country. One such question was the virtual exclusion of Indians from high office in their own country because of the holding of the Indian civil service examination only in England. This was an old question, but it had recently been activated by an order of the secretary of state for India, Lord Salisbury,98 reducing the upper age-limit for the civil service examination from 21 to 19 years, which made it all the more difficult even for the few Indians who could afford to go to England to compete for the examination with any hope of success. The Indian Association decided to organize a 'national protest' against the secretary of state's order. The enthusiasm and skill which the Association displayed in organizing this protest, the details and significance of which will be dealt with in the next chapter, marked it out as representing a new force in Indian politics.

S. N. Banerjea, who was the life and soul of the Indian Association, attended the imperial darbar at Delhi as the representative of the Hindoo Patriot. While at Delhi, he took a prominent part in establishing a 'Native Press Association', consisting of the representatives of the Indian press who had been invited to the darbar, and was elected its secretary.99 In January 1878 the Indian Association actively co-operated with the visiting delegation of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha in holding a 'Native Press Conference' at Calcutta.100 Two months later the Indian Association organized, in conjunction with the British Indian Association, a public meeting at Calcutta to protest against the recently reimposed licence tax and to demand a reduction in heavy government expenditure, especially that on the army.101 In April 1878 the Indian Association got up an impressive public demonstration against Lytton's Vernacular Press Act, though the leaders of the British Indian Association withheld their co-operation from it for fear of courting official displeasure.102

97 Indian Daily News, 1 August 1876.
The two most active and prominent leaders of the Indian Association were S. N. Banerjea and A.M. Bose. Both Banerjea and Bose had first-hand knowledge of European public life. Their outlook was broad and they were full of patriotic zeal and missionary spirit. Their object in launching the Indian Association was, as we have already noted, to make it the head and centre of a national movement in the country. The success which they had in organizing an all-India agitation over the civil service question reinforced their ambition to establish their Association as the national organization of India. Branches of the Association were established at several places in Bengal and elsewhere in northern India. Banerjea and Bose made a determined effort to teach patriotism and politics to the younger generation through their speeches and writings and the organization of 'Student's Associations'. They kept in touch, through correspondence and visits, with leaders of public opinion in all parts of the country and tried to secure their sympathy and cooperation in whatever agitation they organized on behalf of the Indian Association in order to give it the appearance of a national agitation.

But the Indian Association was ill equipped to accomplish its grand design. Its membership was small—probably not more than 200-300—and its annual income, during the first ten years of its existence, did not exceed Rs. 2,000.103 The Indian Association', said the seventh annual report of the Association, 'has found, by the painful experience of nearly eight years, that it often found itself powerless to act, from want of funds. . . .'104 The branches of the Association in places outside Bengal, such as Kanpur, Allahabad and Lahore, which made the Association appear as something more than a mere regional organization, were, in fact, mainly composed of or controlled by expatriate Bengalis. But the greatest weakness of the Indian Association lay in the fact that the people of Calcutta looked upon it, not entirely without justification, as neither a national nor a regional but a sectional organization, dominated by a few young and ambitious men with advanced views on the political and social questions of the day. Despite all their ability and enthusiasm, the leaders of the Indian Association did not command much influence in Calcutta and they were deeply involved in local factional struggles. But, even if the Indian Association had not suffered from these drawbacks and were, in fact, the sole representative organization of Bengal, with all the requisite resources at its disposal, it is extremely doubtful whether it could have succeeded in establishing itself as the national organization of India. The country was too vast and regional interests too strong and various to allow even the English-educated people of the other provinces of India to accept a Calcutta-based association as their
leader and spokesman. The very ideal that inspired the leaders of the Indian Association, namely that of a central organization in the metropolis of India, having branches all over the country and directing a national movement, was impracticable in the India of the nineteenth century.

Consciously or unconsciously, the leaders of the Indian Association tried,

103 See annual reports of the Association.


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like many others before them, for example, the Landholders' Society in the 1830s, the British Indian Association in the 1850s, and the Brahma Samaj and the East India Association in the 1860s, to imitate the model of the British administration in India. They did not realize that, even though operated by an extremely small, homogeneous, integrated and efficient body of men, the centralized machinery of the British raj produced tremendous complications and frictions, and that it was, slowly but surely, moving towards federalism in order to suit Indian conditions. But, however impracticable, the ideal of the Indian Association did appeal to the imagination of the educated classes in India and helped in promoting a sense of national unity in the country.

Like their counterparts in Calcutta and Madras, the leaders of the Bombay Association publicly condemned the rebellion of 1857 and manifested their loyalty to the British government in many ways. But, 'under the then excited state of affairs', when even such a distinguished and loyal Bombayite as Jagannath Shankarseth was suspected of treason by many Anglo-Indians, the leaders of the Bombay Association 'deemed it a prudent course to abstain from putting themselves forward in any way'.105 The agitational activities of the Bombay Association were thus virtually suspended during the period of the revolt.

The first important question which engaged the attention of the Bombay Association after the revolt, in 1859, was that of the recent enormous and continuing rise in taxation, especially the proposed levy on professions and trades. The question occasioned serious differences of opinion among the members of the Association. Public feeling against the so-called Licence Bill was as strong in Bombay as elsewhere in India, but the leaders of the Bombay Association were rather hesitant and slow in giving a lead for fear of courting official displeasure. It was not until 8 October 1859, when the Licence Bill had already passed its second reading in the legislative council and long after Calcutta and Madras had formally registered their protests against it, that the Bombay Association held, under great pressure from the local press and public, a meeting at the house of Jagannath Shankarseth. The meeting resolved to appoint a committee of 'about a hundred native gentlemen' to report on the Licence Bill. Another meeting of the Association was to be called later to consider the report of the committee and, if necessary, to adopt 'a respectful representation' to the legislative council. Some of the younger and more radical members of the Association, led by Dr. Bhaau Daji, urged the need for speedy action and for sending a separate and more comprehensive petition to Parliament, similar to those sent from Calcutta and Mardas, but it was in vain.106
Disgusted at the tardiness and timidity of the older and conservative leaders of the Bombay Association and encouraged by some of the local non-official

105 See the report of a general meeting of the Association held on 19 January 1860 in Bombay Times and Standard, 23 January 1860.

106 Bombay Times, 10 October 1859.

Anglo-Indians, Bhau Daji and his associates decided to act on their own. On 9 October 1859 they organized a public meeting of the 'native inhabitants' of Bombay at 'the Dhakji Dadaji's house' on the Kalbadevi Road to take into consideration the provisions of the Licence Bill.107 Next day, 10 October, they held another public meeting, which included both Europeans and Indians, at the town hall for the same purpose.108 These meetings adopted a petition to Parliament, drawn up by Bhau Daji, which condemned the Licence Bill for attempting 'to place the industrial classes of the country under the burden of an income tax, while the holders of property and other classes, are exempted from all contributions thereto'.109 The petition demanded that the central legislative council 'should be strengthened by the appointment of non-official and independent members thereto, and that subordinate councils should be appointed for each presidency, which should be invested with independent powers in all matters of purely local interest or importance'. The petition also demanded the appointment of a royal commission 'to take evidence throughout the land for the purpose of arriving at a final settlement of such questions as form the chronic causes of discontent thereon and of such as affect the well-being of the people'. Some of these questions were spelled out in the petition. They were 'the reduction and reform of public expenditure'; 'the settlement of the relations of the Imperial power with the Native principalities, in the matter of successions thereto'; 'the settlement of all claims upon the rent-free tenures of the soil'; 'the construction of roads and canals, and the department of public works generally'; 'the advancement of education amongst the body of the people'; and 'the administration of justice'. The petition was forwarded to England by the overland mail of 12 October 1859.110

The Bombay Association took another month to submit its 'respectful memorial' against the Licence Bill to the legislative council. Unlike Bhau Daji's petition, that adopted by the Bombay Association confined itself exclusively to financial matters and, while protesting against the Licence Bill, it admitted the necessity of additional taxation and contented itself with suggesting certain changes and modifications in the Bill in order to make it 'less distasteful to the people at large'.111

On 19 January 1860 the Bombay Association held its 'annual' meeting which had not been held since 1856.112 The reports of the committee of management for 'the fourth, fifth and sixth years' read out at the meeting reveal a steady decline in the activity and prosperity of the Association. This decline became more marked in the years which followed. But for an occasional meeting or memorial on its behalf, we find few notices of the Bombay Association in the

107 Ibid., 11 October 1859.
contemporary press during 1860-5. After the death of its president, Jagannath Shankarseth, in August 1865, the Bombay Association virtually ceased to function.

The causes of the rapid decay of the Bombay Association in the early 1860s are to be found in the apathy and lack of harmonious co-operation on the part of its' members and the absence of public-spirited men like Dadabhai Naoroji and Naoroji Fardunji from Bombay. To these must be added the cotton boom in Bombay, following the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, when 'everyone for himself and Mammon for us all' almost became the motto of most Bombayites. The members of the Bombay Association, many of whom were businessmen anyway, became obviously too busy with cotton to care for the country. The cotton boom ended in 1865, leaving behind a trail of financial disasters. Bombay was, as it were, rudely awakened from its dream but some time was to elapse before it returned to normal life. It was not until the end of 1867 that the Bombay Association was revived.

The immediate stimulus for the revival of the Bombay Association appears to have been provided by the recent formation of the East India Association in London. One of the important planks in the programme of the East India Association was to establish contacts with the existing local associations in India and to promote the growth of new associations there in order to secure funds and information for its activities in London. In late 1867 Naoroji Fardunji, who, along with Dadabhai Naoroji, had taken a prominent part in establishing the East India Association in London, returned to Bombay. It was probably at his instigation that a meeting of 'the members, supporters and friends of the Bombay Association' was convened by Vinayakrao Jagannath Shankarseth at the house of Mangaldas Nathubhai on 14 December 1867 'for the purpose of re-establishing the Bombay Association'. In his opening remarks to the meeting, the chairman, Mangaldas Nathubhai, pointed out how the Bombay Association, 'once so useful, has, for many years past, been existing only in name', and how 'many excellent opportunities for doing good have been lost, and many questions affecting our country's welfare have been allowed to slumber'. He referred to the taunts of the local public about the indolence of the Bombay Association and to the energy and activity displayed by the British Indian Association of Calcutta, and appealed to the audience to 'wipe away the blot upon our patriotism'. The meeting resolved to 're-establish' the Bombay Association. About 90 members were enrolled. Vinayakrao Jagannath Shankarseth resigned the office of honorary secretary which he had

111 B. 1817; interpreter of Bombay high court 1845-64; politician and social reformer; d. 1885.
held for the last fifteen years, but agreed to become one of the four vice-presidents of the
Association. Naoroji Fardunji, who had formerly acted with Vinayakrao Jagannath Shankarseth
as joint secretary of the Association, was selected secretary. Mangaldas Nathubhai became
president of the Association. A committee of about 40, consisting mainly of businessmen and
lawyers, was appointed to manage the affairs of the Association.118

For about five years, following its re-establishment in December 1867, the Bombay Association
remained fairly active. It had a membership of about 100-150. In Naoroji Fardunji it had a
zealous and active secretary who was popularly known as 'the Tribune'. It maintained a regular
office in the Sassoon Building, Elphinstone Circle, Bombay. It corresponded regularly with the
other public bodies in India and with the East India Association in London. It memorialized
the authorities on many important questions of public interest, such as the holding of competitive
examination for the Indian civil service simultaneously in England and in India, the increased
employment of Indians in high public office, the financial administration of India and the
adjustment of financial relations between England and India, additional taxation, especially the
income tax and the non-agricultural tax, the Native Marriage Bill, the Cotton Frauds Bill, the
heavy rate of interest on overdue revenue instalments, municipal affairs, and the preservation
of the Peshwa's Daftar in Poona. In 1870 the secretary of the Bombay Association went to England,
where he tried to enlist the support of influential sections in favour of the demands of the
Association, particularly those relating to the reduction in military expenditure, the appointment
of a trained man as finance member in India, the reorganization of the legislative councils, and a
parliamentary inquiry into Indian affairs. In 1873 the Bombay Association joined hands with the
Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the Broach Association in deputing Naoroji Fardunji to give
evidence before the parliamentary committee on Indian finance in London.119

The Bombay Association was dominated by the local 'plutocrats'. Its president, Mangaldas
Nathubhai, was the biggest property-owner in the town. On its committee of management sat
some of the richest men of all communities in Bombay. The leaders of the Bombay Association
were either businessmen or highly successful professional men, such as the famous lawyer
Vishwanath Narayan Mandlik,120 but whether businessmen or professional men they were very
busy men who had little time to spare for public affairs. Not unexpectedly, the politics of the
Bombay Association were spasmodic. They were also moderate and timid. As a lawyer member
of the Association's managing committee, H. Dadabhai, remarked in 1870: 'From the
commencement our principle has been, never to go up to Government unless, and until, we have got a solid substratum

118 Ibid., pp. 3-8.

119 See published minutes of proceedings of the annual general meetings of the Bombay Association and reports of the committee of management for 1869-73.

120 B. 1833; author, journalist and lawyer; member of Bombay legislative council 1874-84 and of Indian legislative council 1884-8; d. 1889.

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of facts. . . . We err on the side of moderation, being satisfied that "strong representations" defeat their own objects.'121 Another prominent member of the Association's managing committee, Shantaram Narayan, who was also a lawyer, observed in 1871: 'It is of the utmost value to our Association to be on the best of terms with the authorities placed over us in the administration of Indian affairs. Our Association has everything to lose by being in a state of hostility or ill-feeling, or even coldness with the authorities, whether here or in England, and I consider it necessary for us to cultivate the best of feelings [with the authorities], so that the objects which the Association has in view may be favoured with their assistance.'122

The real driving force behind the Bombay Association was its paid secretary Naoroji Fardunji. He was an energetic and intrepid man, with a varied experience and liberal sympathies. It was he who saved the Bombay Association from degenerating into a mere interest group of the richer classes. But Naoroji Fardunji was a strong-headed and quarrelsome man, and his manners alienated many supporters of the Association. Dissatisfaction with the leadership of Mangaldas Nathubhai also prevented certain prominent families of the town from supporting the Bombay Association wholeheartedly. As elsewhere in India, a younger generation of English-educated Indians was growing up in Bombay, represented by such men as M. G. Ranade, P. M. Mehta123 and K. T. Telang,124 whose ideas on politics differed from those of their predecessors and who considered the Bombay Association to be too aristocratic and indolent.

In August 1871 the Hindu Reformer of Bombay announced the formation of a 'Town Association' under the chairmanship of M. G. Ranade, then an advocate of the Bombay high court, for the purpose of representing to the government the wants and wishes of the people. 'We boast', wrote the paper, 'of the Bombay Association and the Bombay Branch of the East India Association, but these bodies are not working with full vigour, and the mass of the people generally are ignorant of their existence, and their meetings, called on rare occasions, perhaps once or twice in a year, are very poorly attended. We hope that the new association will supply the want which has been felt by us, and will perform that work which the Bombay Association has hitherto neglected.'125 The 'Town Association' was obviously still-born, presumably because its chairman and prime mover, Ranade, was soon afterwards appointed subordinate judge and removed to Poona, but the fact of its formation and the comments of the


123 B. 1845; barrister of Bombay high court; member of Bombay legislative council 1887-9, 1893-4 and of Indian legislative council 1894-6, 1898-1901; president of Indian National Congress 1890; d. 1915.

124 B. 1850; author, social reformer and advocate of Bombay high court; member of Bombay legislative council 1886-89; judge of Bombay high court from 1889 until his death in 1893.

125 Quoted in Bombay Gazette, 17 August 1871. See also Star of India, 2 October 1871.

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Hindu Reformer on the occasion, cited above, are sufficiently revealing as to Young Bombay's dissatisfaction with the existing associations in Bombay.

Early in the 1870s the controversy over municipal reform rocked the boat of the Bombay Association. Dissatisfaction with the extravagance and oppression of the Bombay municipality had been growing for quite some time. It came to a head in 1870 with the revelation that the municipality was bankrupt and heavily in debt. Public anger was directed particularly against the municipal commissioner, Arthur Crawford,126 a capable but rather self-willed and reckless man whose grandiose schemes for municipal improvement had proved financially disastrous. Under the leadership of J. A. Forbes, of the great house of Forbes and Company, a Ratepayers' Association was organized on 9 November 1870 and a systematic campaign of agitation was launched, the like of which Bombay had never before witnessed. Not satisfied with severe comments in the press, the public impeachment of Crawford at stormy municipal meetings and angry memorials to the government, the leaders of the agitation, with the famous demonstration inside Hyde Park in 1866 being fresh in their memory,127 organized on 30 June 1871 a huge procession which paraded the streets of Bombay carrying banners, shouting slogans and beating drums and culminated in a monster meeting at the Framji Cowasji Institute.128 They wanted a more economical and responsible municipal administration, and to this end they urged that the ratepayers should elect their own representatives, who should have complete powers to manage municipal affairs.

In the beginning 'the reform party'—as Forbes and his associates were called— enjoyed the almost unanimous support of the local population, both Indian and British, and virtually threatened to dictate terms to the authorities. The situation was extremely embarrassing for the Bombay government which was in no mood to accede to the far-reaching demands of the reform party for it felt that to do so would mean that 'the control of administration of Bombay would be altogether withdrawn from the British Government'.129 Luckily for the Bombay government, a group soon emerged in Bombay which challenged the views of 'the reform party'. How far the Bombay government was responsible for the emergence of this group, it is difficult to say.
Circumstantial evidence, however, would suggest that the role of the Bombay government in this regard was not entirely passive. Prominent members of the group were V. J. Shankarseth, Narayan Vasudevji, Raghunath Narayan Khote, Dosabhai Framji.

126 B. 1835; joined East India Company's service 1854; retired as commissioner of central division, Bombay 1889; d. 1911.


128 Star of India, 1 July 1871.

129 Governor of Bombay, P. Wodehouse, quoted by a speaker (T. Lidbetter) at the rate-payers' meeting, 5 November 1872. Indian Statesman, 6 November 1872.

130 B. 1833; businessman; member of Bombay legislative council 1872-4; d. 1874.

131 B. 1821; businessman; d. 1891.

132 B. 1829; presidency magistrate in Bombay for many years; member of Bombay legislative council 1877-9; d. 1902.

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Shantaram Narayan, P. M. Mehta, Bairamji Jijibhai, A. Habibbhai, P. Naik, Robert Knight, and Colonel H. F. Hancock. As the leader of the group was V. J. Shankarseth and it met at his house, it was commonly known as 'the Shankarseth party' or 'the Shankarseth House party'. Members of 'the Shankarseth party' were distinguished by their personal friendship for the much maligned ex-municipal commissioner, Arthur Crawford, their hostility to some of the prominent leaders of the Bombay Association and the Ratepayers' Association, their vigorous advocacy of the interests of the property-owners, and their desire to support the government.

In October 1872 'the Shankarseth party' submitted a memorial to the Bombay government regarding the municipal bill then being debated in the local legislative council. The memorial differed in several important respects from those already submitted by the Bombay Association and the Ratepayers' Association. It acknowledged 'with feelings of gratitude the concession [of the elective principle] which, for the first time in the history of Municipal administration in Bombay, it is proposed to extend to the people of this town'. It did not concur in the objection 'urged against . . . [the bill] in some quarters that it will exclude a large portion of the intelligent classes (both European and native) from the administration of civic affairs'. It 'fully appreciate[d] the principle of vesting the executive power and responsibility in one individual officer, instead of in a board', though it suggested that the municipal commissioner should be generally under the supervision of the 'town council'. It complained that two-thirds of the municipal revenue were exacted from the property-owners, 'whilst large masses of merchants, traders, and men of profession' contributed little to the municipal revenue. In order to remedy this 'most cruel and unjust incidence upon the unfortunate few', the memorial suggested that 'a direct tax, graduated
according to the income of the people to be taxed, would be a very desirable substitute for the present occupiers' rates'.

Most of the prominent Indian members of 'the Shankarseth party' were also members of the Bombay Association. They were probably already dissatisfied with the working of the Bombay Association and the municipal question only provided them with an occasion to hoist their standard of revolt. Their separate memorial in connexion with the municipal bill could not but give great offence to those who controlled the Bombay Association. The latter regarded it as tending to undermine the position of the Bombay Association and to create a chink in the hitherto united popular front against the government on the question of municipal reform. They particularly objected to its proposal for levying a municipal income tax, because they feared that it would encourage the government of India to retain the general income tax.

133 B. 1821; businessman; member of Bombay legislative council 1868-72; d. 1890.

134 Merchant.

135 Merchant.

136 Senior deputy consulting engineer.

137 For the text of the memorial, see Indian Statesman, 17 October 1872.

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The leaders of 'the Shankarseth party' were talented and influential men, but they were working against the tide of public opinion in Bombay. Their counter-movement was condemned by almost the entire local press, both Indian and British. They were accused of acting from petty personal motives, of being apologists for the extravagant and oppressive regime of Crawford, of creating a schism in the public life of the city, of strengthening the hand of the government against the people, and of advocating the odious income tax.

Annoyed apparently at their being denounced and disowned by the Bombay public, the leaders of 'the Shankarseth party' decided to wreak vengeance upon their most formidable opponent and outspoken critic, Naoroji Fardunji. They tried to dislodge him from his post of secretary of the Bombay Association.138 The attempt failed and made them all the more unpopular in Bombay. They then withdrew from the Bombay Association and on 19 April 1873 formed a separate political organization called 'the Western India Association' having for its object 'the promotion of the interests of the people of this country . . . by keeping a constant watch upon all matters as well as of local as of imperial concern affecting the condition of the people of this presidency; . . . by the dissemination among the people of information touching matters of the nature aforesaid; . . . by representing to the authorities the views, wants, and wishes of the people in connection with the administration of the affairs of this presidency, and by urging measures conducive to the welfare of this presidency'.139 The following were elected office-bearers of the Association: the Honourable Sir Jamshedji Jijibhai,140 patron; Bajramji Jijibhai, honorary president; V. J. Shankarseth, president; the Honourable Narayan Vasudevji, D. M. Petit141 and A. Habibbhai,
vice-presidents. Later Raghunath Narayan Khote was appointed secretary of the Association. A list containing the names of about 150 persons who had enrolled themselves as members of the Association was published. The two most active members of the Association were—Shantaram Narayan and P. M. Mehta, the rising young barrister who had already made his mark in Bombay as a fearless and rather pugnacious public man.

The establishment of the Western India Association was greeted with a shout of disapproval by the local press. The Gujarat Mitra denounced the leaders of the Association as 'men struggling for power and influence' and 'inglorious slaves to self-interest'. The Native Opinion interpreted their conduct as an attempt 'to destroy the Bombay Association' and called it 'an act of faithlessness to the country'. 'We assure the Western India Association', added the Native Opinion, 'that we care not for Mr. Naoroji [Fardunji] or Mr. Mangaldas [Nathubhai] individually, and that if the Bombay Association could be in hands who would work it better, we should not care to see a change in its management. But before we consent to it, we must have a clear public ground for it, which is not even hinted at by our friends.' Even the Anglo-Indian Bombay Gazette, which was no friend of the Bombay Association, condemned the organizers of the Western India Association for launching 'a public association of national character' at a private meeting in a private house in the manner of a joint-stock company, and ascribed its origin to caste as well as political rivalries. The Bombay Gazette also drew attention to the fact that the new association was floated only one short week after the departure of Naoroji Fardunji to England. Condemnation of the Western India Association came even from far-off Calcutta. In a long article, entitled 'Political Associations in Bombay', which showed a remarkable familiarity with persons and public life in Bombay, the Indian Mirror wrote that the new association owed 'its existence to jealousy, rivalry and desire for self-advancement'. After comparing the situation in Bombay with that prevailing in Calcutta, the Indian Mirror sadly concluded: 'Unhappily there is no unanimity anywhere in Indian society, and the want of unanimity is caused, not by principle, but by selfishness and private pique.'

The only Anglo-Indian newspaper in Bombay which approved of the formation of the Western India Association was the Indian Statesman, whose editor, Robert Knight, was known to be one of the 'conspirators'. Replying to the criticism made of the new body, the Indian Statesman wrote on 24 April 1873: 'Reasonably dissatisfied with the dogged refusal of the so-called "Municipal
Reformers" to open their eyes to the real cause of the distress which the people are suffering from the Municipal rates, and believing that the leadership of Mr. Nowrojee Furdoonjee, in spite of the general honesty of his intentions, is fatal to any really effective movement for reform, the leaders of the educated part of the native community, for such they really are, have decided, it seems, upon forming a new Association of their own, that may more correctly represent their views than the Bombay Association with Mr. Nowrojee for Secretary could ever be expected to do. . . . The Western India Association represents a body of gentlemen who feel a natural resentment at having been betrayed by the joint incompetency of the press, and the so-called "reformers" into a false position. . . . So as to Imperial matters, they are convinced that the agitation against the enhancement of the land revenue got up by the English and native press of Bombay, is thoroughly uncalled for, and likely to do great harm; but with Mr. Nowrojee Furdoonjee on his way home to propagate if possible the mischief in England,—it is highly improper, it seems, for the better informed part of the community in Bombay to separate themselves therefrom. As to the Bombay Association, nineteen of the twenty years of its existence have been passed in profound sleep. It has been a long sham, and if the organization of

143 Native Opinion, 27 April 1873.

144 Bombay Gazette, 22 April 1873.

145 Indian Mirror, 1 May 1873, quoted in Times of India, 6 May 1873.

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dthis new body should elicit a little more activity from the former, it will do incidental, if no direct good.'146

The Western India Association proved to be a damp squib. Its establishment probably did spur the Bombay Association to greater activity for some time, but it led a lifeless existence itself and soon faded away. All that we know of its activities through the newspapers of the day is that it set up its own candidates for the municipal election in Bombay in August 1873,147 that it toyed with the idea of sending one of its members to England in order to give evidence before the parliamentary committee on Indian finance,148 and that it memorialized the viceroy against the Revenue Jurisdiction Bill in January 1874.149 The Jame Jamshed, which was perhaps the only Indian newspaper which was not unfriendly to the Western India Association, complained in October 1873 that the Association had failed miserably to live up to its promise and that, though it had been in existence for several months, it had not taken up a single question of public importance.150 Later in the same month local Gujarati papers reported that moves were afoot to amalgamate the Western India Association and the Bombay Association.151 These moves apparently failed. On 31 January 1874 the Times of India, in noticing the memorial of the Western India Association in connexion with the Revenue Jurisdiction Bill, wrote: 'The Western India Association, which has not been heard of for a long time, and even believed to be defunct, has, we find, revived in this instance to some good purpose . . . . '152 But the memorial in connexion with the Revenue Jurisdiction Bill in January 1874 represented not the revival but the swan-song of the Western India Association. No further activity of the Association is reported in
the contemporary press. At a meeting of the Bombay Association in June 1875, Mangaldas Nathubhai remarked that the 'new Association appears to have collapsed'.

The reasons why the Western India Association proved to be such an utter fiasco can only be guessed. It was born of party strife and it found its opponents too strong for itself. It failed to win the sympathy and confidence of the local public. The departure in May 1873 of Robert Knight to Calcutta deprived the Association of its main European counsellor. The untimely death of V. J. Shankarseth in October 1873 must have had a crippling effect on the Association for he was its real leader. The serious outbreak of Parsi-Muslim riots in Bombay in February 1874, which almost disrupted the public life of the town, appears to have dealt the coup de grace to the Association.

146 Indian Statesman, 24 April 1873.

147 Rast Goftar, cited in Times of India 9 July 1873; Native Opinion, 27 July 1873.

148 Times of India, 24 September 1873; Bombay Gazette, 4 October 1873.

149 Times of India, 31 January 1874.

150 Cited in ibid., 16 October 1873.

151 Ibid., 18 October 1873.

152 Ibid., 31 January 1874.


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The Western India Association failed, but it did great damage to the Bombay Association. After the split of 1872-3 things were never the same again with the old association. Early in November 1874 the Native Opinion felt compelled to deny a rumour originated by another local vernacular newspaper that the Bombay Association was 'for want of funds shortly to go out of existence'. The Native Opinion asserted that 'the Association is as healthy as it had ever been' and added: 'The want of funds has been one of its principal difficulties (like that of many other bodies amongst us) even from the time it came into existence; but the institution has, we trust, taken too deep a root amongst us to die for want of nourishment. It will be a day of shame and humility for boastful Bombay if ever the day comes, which sees the end of this most useful body on this side of India.'

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All was obviously not well with the Bombay Association. The defections of 1873 had impaired the finances, if not the prestige, of the Association. The secretary of the Association, Naoroji Fardunji, was away in England. H. Dada-bhai, who was appointed acting secretary, resigned in
July 1874, and K. T. Telang, a rising Maratha lawyer, was nominated to the office.155 Both Dadabhai and Telang were busy professional men who could not devote much time to the work of the Association.

Early in 1875 some members of the Bombay Association tried to get up a memorial to the government in support of the Gaikwar of Baroda, but the move was opposed by certain other members.156 The Association thus failed to speak out on an important question which was then agitating the minds of the people, and for this it was severely criticized, especially by the Marathi press.

Naoroji Fardunji returned from England in January 1875. In March 1875 he called a meeting of the managing committee of the Association and laid before it a brief report on the financial position of the Association which showed that the income of the Association had declined from Rs. 8,000 in 1868 to Rs. 3,3000 at the end of 1874. Fardunji pointed out that the present income of the Association was not enough to defray its expenses and asked the managing committee 'either to take some steps by which the finances of the Association could be placed on a satisfactory footing or to take the alternative course of dissolving the Association if it could not be put into hands more willing and able to manage it in its then impoverished state'. The managing committee appointed a subcommittee to consider the matter.157

On 26 June 1875 the Bombay Association held its 'annual' general meeting which had not been held since April 1873. Mangaldas Nathubhai, who chaired

154 Native Opinion, 8 November 1874.

155 Minutes of Proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the Bombay Association, and the Sixth and Seventh Reports of the Committee of Management for the Years 1873 and 1874 (1875), p. 7.

156 Bombay Gazette, 18 February 1875; Times of India, 19 February 1875.

157 Minutes of Proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the Bombay Association, and the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Annual Reports of the Committee of Management of the Years 1875, 1876 and 1877 . . . (1878), pp. 3-5.

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the meeting, in his opening remarks referred to the 'want of unanimity and the prevalence of party feeling, which disturbed the harmony of the community two years ago' and induced several former members to sever their connexion with the Bombay Association and to found another association. 'This new Association', he said, 'appears to have collapsed; but the Bombay Association has not recovered from the heavy pecuniary loss which this deplorable dissension has inflicted.' He also complained of the 'want of interest on the part of our fellow-countrymen, who ought not, at the present juncture, to slacken their efforts for advocating the interests and upholding the rights of the people of this country'. 'The Bombay Association', he added, 'has acquired a prestige and influence, which instead of being lost, ought to be kept up and supported
with renewed vigour at a time like the present, when there is a great necessity for bold and combined action on the part of our countrymen.' He concluded by appealing to the patriotism of Bombay not to allow the Association to languish for want of adequate support.158 Dadabhai Naoroji, who was present at the meeting, also alluded to 'the precarious state of our Association' and regretted that 'so many of our members have seceded from our ranks, and left us considerably weakened at the very time when we most need to show a bold front'.159

The Bombay Gazette described the proceedings of the meeting as 'funereal in their dullness' and wrote: 'The old vivacity of the Association had departed; the speeches made were of a most lugubrious kind—nobody was hopeful—everybody and everything seemed miserable and dreary. Emblems of mortality would have been fit ornaments for the walls of the Knight's house; mutes and coffin-bearers lounging about the compound would have seemed quite appropriate to the mournful occasion. The Chairman . . . made a melancholy speech. . . . In his mind's eye he seemed to see the Association dead, and with it much of the political influence which he used to enjoy; for the Bombay Association was always too dutiful during the most vigorous part of its life to think of expressing an opinion unless it was sure it was in harmony with the views of its patron. Mr. Nowrojee Furdoonjee's report spoke despondently about the prospects of the Association; and even Mr. Dadabhoy Nowrojee, who is generally sanguine and hopeful, and fears nothing from taking his curry to managing a State, seemed filled with unusual depression.' The paper accused the leaders of the Bombay Association of 'intrigue' and 'spurious patriotism' and concluded by making some interesting general remarks about the character of public associations in India. 'Associations of one kind or another', it wrote, 'have a tendency in India to become governed by cliques, and one clique after another gives way, according as the caste or social influence of a particular individual or clique prevails. Then the members of the Association begin to observe that it is only an instrument for the praise and glory of one or two men with whom the concerns of the public are a minor consideration to their own particular interests. The disaffected members drop off from the Association, and in time it becomes so attenuated that no persons are left in it except the adherents of a particular person. Perhaps owing to this process of disintegration, a number of minor associations are formed; but at all events the result is that the parent Association is ruined'. Before the last spark of life has actually fled from it, the members of the old Association may go into the highways and byways and cry out its praises; but neither this nor appeals to the patriotism of the passers-by avail them; for the public know that it exists not for them but for the benefit of one or two individuals who compose it.' The Bombay Gazette pointed out that the Bombay Association had already 'passed through the majority of these phases' and that it now existed 'more as a clique attached to . . . [Mangaldas Nathubhai] personally for various reasons than as a body properly representative of the native community'. The paper

158 Minutes of Proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the Bombay Association, and the Sixth and Seventh Reports of the Committee of Management for the Years 1873 and 1874 . . . (1875), pp. 5-6.

159 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
predicted that the friends of Sir Mangaldas Nathubhai would drop off in time when they found connexion with the Bombay Association of no further value to them, and then the once well-known Bombay Association would be represented by him 'in solitary state in his drawing room, or go out of existence altogether, clearing the way for younger, more vigorous, more useful, and more independent associations'.160

The Times of India defended the Bombay Association against the charge of disloyalty levelled against it by the Bombay Gazette. The Association was composed, said the paper, of 'all the native members of the Bombay Legislative Council and heads of different sections of the native community'—men who were undoubted in their loyalty. The Times of India described the Bombay Association as a 'useful and necessary' organization which had 'done much for the cause of Indian Reform' and added: 'The machinery [of the Association] may be open to improvement, and an infusion of fresh blood would doubtless give a breadth and tone to their deliberations and acts which would add much to their weight with the public.'161

In July-August 1875 the election to the Bombay municipality revived the old hostility in the town between the Mangaldas Nathubhai party and what was once known as 'the Shankarseth party'. The latter accused the former of pursuing 'aggressive tactics' and of adopting the English system of canvassing for its own candidates.162

In October 1875 Mangaldas Nathubhai and Naoroji Fardunji resigned their posts as president and secretary respectively of the Bombay Association. As we do not know for certain the reasons for their resignations, we are left only to surmise. The subcommittee appointed in March 1875 to suggest ways and means of improving the finances of the Association had been unable to make any suggestions 'except that of reduction in the office establishment'.163 The

160 Bombay Gazette, 30 June 1875.

161 Times of India, 3 July 1875.

162 Bombay Gazette, 21 July 1875.

163 Minutes of Proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the Bombay Association, and

monthly expenditure on the office establishment of the Association at the time was Rs. 447, of which the salary of the secretary alone accounted for Rs. 350. Any worthwhile economy in the expenditure on the office establishment of the Association, therefore, necessitated a reduction in the monthly salary of the-secretary, Naoroji Fardunji. At first the managing committee of the Association appears to have been unwilling to entertain the idea of reducing the salary of Naoroji Fardunji, for it knew that he was the life and soul of the Association and his services were worth any price. But when its attempts to increase the income of the Association by other means failed, it was reluctantly compelled to think in terms of reducing the salary of the secretary. Moreover, the committee had to take into account the fact that the public was critical of what it considered to be 'a handsome salary'164 paid to the secretary of the Association. The move to reduce the
salary of the secretary was apparently not liked by Naoroji Fardunji and his patron Mangaldas Nathubhai. They might even have interpreted it as designed to get rid of the present secretary, and decided to resign. Criticism of the leadership of Fardunji and Nathubhai had been growing for quite some time. The seceders from the Association probably demanded the heads of these two men as the price of their rejoining the Association. Some of the younger members of the Association were perhaps themselves dissatisfied with the secretary and the president. They had their own ideas about the organization and working of the Association. They seem to have become sick of the feud between the leaders of the older generation in the town. It might well be that Fardunji and Nathubhai judged aright the mood of the younger members and decided to leave the field to them. Whatever the reasons which prompted Fardunji and Nathubhai to resign their posts in October 1875, the event was regarded by some as marking the demise of the Bombay Association. The Jame Jamshed spoke of the 'death' of the Association and attributed it to 'defective organization and the predominance in its constitution of the apathetic element'. The paper, however, called upon 'the rising youth of Bombay to establish another Association with similar objects and aims'.

But the Bombay Association was not yet really dead. The managing committee of the Association 'accepted with regret' in early 1876 the resignations of the president and the secretary and set about reorganizing the Association. It persuaded D. M. Petit, a wealthy Parsi mill-owner, to become president of the Association. It retrenched the expenditure on the office establishment of the Association. The duties of the secretary were divided between a half-time secretary (Y. V. Athalye) on a monthly salary of Rs. 100 during the first year and Rs. 150 after that time, and a treasurer-cum-accountant (A. F. Moos) on a monthly allowance of Rs. 100, including the charges for collection of subscription, and office rent. By this arrangement, a clear saving of Rs. 200 per month in the first year and Rs. 150 after that was secured and the services of two distinct officers were obtained. The managing committee of the Association was reorganized so as to include active, not ornamental, members. Many of the seceders of 1873 rejoined the Association. In April 1876 the Bombay Association resumed its labours.168

During the next two years the Bombay Association attended to several questions of public importance. It memorialized the Bombay government regarding the reduction of trains between

\[164\text{ See Jame Jamshed, cited in Bombay Gazette, 14 September 1872.}\]
\[165\text{ Cited in Times of India, 8 December 1875.}\]
\[166\text{ B. 1851; lawyer; joined Baroda state service 1887; d. 1894.}\]
\[167\text{ Businessman and author.}\]
Bombay and Poona, the Cotton Frauds Act, the fares over certain public ferries, the Civil Procedure Code Bill, and the Abkari Bill. It also memorialized the government of India regarding the Presidency Magistrates Bill, the Indian Railway Bill, the heavy stamp duty, the ban on vessels of less than 300 tons from carrying salt, and the condition of Indian immigrants in Mauritius. The Association presented a congratulatory address to the Queen on her assumption of the title of 'Empress of India' in 1876.169 'Following the example of Bengal and the North-Western Provinces', the Association called a public meeting of the inhabitants of Bombay on 15 December 1877 in the Framji Cowasji Institute Hall regarding the civil service question. The meeting brought together leaders of all sections of the Indian community in Bombay and was presided over by Sir Mangaldas Nathubhai. It adopted a petition to the House of Commons which demanded the raising of the maximum age for the Indian civil service examination from 19 to 22, a rearrangement of subjects to be offered at the examination, and the holding of the examination simultaneously in India and in England.170 On 19 February 1878 Bombay witnessed another public meeting, this time to protest against the reimposition of the licence tax. As the Bombay government refused to allow the use of the town hall for the meeting, it was held in the pavilion of a visiting American circus, 'under the protection of the American flag', and was 'unprecedently large, even for Bombay'.171 Speakers at the meeting, both European and Indian, criticized bitterly the taxation policy of the Indian government and coupled their criticism with the demand for representative government. The meeting attracted widespread attention. The Times of India wrote that the meeting 'will have an historical significance far beyond that of a mere protest against taxation . . . . It was nothing more nor less than the first public demand for representative government in India.'172 The Poona Observer remarked: 'There is a great shaking and awakening among the dry bones of the population

168 Minutes of Proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the Bombay Association, and the Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Annual Reports of the Committee of Management for the Years 1875, 1876 and 1877 . . . , pp. 3-5.

169 Ibid., pp. 5-20.

170 Times of India, 17 December 1877; Bombay Gazette, 17 December 1877.

171 For the proceedings of the meeting, see Times of India, 20 February 1878.

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of India, and the time has arrived when the spirit of political life is being infused into them . . . the four winds of education, peace, common justice and the rights of a British subject have at length breathed on them and now they "stand upon their feet an exceeding great army".'173

Unfortunately, the Bombay Association proved itself unequal to the task of canalizing this growing ferment. The 'monster meeting' of 19 February 1878 in Bombay was neither due to the initiative taken by the Bombay Association nor held under its auspices, though the Association, through its secretary, expressed its sympathy with the object of the meeting.174 In fact, a speaker at the meeting—Gokuldas Jagmohandas175—who was himself a member of the managing committee of the Bombay Association, made certain remarks which indicate that the inadequacy
of the Bombay Association was already being felt. He said that it was extremely desirable to form 'a People's Association composed of all classes, Europeans and natives, for the purpose of representing to our rulers our wants and grievances'. 'I am led to make this suggestion', he added, 'on the ground that in the non-existence of any such body, the wants and grievances of the people of this side of India are not timely and fairly represented. Were it not for the public spirit of the promoters of this movement . . . the action of our rulers in imposing an unjustifiable and iniquitous tax would have passed without our protest.'

The Jame Jamshed strongly supported Jagmohandas's suggestion for the formation of a 'People's Association' in Bombay and was more outspoken in its criticism of the Bombay Association. 'The so-called Bombay Association', it wrote, 'is practically useless, and it would be difficult at this time of the day to resuscitate that almost defunct body.' The paper contrasted the 'apathy' and 'backwardness of Bombay' with the energy and enterprise of Poona and called upon the citizens of Bombay to organize a public body similar to the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha. But the call was not heeded and the citizens of Bombay continued to cling to their 'indolent ways' for a few more years.

In March 1878 the Poona Sarvajanik invited the Bombay Association and other public bodies in Bombay to co-operate with it in organizing a 'Native Press Conference' in the presidency, similar to that already organized in Bengal. The Conference met in Bombay on 29 March 1878, and though some members of the Bombay Association did, as individuals, take part in it, the Association as such appears to have had nothing to do with it. While the Calcutta Indian Association and the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha were bold enough to hold public meetings in protest against the infamous Vernacular Press Act,

173 Poona Observer, 28 February 1878.

174 Times of India, 20 February 1878.

175 Businessman.

176 Times of India, 20 February 1878.

177 Cited in ibid., 1 March 1878.

177 Ibid., 26 March 1878. See also below, p. 204.

179 Ibid., 30 March 1878.

180 The situation in India, especially in the Bombay presidency, was undoubtedly critical at the time. There was a great deal of alarm and discontent in the country because of complications in the Near East, famine, the licence tax and the Vernacular Press Act. A war
between Britain and Russia seemed imminent. In Surat the agitation against the licence tax led to serious rioting in the first week of April 1878. Bombay officials were extremely suspicious of any political movement in the presidency. Nevertheless the pusillanimous conduct of the Bombay Association in first postponing and later altogether abandoning its proposed demonstration against the Vernacular Press Act, though hailed as 'a graceful act of native loyalty'\(^1\) by Anglo-Indians, was not calculated to enhance its prestige in the eyes of the Indian public.

Later in the year the managing committee of the Bombay Association decided not to associate itself with the movement for raising public subscriptions on behalf of the two prominent Surat editors who, though innocent, had been the unfortunate victims of the official 'Reign of Terror' in that town, on the ostensible ground that such a movement did not fall within the scope of the objects for which the Association was established. Not unnaturally, the decision was condemned by the public. 'The Committee of Management of the Bombay Association', commented the Indu Prakash, 'has been often known for its apathy, but we had never thought it would earn a name for eccentricity by putting a far-fetched construction on "the objects of the Association".' The paper argued that as a public body the Bombay Association was bound to look to and to defend public interests whenever they were violated or wronged, as in the case of the Surat editors. Moreover, nothing prevented the leaders of the Association from interesting themselves in the vindication of a public cause in their capacities of public men, if not as members of a public body.\(^2\)

On 1 August 1878 a general meeting of the Bombay Association was held at the residence of the president, D. M. Petit, to adopt the reports of the committee of management for the years 1875, 1876 and 1877. The proceedings of the meeting indicate that the Association was far from being in a healthy condition. The total membership of the Association was 66, of which only twenty-one were present at the meeting. The income of the Association from membership subscriptions for the years 1876-7 amounted to Rs. 4,585, while the expenditure incurred by the Association during the same period came to Rs. 6,350.\(^3\)

Towards the end of 1878 Bombay was hit by a severe commercial crisis which

\(^{180}\) Ibid., 1 April 1878.

\(^{181}\) Ibid.

\(^{182}\) Quoted in Bombay Gazette, 20 November 1878.

\(^{183}\) Minutes of Proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the Bombay Association, and the Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Annual Reports of the Committee of Management for the Years 1875, 1876 and 1877 . . . ., pp. 5, cii-ix.

\(^{186}\) apparently administered the finishing stroke to the Bombay Association. Practically nothing was heard of the activity of the Association during the next six-seven years. Presiding over a public meeting held in Bombay on 3 May 1879 to protest against the abolition of the import duties on
cotton, Sir Mangaldas Nathubhai regretted that the Bombay Association had 'again been allowed to slumber'. He emphasized 'the want of a powerful and efficient organization' in Bombay and exhorted his listeners either to resuscitate and place on a sound footing the Bombay Association or to establish a new organization and provide it with the means necessary for conducting its operations with ability and vigour. 'Let them look', he was reported to have said, 'at the good which the Sarvajanik Sabha of Poona was doing and what success it had already achieved. Should they, the inhabitants of the chief presidency town, quietly submit to be surpassed by their brethren of the Deccan?' Bombay had to wait until January 1885 for the establishment of a really 'powerful and efficient organization'. In the interval the Bombay Branch of the East India Association maintained a semblance of organized political activity in the city.

In the nineteenth century Bombay was, like Calcutta, a city of recent growth. Both cities were the creation of British rule. But, while Calcutta became the hub and heart of Bengal, overshadowing all the other cities in the eastern presidency, Bombay never occupied the same pre-eminent position in the western presidency. The reasons for this are not far to seek. Calcutta was the capital not only of Bengal but of India as a whole. Bombay was the capital only of the western presidency and it had to share that honour with Poona, the old capital of the Peshwas. Calcutta, though the capital of India, was essentially a Bengali city and most of the important members of the aristocracy in Bengal—landed, commercial and intellectual—resided there. Bombay had no such distinctive character. It was of all Indian cities the most cosmopolitan. Both the eastern and western presidencies were composed of at least three or four distinct regions, each with its own separate language and traditions. Neither Calcutta nor Bombay could, therefore, become the focus of the territorial, linguistic and cultural loyalties of the entire presidency of which it happened to be the capital. But Calcutta had at least one advantage over Bombay: it belonged to Bengal proper and the Bengalis looked upon it as their city. Bombay did not belong even to a part of the western presidency and no linguistic group looked upon it as their city. What Calcutta was to the Bengalis, Poona was to the Maharashtrians, Ahmedabad to the Gujaratis, and Karachi to the Sindhis. Except, perhaps, the Parsis no people in the western presidency looked upon Bombay as their city. Bombay was thus in the western presidency but not of it, or even of a part of it. 'The position of Bombay', said a memorial of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha to the government in 1872, 'has been geographically and historically unique.'

184 Times of India, 5 May 1879.

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and isolated, so that notwithstanding the beneficial measures that have been introduced within the last fifty years, with a view to connect it physically, commercially, and intellectually with the great interior, the Island still preserves its separate and peculiar character.' Bombay's large population, its immense wealth, its ever-expanding trade and commerce, its lead in industrialization, and its position as a port, metropolis and university town gave it great influence and prestige. But in the intellectual, social and political life of western India Bombay never enjoyed the same unquestioned supremacy which Calcutta enjoyed in eastern India.
The greatest rival of Bombay in the western presidency in the nineteenth century, not in the commercial but in the cultural and political spheres, was Poona. There was—and still is—a marked difference in the character of the two towns. It was thus summed up in 1881 by a writer in the Quarterly Review: '...while Bombay is anglicized, Poona remains sullenly native and almost anti-English.'186 The Mahratta of Poona not only approved of this remark, but also embellished it with its own comments. It wrote: '...have not many of the leading gentlemen of Bombay taken a peculiar fancy to trousers and boots; do not the streets of Bombay present the appearance more of an English town than a native one; do we not observe that in Bombay there is less of that dash and pluck than there is at Poona; does not Bombay almost worship Englishmen? In short, in eating, drinking, playing and in almost every other thing Bombay shows more of an English town than Poona does.' The Mahratta maintained that, though Poona had remained 'sullenly native', it had made great progress so far as 'education, mode of living and thought, and lastly political ambition' were concerned. 'Poona', said the paper, 'proportionately claims as many graduates, as many political thinkers, nay more, as many writers, as many speakers, as many authors and everything as many as Bombay does; and we are certainly proud that while this capital of the Western Presidency has availed itself of every opportunity of gaining a step in the advance, it has not receded—if not actually advanced—a single step in patriotism. The instinct of nationality, the pluck of the Mahratta, the zeal of the Hindoo, the intelligence of the Brahmin, the self-esteem of the individual and lastly the fire of patriotism are all our own. Would that we do not surrender to the influence of angliciza-tion; would that the solemn scenery of the Deccan that exercises a healthy influence on [our] patriotism is not changed; would that we continue to make a progress in political thought without giving even an inch of what we proudly call our own; would that Poona continues "sullenly native" in the sense in which we understand it.'187

185 Memorial of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, dated 28 July 1872, demanding an equitable representation in the local legislative council for the various regions and interests in the presidency and objecting to the practice of generally nominating men from Bombay city as additional members of the council. Native Opinion, 18 August 1872.

186 Sir Richard Temple's India in 1880', Quarterly Review, July 1881, p. 68.

187 Mahratta, 21 August 1881.

188

Poona was a Maratha city par excellence, and the Marathas were one of the great bugbears of the British in India. A hardy, intelligent and proud people, the Marathas had a highly developed sense of freedom and patriotism. Warren Hastings had noted in 1784: '. . . the Marattahs possess alone, of all the people of Hindostan and Decan, a principle of national attachment, which is strongly impressed on the minds of all individuals of the nation, and would probably unite their chiefs, as in one common cause, if any great danger were to threaten the general state.'188 The proud memories of the valour of Shivaji and the glorious days of the Maratha empire continued to haunt the city of Poona even after the defeat of the last of the Peshwas, Baji Rao II, at the hands of the British in June 1818. In 1860, when the proposal to make Poona the capital of the western presidency was being discussed, the Bombay Times and Standard, then edited by Robert
Knight, remarked: 'There are special grounds of objection to making the Peishwa's capital the seat of Government in Western India. Traditions are slow in dying out of any people, and the glory of the old Maratha empire survives in the memory of Maharashtra to this hour. . . . Our rule is popular almost in no part of India, and the extent to which the movement in the North-West [in 1857-8] was sympathized with throughout the Deccan, will hardly be credited when it comes to be made known. One vast conspiracy to overthrow our rule bound together all classes above the Ghats, and the reign of a new Peishwa in Poona, was the fond dream of half Southern India. True policy suggests that instead of raising the Maratha capital into importance, the focus, as it is, of Brahminism and disaffection—we should allow it to sink into insignificance, and if possible starve the traditions associated therewith.'189

The Bombay Times and Standard was faithfully reflecting the deep-rooted apprehension and antipathy with which most Britons viewed Poona. It was the focus of Maratha patriotism and a centre of Brahmanical influence. The Maratha Brahmins, particularly those of the Chitpavan variety, who dominated Poona, were considered by the British to be ambitious, intriguing and incurably hostile to the raj. Captain James Grant Duff190 had written in 1819 that they were 'generally discontented, and only restrained by fear from being treasonable and treacherous'.191 Sixty years later Richard Temple, then governor of Bombay, remarked: ' . . . never have I known in India a national and political ambition, so continuous, so enduring, so far reaching, so utterly impossible for us to satisfy, as that of the Brahmins of Western India . . . . They think that as the same mountains and fastnesses still stand to favour uprisings, and the same climatic conditions still exist to sustain martial qualities of a certain sort—so the Hindoo polity, perhaps without the Hindoo religion, will one day reassert itself over the white conquest.'192


189 Bombay Times and Standard, 17 October 1860.

190 B. 1789; joined East India Company's military service 1805; resident of Satara 1818-22; d. 1858.


189

How the spirit of Poona differed from that of Bombay is exemplified by an episode in 1883. In July of that year the Indu Prakash, the famous Anglo-Marathi weekly of Bombay, wrote that those Indians who dreamt of the period when their country would be free and self-governing indulged in a speculation which was as wild as it was unprofitable, and that given a good and impartial rule, it did not matter whether that rule was foreign or native.193 This elicited an angry rejoinder from 'A Maratha Brahmin', obviously of Poona, who wrote to the editor of the Indu Prakash that the latter's remark had 'struck many of us here in the Deccan with much surprise'
and that 'no public writer in the Deccan would ever venture to make [it] even in a fourth-rate paper'. He asserted that the glorious traditions and history of their country might be forgotten 'in the hybrid and bania atmosphere of Bombay', but they were still remembered in the Deccan and 'there are among us men, who in their boyhood breathed the free air of national independence'. The correspondent added that the people of India were 'not such slavish creatures' as to accept the 'most untrue and unnatural dictum' that good government was preferable to self-government, and he quoted approvingly the remark of a writer in a recent issue of the Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha to the effect that though the aegis of British rule was a necessity for the present, a nation of 250 millions could never be permanently held down by sheer force, and sooner or later in God's providence and under the encouragement of British example and discipline, the people of India must rise to the status of a self-governed community and learn to control their own affairs. A people who, the correspondent maintained, had produced Janak, Ramchandra, Shivaji, Mahadji, Madhav Rao and Fadnavis could not be said to be wanting in the art of government and in men able to govern and guide the destinies of a free and independent nation. He concluded by saying: 'All men are born free, but a people, who, at a given time and place, happens to possess some advantage in energy, organization, honor, &c. over other races, becomes, for the time being and only while the advantage lasts, a dominant and ruling race. The people of this country had their days of superiority and dominance, not many years since, and the torch of freedom, though it now glimmers before the dawn of superior light, is most certainly destined, under the rule of a people pre-eminent for the love of, and sympathy with, freedom, to revive and shed a glorious lustre over the land.'

Poona was among the last of the British conquests in India. And although defeated, it had refused to surrender to the victor its unconquerable will. Its elite, the Chitpavan community, was marked for its manliness, love of freedom, pride in its past and faith in its future. Richard Temple noted in 1879: 'Like as the Mahrattas under Brahminical guidance once beat the Mahomedan conquerors

192 Temple to Lytton, 9 July 1879, Temple Papers, MSS. Eur. F. 86/5.

193 Indu Prakash, 23 July 1883.

194 Ibid., 30 July 1883.

bit by bit, inch by inch, out of the Deccan, so the Chitpawans imagine that some day more or less remote, the British shall be made to retire into that darkness where the Moghuls have retired. Any fine morning an observant visitor may ride through the streets of Poona and mark the scowl with which so many persons regard the stranger. . . . What would happen if British Rule were to be blown into the "air", is a question which I know constantly occurs to the Native mind. Most Natives when this question crops up feel the answer to be so hopeless, that they turn from it in dismay, and return to acquiescence in the present order of things. Some Natives think otherwise, however, and are not afraid to face that question, thinking that they could manage India quite well without the British and could organize states and confederacies just as they did 150 years
ago. And these Natives are the Brahmins of Western India, especially the "Concanust" Brahmins.

Bombay had the advantage of wealth and westernization over Poona. But, while Bombay, with its heterogeneous population, found it difficult to act promptly, unitedly and effectively in matters political, Poona, with its compact Hindu population led by the Brahmans, suffered from no such drawback. Moreover, Poona sent out its educated young men into offices everywhere throughout western and central India, including the princely states. Poona thus wielded greater influence in the interior than Bombay ever did. It was, however, not until the 1870s that Poona really made use of its advantageous position and established itself as a centre of constitutional agitation in the western presidency, outrivalling even Bombay. By the 1870s Poona had not only caught up with Bombay in the fields of English education and journalistic activity, its brain drain had also been to some extent checked, thanks partly to the anti-Maratha-Brahman policy adopted by the Bombay government regarding employment in the public services, especially after the revolt of 1857. More and more of Poona's fast multiplying population of English-educated young men were now forced to stay at home and take to independent professions such as journalism, law and teaching. These men contributed to the growth of public life—and of discontent—in Poona.

As we have already noted, Poona was the first city in western India to follow the lead of the British Indian Association of Calcutta. But the Poona Deccan Association, founded early in 1852, never got off the ground. Fifteen years were to elapse before Poona made another serious attempt at political organization. The stimulus for this latest attempt was obviously provided by the recent establishment of the East India Association in London. Poona once again stole a march on Bombay and in the spring of 1867 — more than six months before the resuscitation of the Bombay Association — organized a political body called the Poona Association or (in Marathi) the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha. The avowed objects of the Association were: to communicate to the government the wishes and opinions of the people regarding the laws passed or proposed to be passed by the government; to suggest ways and means of improving the functioning of the local municipality; to interpret the acts and policies of the authorities to the public; to promote amity and understanding between the rulers and the ruled; and to attend to various other matters of public interest. The officebearers of the Association were: Ramchandra Ganesh Natu, president; Vasudev Ramchandra Dhamdhere and Baburao Krishna Gokhale, vice-presidents; Kashinath Parashuram Gadgil and Kashinath Govind Natu, secretaries for work in English; Kashinath Trimbak Khare and Naro Appaji Godbole, secretaries for work in Marathi; and Vishnudas Harkrishnadas, treasurer. Most of the 50-odd members of the

195 Temple to Lytton, 9 July 1879, MSS. Eur. F. 86/5.

196 See above, pp. 53-4

197 Native Opinion, 21 April, 12 May 1867.

198
Association, representing various castes, creeds and professions, belonged to Poona, though a few also came from other places such as Bombay, Kalyan, Karhad and Nagpur. Among them we find the names of such prominent public figures as Gopalrao Hari Desmukh and Kashinath Balkrishna Marathe. Members of the Association were required to pay a monthly subscription of 1 rupee, 8 annas, or 4 annas, and were accordingly divided into three different categories. The Poona Association did not thrive. Addressing a meeting of the Association early in 1868 on the subject of the reform of the Poona municipality, Baburao Krishna Gokhale remarked that, though the Association had done some useful work in the beginning, it had been so inactive ‘during the last three or four months’ that people had begun to enquire whether it was alive or dead. He hailed the occasion as marking the revival of the Association. But the attempt to revive the Poona Association seems to have failed. Not only do we have no information about the activity of the Association in the months which followed, a report of the managing committee of the Bombay Association, dated 26 June 1869, even tells us that ‘several native gentlemen of Poona have joined the [Bombay] Association’. This would suggest that by the middle of 1869 the Poona Association was already dead.

Undaunted by their repeated failures, the public men of Poona soon made...

198 Poona Association Hanje Punyantil Sarvajanik Sabha Hya Sabheche Niyam (1867), pp. 4-5.

199 B. 1839; large landholder; d. 1876.

200 Large landholder.

200 Lawyer; d. 1883.

202 Lawyer?

203 B. 1839; lawyer and later teacher; d. 1896.

204 B. 1820; journalist; d. 1898.

205 Teacher?

206 Merchant.

207 B. 1844; joined Bombay judicial service and retired as subordinate judge 1901; Prarthana Samajist; d. 1918.

208 Poona Association Hanje Punyantil Sarvajanik Sabha Hya Sabheche Niyam, pp. 10-12.


a fresh attempt to organize a political association. On 2 April 1870 they launched the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha. The Sabha was intended to be 'a mediating body between the government and the people] which may afford to the latter facilities for knowing the real intention and objects of Government as well as adequate means for securing their rights, by making a true representation of the real circumstances in which they are placed'.211 There was nothing unusual in the declared objective of the Sabha, but the basis of its organization was rather novel and different from that of the other existing political associations in India. In order to become a member of the Sabha a person was required to produce a mukhtiarnama (power of attorney) signed by at least fifty adults, authorizing him to speak and act on their behalf in all public matters.212 An attempt was thus made to give the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha a representative character and no ensure that the members of the Sabha enjoyed the confidence of the people. Within four months of its launching the Sabha had about 100 members who had acquired mukhtiarnamas from about 7,000 people.213 By June 1871 the number of the members of the Sabha had risen to about 140 and that of their constituents to about 17,000.214 Each member of the Sabha was also required to take an oath that he would impartially and according to the best of his judgement and abilities perform the duties of the Sabha which might be assigned to him.215

According to its constitution the Sabha was to take up the following subjects:


212 Ibid., p. 6. How the Sabha came to adopt this novel mode of membership is explained by the Bombay Star of India, 9 May 1871, deriving its information from an article published in the Indu Prakash in the early part of the same year: '... the cause of its [Sabha's] origin was the management of the fund, we believe about Rs. 20,000, which the Government is in the habit of annually granting to the Parvati temple. Certain trustees were appointed to receive this money and manage its distribution. But some domestic quarrels between the son and grandson of one of the principal trustees having broken out, the funds were mismanaged . . . . The Hindu residents at Poona became clamorous about this mismanagement, and the more earnest of them wished to adopt some method by which redress could be obtained . . . . They resolved that a representation of their grievances should be made to the Government, and in order to make the petition represent the opinions of the whole community they adopted the following method for doing so. They set to work by inducing each caste to assemble and nominate some of its members as its representatives. Having succeeded in obtaining their nominees, they gave a legal form to the whole of the proceeding which might be deemed necessary, by granting to their representatives powers of attorney, to act on behalf of the community, on eight-rupee stamp papers. When these documents were ready they were circulated for the signatures of the adult male members of the respective castes. But it occurred to the promoters of the scheme, whether other subjects besides that one which was the immediate cause of the Sabha's formation, should not be taken into consideration at the same time as the matters relating to the Parvati grievance. . . . The end of these movements has been the formation of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha . . . . ' See also Native Opinion, 1 August 1880, and V.M. Potdar, 'The History of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha', Jubilee Number of the Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, April 1920, pp. 68-75.
all bills of regulations and acts published in the government gazette; all bills of regulations, acts, circulars and rules which were in force or which might come into force; all such regulations, acts, circulars or rules, the passing of which was essential to the welfare of the people; the operations of the municipalities; the management of devasthans (religious endowments); and all matters connected with the public weal. The Sabha was debarred by its constitution from taking up any matter involving the interest or injury of any individual or individuals, or any religious subjects or disputes. To defray the expenses of the Sabha each member was required to pay annually, on an average, one day's income. The affairs of the Sabha were to be managed by an elected committee. A meeting of all the constituents of the Sabha, that is the electors of mukhtiars, was to be held annually.216

An examination of the available lists of members and office-bearers of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha during the first ten years of its existence reveals some interesting facts.217 The Sabha represented the wealth and intelligence of the local community. It was composed of sardars, landholders, businessmen, retired government servants, lawyers and teachers. Most of the members of the Sabha were Hindus. This was to be expected, for Hindus formed the bulk of the local population. But the Sabha also had a fair number of Parsi, Muslim and Christian members. Of the Hindu members of the Sabha, a vast majority were Brahmans. This, too, was to be expected, for Brahmans were the traditional as well as the modern elite of Poona and of the Deccan generally. The president and vice-presidents of the Sabha were invariably first-class chiefs, such as those of Aundh, Akalkot, Jamkhindi, Jat, Karandwad and Sangli. But these appear to have been mere figure-heads. The managing committee of the Sabha was dominated by retired government servants and lawyers. Its most active members were G. V. Joshi, S. H. Sathe218 and S.H. Chiplonkar.219

During the first two years of its existence the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha 'discussed a variety of subjects, most of them of a local character'.220 Representations were made to the various authorities on such matters as the procedure for the recovery of costs in revenue cases, the reduction of liquor shops in the city of Poona, the management of the Parvati temple endowment, the application of the funds contributed by the Deccan chiefs in honour of the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh for the establishment of a law class in Poona, the unsatisfactory state of the accounts of the David Sassoon poor asylum of Poona and of the Alundi municipality, the desirability of opening a vernacular school in the Poona cantonment, the recent rise in taxation, the desirability of appointing an Indian judge to the 216 Ibid., pp. 11-15.
The arrival in Poona in November 1871 of Mahadev Govind Ranade, then a subordinate judge, appears to have infused new life and vigour into the Sabha. Ranade's is probably the greatest name in the history of India in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. He was a versatile man—a scholar, a judge, an educationist, a religious and social reformer, an economist and a politician. One of the earliest and most illustrious products of 'Bombay university, Ranade had already made his mark in Bombay as a religious and social reformer. He had also been an active member of the Bombay Association and of the Bombay Branch of the East India Association. In August 1871 he had projected a new political body in Bombay, called the 'Town Association'. He was an indefatigable worker, a clear thinker, a prolific writer, a compelling orator, and, above all, a great patriot. Earnest and erudite, a visionary who did not lack a sense of realism, a traditionalist in outward appearance but at heart a great modernizer, Ranade was soon to establish himself as the leading moderate and liberal thinker of his time in India. Ranade was a government servant, but he took a keen interest in public affairs. Though he was hardly thirty years of age when he arrived in Poona late in 1871, Ranade soon became the mentor of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha.

While Ranade was the brain behind the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, its life and soul was Ganesh Vasudev Joshi, the real founder of the Sabha and its secretary for many years. Joshi was a pleader in the local court. He was not very highly educated, but he was a born agitator and leader. Like the clothes which he always wore, Joshi was homespun. The devotion and zeal with which he exerted himself on behalf of the Sabha earned him the sobriquet of the 'Sarvajanik Kaka' ('Uncle of the People'). Joshi evolved a style of political agitation which was a curious amalgam of the old and the new, of the indigenous and the foreign, and was later followed by many other Maratha politicians, notably Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Ranade and Joshi combined to build the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha into one of the foremost political associations in India. In December 1873 the Indian Statesman of Bombay wrote: 'The Poona Sarvajanik Sabha is the leading Association of the progressive party in Western India, and the secretaries to Government have, we should think, painful recollections of its interminable memorials on every subject that
could be made an excuse for asserting rights or remonstrating against wrongs. No koonbee can
have a grievance against Government and want the championship of the great Sabha.'224

221 Ibid.

222 See above, p. 173.

223 B. 1856; teacher and journalist; jailed for sedition 1897-8 and 1908-14; d. 1920.

224 Indian Statesman, 10 December 1873.

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But the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha did not content itself with memorializing the authorities. It had
already taken the lead in organizing a swadeshi movement in the Deccan.225 In 1872—and
again in 1876-8—the Sabha organized famine relief in the Deccan and won the approbation of
both the people and the government.226 In 1872 the Sabha appointed a subcommittee of its
members to conduct an elaborate inquiry into the condition of the agricultural classes in the
Deccan. Agents of the Sabha travelled in the interior, interviewed people, and collected a great
deal of information regarding prices, wages, indebtedness, the pressure of the land revenue and
of increased local and central taxation, and the working of the forest laws. This information was
sifted and analysed by the subcommittee of the Sabha and the results were published as a
pamphlet227 which, according to the Times of India, bore the 'impress of veracity and sound
judgement'.228 In 1873 the Sabha combined with the Bombay Association in sending Naoroji
Fardunji to London as their delegate to give evidence before the parliamentary committee on
Indian finance.229 Like many other important political associations in India, the Poona
Sarvajanik Sabha conveyed in 1872 its thanks to Henry Fawcett, M.P., for his services to
India.230 In 1874 the Sabha raised funds for the relief of the famine-stricken population of
Bengal.231 In 1875 the Sabha submitted a petition to the House of Commons, signed by 21,713
persons, demanding the direct representation of India in Parliament.232 The petition complained
of the scant attention paid to India by Parliament and of the prevalence therein of one-sided
official views on Indian questions. It referred to the presence in the French and Portuguese
assemblies of representatives from their respective possessions in India, and demanded that 16
persons from British India (4 each from Bengal, Bombay and Madras, and 2 each from the
North-Western Provinces and the Punjab), elected by those who paid at least Rs. 50 per year in
direct taxes, should sit in Parliament.

The Poona Sarvajanik Sabha did much to stimulate political activity in western India. Thanks to
the example and exertions of the Sabha, political associations grew up in many places in the
presidency, especially in the Deccan.

These associations were closely modelled on the Sabha and maintained regular contact with it.
The leaders of the Sabha made a systematic and extensive use of the platform in order to arouse
patriotic feelings among the masses. Not only did they themselves travel up and down the
country addressing public gatherings, they also secured the services of educated men for the
purpose of
preaching patriotism to the masses at street corners and market-places. These lectures invariably dealt with the fallen condition of the motherland and the means to ameliorate it. They were often accompanied with kirtans (songs) specially composed for the occasion.233 In July 1878 the Sabha launched its Quarterly Journal which published the proceedings of the Sabha and contained ably written articles—many of them from the pen of Ranade—on the more important political, social and economic issues of the day, especially those 'upon which public opinion has to be created and formed before any formal action can be taken in respect of them by the Sabha'.234

From 1876 on the Sabha took an active interest in organizing arbitration courts (nyaya sabhas) in the Deccan for the private settlement of civil disputes without having recourse to the ordinary courts of justice.235 The object of the Sabha in organizing these arbitration courts was two-fold: to revive the ancient institution of the panchayat, and to curb the growing evil of expensive and often ruinous litigation. The lead given by the Sabha was followed by its branch and affiliated associations in the interior and arbitration courts were established at many places in the Deccan, but they do not appear to have been a great success.

As a political association in the ancient capital of the Peshwas and conducted with energy and ability by Maratha Brahmans, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha had always been suspect in the eyes of many Anglo-Indians. The leading part played by the Sabha in the agitation against the deposition of Gaikwar Malharrao and the threatened annexation of Baroda in 1875 served to heighten the latter's suspicion. Anglo-Indian papers accused the Sabha of disaffection and suggested that the government should authorize an inquiry into its working. What particularly worried them about the Sabha was its 'representative' character and its claim to speak on behalf of the people of the Deccan. The Englishman, for example, wrote: 'It is not too much to say that this body [the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha], backed by its branches or affiliated societies at Sholapur
and other stations, threatens to grow into an imperium in imperio in the Dekkan—a power whose interests are not necessarily indentical with those of the responsible administrators, and whose action is sometimes antagonistic to them. . . . [The Poona Sarvajanik Sabha] boasts that each of its members represents the votes, and is entitled to interpret the political wishes and views of two thousand men . . . a society thus constituted would exercise immense weight with a section of the press in England. That influence would act primarily on the Government here, and would prove capable of being held in terrorem over a weak or tottering Viceroy . . . the Government lies under a very heavy responsibility to prevent such societies from growing into a danger to the State. Popular representation is a sharp weapon, and a very perilous one to play with. It is well to realize that we are not yet prepared to govern India by means of popular representation,"

233 Dnyan Prakash, cited in Indian Statesman, 21 May 1873.

234 'Notice to Subscribers', Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, July 1878.

235 Poona Observer, 4 March 1876.

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and that anything which approaches to be a bona fide representative body will necessarily exercise a power incompatible with the existing system of administration. If a society could carry out the programme above indicated, and could state with truth that such of its members represented a certain number of thousands of votes, and that they were pretty fairly drawn from the different districts of a province, it would very soon begin to claim and, unless watched, would practically exercise, the weight of a local Parliament. Government would find it very difficult to disregard its wishes. We would commend to the Viceroy the expediency of ascertaining to what extent such societies have already sprung up, especially in Western India; on what subjects they have already volunteered their advice; and what results have followed these expressions of their wishes. It is a most delicate and difficult task to suggest a repressive policy as regards popular representation. But we ought not to shrink from the fact that while in England the whole framework of Government is built upon such representation, it here depends, not on the will of the people, but upon the deliberate judgement of the governing body. If the peril has not been exaggerated to us, perhaps a practicable line might be drawn between societies representing individual localities, or individual castes or sections of the community, and societies of the more ambitious sort, which claim to represent the whole community, or large areas, or territorial entities.236

The government increased its surveillance on the Sabha and its leaders, and though it could not, despite its best efforts, discover even a shred of positive evidence which connected them with any treasonable activity, it continued to regard them with the deepest suspicion. In 1878 two prominent members of the Bombay government, L. R. Ashburner237 and James Gibbs,238 in their confidential minutes, described the Sabha as 'a seditious association'.239 Believing that Ranade was the master mind behind the Sabha, the Bombay government, under Richard Temple, removed him early in 1878 from Poona to Nasik, and later from Nasik to Dhulia, where his allegedly 'pernicious influence upon his fellow-countrymen' would have less scope.240 In 1880
Bombay officials blocked successfully the promotion of Ranade to a judgeship, despite his recognized abilities and the favourable recommendation of the chief justice, on the grounds

236 Englishman, 18 May 1875.

237 B. 1827; entered Bombay civil service 1848; member of governor's council 1877-83; d. 1907.

238 B. 1825; entered Bombay civil service 1846; member of governor's council 1874-9; member of viceroy's council 1880-5; d. 1886.

239 Ashburner's minute was in connexion with the proposed Vernacular Press Act and was later published. See C. 2040 of 1878, p. 58. Gibbs's minute dealt with the origin of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the history of its promoters and leading supporters. It was considered by Temple to be of such a strictly confidential character that it was not allowed to be placed on record in the secretariat. Only extracts from this minute are available in 'Appointment of a Native of India to the Joint Judgeship of Nassick', Home, Judicial, August 1880, Nos. 203-5, A., National Archives of India.

240 Home, Judicial, August 1880, Nos. 203-5, A.

of his connexion with the Sabha and his 'strong patriotic, national feelings'.241 'The disloyalty of this gentleman', wrote Ashburner, 'has for some years been a matter of public notoriety.'242 And E. W. Ravenscroft,243 another member of the Bombay council, remarked that Ranade was 'in the Deccan, what Mr. Parnell244 is in Ireland, an ardent Home Ruler'.245 The activities of a Maratha Robin Hood—Vasudev Balvant Fadke246—in the Deccan in 1879 provided the enemies of the Sabha with another opportunity to impugn its loyalty. The leaders of the Sabha knew that they were disliked and distrusted by many Anglo-Indians, but they continued to perform their patriotic duties energetically, though cautiously. They were convinced that their proceedings were useful and perfectly legitimate and that they were so regarded not only by their own countrymen, but also by a few liberal-minded Anglo-Indians such as Professor William Wordsworth and Sir William Wedderburn.247

In May 1876 the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha voted a congratulatory address to Queen Victoria on her assumption of the title of 'Empress of India'.248 The address, which was probably drafted by Ranade, was meant as much for the eyes of the rulers as for those of the people of India. It surveyed the progress of India under British rule and gave expression to the wishes and aspirations of educated Indians for the future. Both for its tone and contents it was highly praised by the press in India. The Times of India, for example, wrote: 'From the native standpoint it may well claim to be moderate in tone; while in mere outward form of nicely balanced words, of sonorous sentences, of accurate expression, even in persistent argument and close deductions from the lessons of the past as to the exigencies of the future, it would scarcely have disgraced the official minutes of a Talleyrand, a Palmerston, or a Gladstone. Of course we do not go with
this interesting document in its entirety, but there is very much put forth here worth the serious consideration of every Anglo-Indian. . . .249

The address acknowledged in the ampest terms the beneficent results of British rule in India, especially since 1858. 'The great work of union, inaugurated by the Proclamation of 1858,' it said, 'has been continued with unabated progress for a whole generation, and now this assumption of an Indian title is regarded

241 Ibid.

242 Ibid.

243 B. 1831; entered Bombay civil service 1851; member of governor's council 1879-84; d. 1911.

244 Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91). Irish national leader.

245 Home, Judicial, August 1880, Nos. 203-5, A.

246 B. 1845; clerk in military accounts department; sentenced to penal transportation for life for leading unsuccessful rebellion 1880; d. 1883.

247 B. 1838; entered Indian civil service 1860; judge of Bombay high court 1885; officiating chief secretary to Bombay government 1886-7; M.P. 1893-1900; president of Indian National Congress 1889 and 1910; d. 1918. For the views of Wedderburn and Wordsworth about the Sabha, see 'Opinions about the Journal', Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, July 1879, pp. 3-5.

248 The text of the address is to be found in Deccan Herald, 31 May 1876.

249 Times of India, 23 June 1876.

by us as the crowning of the noble edifice. Unbroken peace has reigned throughout the land for twenty years; the whole country has been covered by a network of civilization which brings the remotest parts to feel sympathy with each other as members of a living body, and many races, and tribes, and varieties of creed and language are, under your benign sway, forgetting their old differences and petty traditions, and are being welded together into a great and homogeneous nation. The Native Princes, great and small, are protected by the strength of the paramount power from internal dissensions, and their continuance as the feudatory members of the Empire has been assured to them beyond all risk of change. The blessing of a fixed and generally uniform law of equality of personal and civil rights has been secured to every part of this Empire. The subordination of the military to the civil power, the separation of judicial from executive functions, publicity in matters of legislation, justice and taxation, the general freedom of enterprise, commerce and locomotion, the three-fold freedom of speech, of public assemblies,
and of the press, religious neutrality and toleration, the blessings of a widespread and elevating machinery of education, the vast development of foreign commerce, and the revival of home industries, these and many more similar blessings which your most gracious Majesty's subjects in this country have been enjoying, have endeared your rule to many millions.\textsuperscript{250}

The address of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, however, did not confine itself to a mere enumeration and eulogy of the blessings of British rule. It went on to demand that new privileges should be granted to the Indian people so that the recent historic occasion might be associated in their minds with the hopes of 'peace and progress and free government'. The new privileges asked for by the Sabha were as follows: the association of the Indian princes in the councils of the empire 'through some organization of a recognized diet or assembly where they could meet one another and the great officers and statesmen who rule India, and discuss all imperial questions'; the employment of Indians in high civil and military offices; the representation of India in the British Parliament; the reform of the legislative councils in India with a view to making them more representative and responsible; the extension of the permanent settlement of the land revenue in a modified form to the whole of British India; and the lightening of 'the great burden imposed by the Indian national debt upon the finances of India . . . by consolidating the debt and extending an English guarantee to it'. The address concluded by expressing the hope that 'the assumption of the imperial title may be signalized by the grant of new constitutional rights to the people of the country, thereby inaugurating a new era in the gradual development of the institutions of this country, elevating its people to the political and social status of the British nation, and teaching them gradually, by examples and encouragement, and by actual exercise of responsible power, to be manly and self-sustained, prepared to welcome their connexion with England as a providential arrangement\textsuperscript{251}

\textsuperscript{250} Deccan Herald, 31 May 1876.

\textsuperscript{200}

intended for their welfare, and resolved to abide by it through all troubles and trials of their mutual growth'.\textsuperscript{251}

In order to mark the assumption of the new title of 'Empress of India' ('Kaiser-i-Hind') by Queen Victoria, the viceroy, Lord Lytton, announced a grand darbar to be held at Delhi on 1 January 1877. Sensing the unique significance of the forthcoming event and anxious to turn it to some national advantage, the leaders of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha addressed, on 5 December 1876, a circular letter to the princes, chiefs and gentlemen who had been invited to the great imperial assemblage to be held at Delhi. The letter, which was also given wide publicity in the press, exhorted the Indian invitees to the darbar not to look upon the coming event as an occasion for gaiety and pageantry but as one symbolizing the growing unity of India as a nation and to take advantage of it for furthering that unity. 'The honour that has been paid to you in your personal or representative capacity [in being invited to the gathering at Delhi]', said the Sabha's letter, 'is regarded by us as an honour to the nation to which you belong, and we have no doubt that the gathering of so many representative men from all parts of India is an event of national importance, and that it will be regarded, in all future history, as the commencement of that fusion of races and creeds, the second birth of the great Indian nation, for which we have so long prayed
and dreamed, and which has been so wonderfully brought about by Providence through strange agencies. On such an occasion, it behoves you to sink the individual and the temporary in the national and permanent concern of the event, and to prove to the world that you are fully alive to the greatness of the responsibilities thrown on you by being thus singled out to represent all that is great and good, true and hopeful, in this vast country. Never since the introduction of foreign rule in this country has such an assemblage been brought together, and it is in justice due to the great power under whose sheltering wings we have learned to outgrow our small differences, and feel as one united nation with a great past behind, and a greater future before us, it is justly due to the British Government that you should not be dazzled by the gaieties of the gathering, but learn the great moral lesson of healthy, self-sustained, and joint political action, which such an event is so well calculated to teach. You are the great Notables of the land, the first Parliament of the united Indian nation, the first Congress of the representatives of the diverse states and nationalities which make up the body politic of India.'252

Having thus underlined the great 'national importance' of the coming darbar at Delhi, the Sabha's letter proceeded to suggest the following 'programme of work to be done at the assemblage':

1. We pray that you will make it a point of duty to see each other individually during your stay in Delhi, and bid welcome to each other, foregoing all reserve and petty misunderstandings, which have separated us long enough to our ruin.

251 Ibid.

252 Poona Observer, 7 December 1876.

'2. We propose further that you will all meet together in private gatherings, and discuss with each other our present situation and future prospects.

'3. The great act of condescension on the part of our most Imperial Majesty in taking a purely Indian title, and in bringing all India together, demands loyal recognition, and we propose accordingly that a united address from all India, may be presented by you at the foot of the throne in humble but hearty response to the gracious Proclamation which His Excellency the Viceroy will issue on this occasion. . . .

'4. We request that you will, independently of the invitation you have received from Government, secure from the inhabitants of the town or district to which you belong, the necessary written authority, empowering you to present the address in the name of the millions who will not be able to attend in person at the gathering.'253

In the last week of December 1876 a deputation of the Sabha, which included its two secretaries, Ganesh Vasudev Joshi and Sadashiv Ballal Govande,254 travelled to Delhi,255 where it tried, among other things, to canvass support for the idea of holding periodical conferences of representative Indians. Before the Sabha’s deputation arrived in Delhi, the Bengali leader Surendranath Banerjea had already, on 27 December 1876, organized there a 'Native Press
Association', consisting of the representatives of the Indian press who had assembled in Delhi for the darbar.256 Joshi and his associates lent their enthusiastic support to the Association and even tried to mould it nearer to their hearts' desire. The 'Native Press Association' presented a 'loyal address' to Lytton on 3 January 1877 and decided to hold a conference at some central place once or twice a year for discussing and adopting measures for protecting the interests of the press and of the country at large. Thus, by a strange irony of history, it was on the occasion of the imperial darbar at Delhi, and encouraged in part by its very example, that Indian patriots made the first tentative efforts to organize a periodical conference of representative men from all parts of the country which nine years later led to the establishment of the Indian National Congress.

After the Delhi darbar was over, Joshi and his associates paid a visit to Calcutta, where they discussed with local leaders questions of mutual interest. As in Delhi so in Calcutta, the idea of holding 'an annual conference of the representative men of India' was mooted and generally welcomed.257 It was even agreed that the first such conference should assemble in Calcutta.

The agreement reached in Calcutta early in 1877 was probably confirmed later in the year when some prominent Calcutta leaders such as S. K. Ghose and S. N. Banerjea visited Bombay and Poona. Towards the end of 1877 the

254 B. 1824; retired from Bombay judicial service 1874; d. 1884.

255 The Sabha's deputation left Poona by train for Delhi on 26 December 1876. See Poona Observer, 26 December 1876.

256 See above, p. 167.

257 Amrita Bazar Patrika, 2 February 1877.

Poona Sarvajanik Sabha addressed a communication to public men in Calcutta which said: '. . . about this time last year certain members of the Sarvajanik Sabha paid a visit to Calcutta and other places in Northern India, and they had the pleasure of seeing you, and of interchanging thoughts and discussing certain questions of general importance with you. At that time the idea of holding annual conferences was suggested, and was received with favour generally. It was suggested that at these conferences representatives of the Native Press and Political Associations should meet together, and, after ascertaining each other's views upon the great political questions of the day, fix the general lines of policy which should be pursued by the exponents of Native public opinion and commended for adoption to the Native public generally. It was also agreed that the first conference should meet in Calcutta with a view to give effect to this suggestion. Some members of the Sabha will proceed to Calcutta in a few days, and will be present there about the first of January 1878. The Sabha hopes they will receive brotherly welcome from your Association, and that this first attempt to incorporate the different provinces of India, and to form a collective and representative opinion, will be so far successful as to encourage similar attempts in the future. The questions which demand special attention about this time may be briefly stated to be:
1. The Indian Civil Service question, upon which a general expression of Native opinion has been secured by the efforts of Babu Surendranath.

2. The question of the income tax, which is likely to be imposed to meet famine charges.

3. The question of demanding a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the causes of the frequent occurrence of famines of late years, and of the success of the preventive and remedial measures adopted by the Government.

4. The question of the liberty of the Native Press, about which it is rumoured that the Government is seriously thinking of passing exceptional laws to curb its alleged license.

5. The question of the extension of the permanent settlement of land revenue with suitable modifications to other presidencies.

6. The policy pursued of late in regard to schools and colleges for higher education.

7. The proposal to levy excise duties upon cotton yarn produced in Native mills.

8. The question of how far reduction in public expenditure can be practically suggested as advisable.

9. The question of the withdrawal of State support from the Christian ecclesiastical establishment.

10. The question of the enlargement of the Legislative Council by the admission of more non-official Native members.

11. The question of the extension of the elective franchise in the municipalities of the larger cities in the mofussil.

These and similar other questions which will suggest themselves to you, will be discussed, and as far as possible the principles of action will be definitely settled.

Four members of the Sabha—G. V. Joshi, S. B. Govande, G. V. Kanitkar and A. G. Bhagvat—arrived in Calcutta early in January 1878 and stayed there for a couple of weeks. The visit of the Poona leaders aroused much greater interest in Calcutta this time than it had done a year earlier. They were accorded a public reception by the citizens of Calcutta on 8 January, at which speakers, both host and guest, vied with one another in emphasizing the need for unity and interprovincial co-operation—a theme which had already been taken up by the local press. They had talks with the leaders of the various associations in Calcutta on the important questions of the day. They participated in a conference, held in Calcutta on 14 January 1878, ostensibly to celebrate the first anniversary of the 'Native Press Association' established in Delhi at the time.
of the darbar. The conference adopted the following important resolutions: 'That with a view to promote mutual sympathy and co-operation among the members of the Native Press, to foster among them harmony of views, as far as practicable, on questions of national policy and interest, and to diffuse among them a proper sense of their duties and rights, a meeting of their representatives be held at least once a year . . . .

'That it be their anxious care, while faithfully representing to Government the wants and wishes of the people, to nurture in them feelings of loyalty to the Crown.

That it be their earnest endeavour to vindicate the rights and liberties of the Native Press by all constitutional means.

'That efforts be made to secure the co-operation of the different political associations of India with the objects of the meeting.'

A local committee was appointed with S. N. Banerjea and Navgopal Mitra as joint secretaries.

On their way back home from Calcutta, Joshi and his colleagues visited some other places in northern India, and wherever they went they urged the need for greater unity and co-operation between public men and associations in the various parts of the country. What they were aiming at is made clear by a speech which Joshi delivered while in Allahabad early in February 1878. In this speech he remarked: 'It is . . . incumbent on us all to elect a number of right-thinking, public-spirited and patriotic gentlemen and to form them into a committee to watch over the national welfare and interests, and to represent our common grievances to Government, in every considerable town all over the country; and these gentlemen should meet together in a general conference once in a year, and thereby exchange their thoughts and opinions on various subjects affecting our happiness.'

258 Indian Minor, 4 January 1878.

259 B. 1854; lawyer and later in Bombay judicial service; poet and journalist; d. 1918.

260 Lawyer?

261 Indian Mirror, 12 January 1878.

262 For a report of the talks of the leaders of the Sabha with those of the British Indian Association, see Hindoo Patriot, 14 January 1878.

263 For the proceedings of the conference, see ibid., 21 January 1878, and Indian Mirror, 15 January 1878.

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Encouraged by the success which had attended the efforts of its deputation to Calcutta in organizing a 'Native Press Conference' there in January last, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha resolved on 10 March 1878 'to hold a similar conference [in Bombay on the 29th instant] of the editors of the Native Press of the Bombay Presidency and the adjoining provinces [sic] of Berar and Hyderabad, in the hope of forming a committee to correspond with that in Calcutta'.265 The passing of the notorious Vernacular Press Act on 14 March 1878 did not apparently disturb the plans of the Sabha. The Sabha had already secured 'the consent of some of the leading members of the Native Press of this Presidency' for the proposed conference. It was, however, anxious to enlist the sympathy and cooperation of the Bombay Association and other public bodies in its endeavours. With this end in view the Sabha addressed to the latter a communication on 20 March 1878, which pointed out that the object of holding the conference was that 'representatives of the Native Press and the several Political Associations existing in the several parts of this Presidency, should meet together, and after ascertaining each other's views upon the current political questions, chalk out general lines of policy which should be pursued by the exponents of Native public opinion, and recommended for adoption to the Native public generally'. The communication also contained a long list of the questions which were proposed to be considered at the forthcoming conference at Bombay. These were, in addition to those which were submitted to the Calcutta conference, as follows: the Vernacular Press Act; the admission of representatives from India into the British Parliament; 'the relation of the British Indian Political Agencies to the Native States'; general customs tariff, with special consideration of the duties on finer kinds of imported cotton; the 'Home Charges' and army expenditure, organization and reform; the admission of Indians to volunteer corps; the uniformity of weights and measures throughout India; the decentralization policy of the government; 'the international condition of the jurisdiction of the criminal courts of British India and Native States'; the commercial relations between England and India; the guarantee of the British Parliament for debts of the Indian government; the systematization of Indian coins, with special consideration of gold coinage for British India; the Arms Act; and 'the formation of a representative Indian Diet of the several heads of Political Societies in India'.266

The conference met at the Framji Cowasji Institute in Bombay on 29 March 1878. It was an 'influential' gathering, consisting of leading journalists and public men, mainly from Bombay and Poona, 'which resolved that a 'Conference of the Native Press' be established in Bombay and that it should meet at least once a year. A local committee, similar to that in Calcutta, was also established.267

264 Indian Mirror, 6 March 1878.

265 Times of India, 26 March 1878.

266 Ibid.

267 Bombay Gazette, 30 March 1878.

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The Vernacular Press Act appears to have struck terror into the hearts of some Bombay journalists, who dissociated themselves from the proceedings of the conference on the ground that they were 'a leap in the dark' or that 'the present time was rather ticklish'.268 Because of this rift in the lute the conference proved to be, as the Bombay Gazette described it, 'a poor affair'.269

The 'Native Press Association' existed on paper only. Its local committees at Calcutta and Bombay soon disintegrated. The experiment of holding 'Native Press Conferences' was not repeated in later years. But the idea that lay behind that experiment, namely that of bringing together periodically the representatives of the press and the various political associations in India in order to discuss questions of common interest and the ways and means of promoting national solidarity, did not die. It was taken up again more earnestly, and under more favourable circumstances, in the 1880s. It was no accident that the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, which made the first tentative efforts to realize this idea in the 1870s, was also to have served as host to the first session of the Indian National Congress in December 1885, and would have done so had it not been for the last-minute decision to change the Congress venue to Bombay because of an outbreak of cholera in Poona.

Like the other presidency associations established in 1851-2, the Madras Native Association continued to function even after the charter discussion, which had originally brought it into existence, had concluded. But it had a special reason for doing so. Its petitions had received more attention in Britain than those of the Bombay and Calcutta associations. One specific complaint made therein, namely the practice of torture by government officials to extract revenue, had led H. D. Seymour, the chairman of the India Reform Society, to visit Madras in late 1853 and the government to appoint a commission of inquiry. In order to prove its charge the Madras Native Association had not only to remain active, but also to extend its operations into the mofussil.270

The charge of the Association was substantially vindicated by the findings of the so-called Torture Commission,271 but the Association incurred the displeasure of local officials,272 which frightened away many of its existing and potential supporters. During 1854-60 the Association remained fairly active. It held public meetings and made several representations to the authorities, both in India and in Britain, on such subjects as administrative and judicial reforms, the findings of the 'Torture Commission, the activities of the 'missionary party' and the religious riots at Tinnevelly, the increase in direct taxation after the revolt, and the restoration of

269 Ibid.; also Native Opinion, 31 March 1878.

270 Athenaeum, 22 April 1854.


272 Athenaeum, 6, 13 July 1854.

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the Tanjore raj.273 But in the early 'sixties it sank into a state of torpidity. By the middle of 1862 it had become 'practically defunct'.274

With the demise of the Madras Native Association in 1862 organized political activity in the southern presidency virtually ceased for almost two decades. Madras thus lagged behind both Bengal and Bombay in the 'sixties and 'seventies. The reasons for this are not far to seek. The landholders and merchants of Madras, who continued to dominate the public life of the presidency during this period, generally lacked the wealth and enlightenment of their counterparts in Bengal and Bombay. Though, in the 'sixties and 'seventies, the English-educated class grew as rapidly in Madras as it did in Bengal or Bombay,275 it was in the first case drawn from a narrower base. Moreover, the employment opportunities for this class in government service were much greater in Madras than elsewhere in India. Not unnaturally, the independent professions like law, teaching and journalism registered a slower growth in Madras. It was probably because of this fact that the number of Indian-owned newspapers in Madras was very small. Nor did local Anglo-Indians provide the same sort of challenge to the people of Madras as they did to those in the other two presidencies.

In the absence of organized political associations in Madras, the rapidly growing English-educated class in the presidency found some outlet for its energies in debating and literary societies. Of these latter, the earliest was the Madras Hindu Debating Society. It was founded in 1852 by M. Venkataroyulu Naidu,276 who headed a small local faction which was opposed to the leaders of the Madras Native Association.277 Naidu had close contacts with many Anglo-Indians, both official and non-official. Unlike most of his rivals in the Madras Native Association, he held advanced views on social questions but was a moderate in politics. Though aiming primarily at the mental and moral improvement of its constituents, the Madras Hindu Debating Society also dabbled in politics.278 The government occasionally solicited its opinion on legislative matters.279 Despite its name, it had members belonging to all creeds and races. Following the death of Naidu, the Society became moribund in the mid-1860s. The Triplicane


274 Madras Times, 25 July 1862.

275 See Report of the Indian Education Commission . . . 1882 (1883), Statistical Tables, pp. vi-xi; S. Satthianadhan, History of Education in the Madras Presidency (1894), pp. 41 ff; Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism (1968), Appendix I, pp. 355-6; and Dr. R. Suntharalingam's forthcoming work, Consensus and Conflict in South India: Elite Politics in the Nineteenth Century.

276 Lawyer and journalist; d. 1863.

277 See report of the first anniversary meeting of the Society in Spectator, 1 August 1853; also The Sixth Annual Report of the Madras Hindoo Debating Society, from 1856-58 (1859).

279 See the remark of Rajratnam Mudaliar at a meeting held in Madras to revive the Society in Madras Times, 1 August 1878.

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Literary Society is more well known. It was started in 1868 by a Muslim named Mir Ibrahim Ali, though most of its members were Hindus.280 It did not become active until the mid-1870s, when it provided a forum for the meeting and exchange of ideas amongst the educated elite in Madras.281 Its chief title to fame, however, lies in the fact that some of its leading members were responsible for launching the Hindu in 1878 and the Madras Mahajana Sabha in 1884. The more reflective amongst the English-educated Indians in Madras always felt ashamed of the fact that their presidency was called 'benighted' by outsiders and recognized the need for a well-organized local political association. No sooner was the Madras Native Association defunct in 1862 than the idea of organizing a new political body on 'proper principles' began to be mooted,282 but it came to nothing. The exercise was repeated in 1864 283 and with a similar result. The Madras branch of the East India Association, founded early in 1868, failed to prosper.284 In 1872, amidst the excitement caused by the Brahmo Marriage Bill, the Madras Native Association was revived, but it died soon afterwards.285 In 1874 an attempt to get the recently established Cosmopolitan Club interested in political questions failed.286 In the later 'seventies, however, with the general quickening of political life all over the country, the examples of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the Calcutta Indian Association and the shock administered by the terrible famine of 1876-7 in south India, the idea of forming a comprehensive political organization in Madras began to be more earnestly and energetically canvassed. William Digby,287 the popular editor of the Madras Times, lent it his powerful support.288 The result was that in August 1878 the Madras Hindu Debating Society, which had been defunct for 'the last twelve years', was revived.289 A month later it was converted into the Southern Indian Association with pronouncedly political objectives, namely 'to consider matters of interest and importance to the native community, both social and political; to obtain all possible information thereon; and to serve as a medium between the Government and the non-official native community on all matters affecting its interest'.290 But even the Southern Indian Association proved to be

280 Athenaeum and Daily News, 12 August 1868; also 16 April 1869.

281 Ibid., 24 August 1878, 4 November 1879.

282 Madras Times, 25 July 1862.

283 Athenaeum and Daily News, 20 August 1864,

284 See below, p. 227.
Considering the fact that Avadh was the last of the British territorial acquisitions in India, and also that it had only recently been the scene of a widespread rebellion, the organization there in 1861 of a modern-style pressure group of talukdars, called 'the British Indian Association of Oudh', seems rather surprising. But the organization of the British Indian Association of Oudh was part of the general policy of appeasing the talukdars which the British adopted in the region after the revolt of 1857. The Association was largely the handiwork of a Bengali named Dakshinaranjan Mukerji, whom the British brought to Avadh in 1859 in order 'to enlighten the minds of the Talookdars, and to teach them to appreciate the good intentions of the Government'. Mukerji belonged to the Tagore family of Calcutta. In his younger days he had been known for his advanced views on political and social questions. But his friendship with many leading Anglo-Indians in Calcutta and his demonstrative loyalty to the British raj during the revolt of 1857 earned him the estate of Shankarpur in Avadh. In March 1861 he organized, with the apparent approval of Canning and Charles Wingfield, then chief commissioner of Avadh, a pressure group at Lucknow on the model of the British Indian Association at Calcutta, of which he had been a member. The avowed object of the British Indian Association of Oudh was 'to take every lawful and constitutional measure so to help Her Majesty's administration in Hindustan and especially in Oudh, that it may prove conducive to the welfare equally of the people of Britain and of this country'. It was 'to petition the constituted Authorities to alter or cancel any draft law, or law now in vogue, which . . . may prove injurious to [the] general interest; as also to point out any errors or defects in the administration of the law that may have a similar tendency, and to pray for the introduction of such laws as may be beneficial to our country'. Its membership was initially restricted to talukdars in Avadh paying an annual revenue to the government of Rs. 5,000 and more and to those acceptable to them, but it was later extended to all talukdars in the region. As owner of the largest estate in Avadh, Maharaja Digvijaya
Singh of Balrampur298 almost automatically became president of the Association. But the real control of the Association, at least in its early years, lay in the hands of its two most able and active members: Maharaja Man Singh of Ayodhya,299 the vice-president; and Dakshinaranjan Mukerji, the secretary. The government valued the Association as a means of knowing 'the views and feelings of the influential class represented in that body' and hoped that 'by frequently meeting together and by the habit of free discussion, the landed gentry of Oudh will learn to divest themselves of old prejudices and jealousies, and to co-operate in schemes of social and material improvement'.300 It, therefore, encouraged the Association in various ways, for example, by giving it the Kaiserbagh palace at Lucknow as a meeting place, by consulting it on most matters of legislation, and by undertaking from 1878 on to collect its annual subscriptions as a regular assessment along with the land revenue.301 In the 'sixties and 'seventies the British Indian Association of Oudh served as an effective spokesman for talukdari views and interests, though not many talukdars took any active part in its proceedings. But its almost exclusive preoccupation with questions affecting the talukdars, whose number, incidentally, did not then exceed four hundred, its excessive dependence upon the government, and its interminable internal dissensions precluded it from making any significant contribution to the growth of an independent political life in the region.

In 1866 Raja Jaikishan Das302 and Syed Ahmed took the lead in establishing at Aligarh 'the British Indian Association, N. W. Provinces'. The choice of the name 'British Indian Association' would suggest that Jaikishan Das and Syed Ahmed were merely imitating their fellow-countrymen at Calcutta and Lucknow. But the speech made by Syed Ahmed at the inauguration meeting of the Association on 10 May 1866 makes it clear beyond any doubt that the immediate stimulus for the formation of the Association came from the projectors of the East India
Association in London.303 Both Jaikishan Das and Syed Ahmed were government servants and it is not improbable that they had been encouraged by their Anglo-Indian friends and colleagues, such as G.F.T. Graham,304 who were in touch with the Indian Officers' Committee in London,305 to take the

298 B. 1818; member of Indian legislative council 1868-70. 1875-7; d. 1882.

299 B. 1820; d. 1870.

300 Annual Report on the Administration of the Province of Oudh, for the Year 1862-63, p. 38.


302 B. 1832; landowner in Moradabad district; uncovenanted civilian; member of Calcutta British Indian Association; d. 1905.


304 Biographer of Syed Ahmed Khan; joined East India Company's military service 1857; also served in police department, North-Western Provinces; retired 1887.

305 See below, p. 224.

210 lead in establishing the British Indian Association at Aligarh. The 'leading aim and object' of the Association was 'to improve the efficiency of the British Indian Government and to promote its best interests, by every legitimate means . . . with a view to benefit the Natives of the country and other permanent settlers in it, thereby advancing the common interests of Great Britain and India'.306 It proposed 'from time to time [to] draw the attention of the Government to redress and amend such already existing measures as appear likely to prove injurious to the interests of the country, or to adopt such other measures as may be calculated to promote those interests, whether viewed in relation to law and jurisprudence, or trade and agriculture, or the general condition of the people'.307 Membership of the Association was open to all 'respectable individuals, without distinction of race and creed', the amount of the annual subscriptions to be contributed by them depending 'on the good will of the Subscribers themselves'.308 The Association looked forward to having branches in other towns of the North-Western Provinces and to co-operating 'with similar Associations in other parts of the country' and with the East India Association in London.309 Jaikishan Das was elected president of the Association and Syed Ahmed became its secretary.

The Aligarh British Indian Association had a short and not very active life of about four years, during which it secured some members for the London East India Association and submitted a few petitions to the government on such subjects as the grievances of Indian railway passengers,
the reduction of the book postage, and the promotion of western education through the vernaculurs.310 The small and insignificant town of Aligarh was ill suited to be the centre of a regional political association. Nor were men like Jaikishan Das and Syed Ahmed suited to be its leaders. But even if the British Indian Association of the North-Western Provinces were located in a more suitable place and blessed with more independent-minded and popular leaders, it is doubtful whether it would have prospered. The North-Western Provinces lacked in the 'sixties and 'seventies a sufficiently large and cohesive English-educated class which was essential to the sustenance of a modern political organization.

Coming late under British rule, slow in taking to English education, having few non-official Anglo-Indians, and with its press rigidly controlled by the government, the Punjab had little organized political activity in the 'sixties and seventies. In January 1865 G. W. Leitner,311 the recently appointed principal of the local Government College, founded at Lahore the Punjab Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge or the Anjuman-i-Ishat Alumi Mufida-Punjab. It aimed at 'the revival of ancient oriental learning' and 'the diffusion of useful knowledge among all classes of the native community through the medium of the vernacular1.312 Leitner believed that the British government in India should deliberately use education as an agency for strengthening its hold upon its subjects. He hated the existing system of western education in India, particularly in the Punjab, which was, in his view, alienating from the state the traditional leaders of society, namely the nobility and the priesthood, and creating 'out of the rejected members of chiefly the middle and lower castes' a dangerous class 'eager for place and political power'.313 With the active support of many Anglo-Indian officials, including Sir Donald Macleod,314 the lieutenant-governor of the Punjab, Leitner matured the scheme of an 'Oriental University'. His scheme was only partially accepted by the government of India and in 1870 the Punjab University College was established at Lahore. With a view to identifying the natural leaders of Indian society—'the chiefs, the priests, and the wealthier merchants'315—with the British government, Leitner also advocated the formation of 'representative Councils' which would 'represent to the Government the wishes, wants and feelings of the people, and . . . explain to the latter the principles and
motives which actuate Government in framing the laws and regulations for the administration of the country'.

The Anjuman-i-Punjab had a relatively long and busy life. It interested itself in all sorts of subjects, educational, social and political. It established a few branches in the mofussil and even published a journal of its own. It had a large number of Indian members, belonging to all communities in the Punjab. But the Anjuman-i-Punjab cannot be regarded as an Indian association. Its founder and driving force was Leitner and it existed primarily for the promotion of his personal ideas and interests. Leitner's vanity and intrigues soon brought him into conflict with local officials and the Anjuman lost its early influence with the government. Instead of doing any good to the people of the Punjab through his Anjuman, Leitner only retarded the growth of English education and stoked the fire of communal-cum-linguistic controversies in the province. It was mainly in order to counteract what they regarded as the baneful activities of Leitner and his associates that some young English-educated Punjabis and expatriate Bengalis, led by Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia, started at Lahore the Indian Association in 1877 and the Tribune in 1881.

One of the most significant developments in Indian politics in the second half of the nineteenth century was the growth of associations on modern lines for the promotion of the exclusive interests of the Muslims as a community. The first such association was established in Calcutta...
in 1855. Calcutta was not only the capital of the raj, it also contained a large population of Muslims, drawn from all parts of the country, who had the advantage of observing at close quarters the workings of the British government in India and of the several voluntary associations in the town. Moreover, the substitution of Bengali or English for Persian as the language of the courts and the preference given by the government to the English-educated for the better-paid jobs had already started adversely affecting the employment prospects of Muslims in Bengal, who showed little enthusiasm for learning either Bengali or English.

On 6 May 1855 a few Muslims, mostly pleaders and government employees, assembled at a private house in Calcutta and resolved to form an 'Anjuman-i-Islami' or 'Mahomedan Association' 'for the purpose of promoting the general welfare of the Mahomedan community of India'.319 The principal speaker at the meeting was the editor of the Durbin, Mohammad Abdur Rauf.320 He referred to the existence of several voluntary associations in Calcutta run by non-Muslims and the advantages which accrued from them and regretted 'that though superior to others in natural energy, boldness of heart, and similar characteristic abilities, and enjoined besides by the precepts of our religion to be united, we should be left far behind in the road leading to union'. He drew attention to the decline in the 'strength, wealth and influence' of Muslims and urged 'the learned and the great of our community, to employ their best exertions, without delay or hesitation, for the amelioration of the present and future condition of their brethren, suffering them no longer to sink still further into abjectness and wretchedness'. In an obvious reference to the activities of Christian missionaries, he said: 'Alas! that a people once unrivalled for their strong national fellow-feeling and enthusiastic religious zeal in the cause of their welfare, should at last reach a state of degradation which emboldens others to insult them with impunity, by inviting them to become the followers of their religion;— should be so humbled and dispirited as not to possess the boldness requisite for refuting them with those cogent and strong arguments of which they are in possession, thereby persuading others in turn to profess their own holy religion.' He insisted that in trying to form an association they were not 'imitating the examples of others', but 'only pursuing the true path pointed out by our religion', for 'our reverend Prophet himself was directed in the verse,—to consult with his disciples, and . . . it is fully proven that he, his disciples, and descendants were always in the habit of holding consultations together'. The meeting appointed the principal office-bearers of the Anjuman and a 'special committee' to frame its rules. It also resolved that 'as the . . . association is to be formed solely with the view of seeking the interests, and promoting the general welfare of the Mahomedan community of this country, no measures should on any occasion be adopted that might, in any manner, appear inimical to the British Government'.321
The formation of the Anjuman-i-Islami was hailed by the Hindu Intelligencer and the Hindoo Patriot, the two leading Hindu papers of Calcutta, and also by the British Indian Association as evidence of the growth of public spirit amongst Muslims.322 But the Anglo-Indian Friend of India tried to make political capital out of it. 'The Hindoos and the Mahomedans', wrote the Friend of India in a highly tendentious article on 17 May 1855, 'may be said to constitute two different nations in India, between whom there is no affinity of interests, and not the smallest sympathy of feeling. . . . In all the movements which the Hindoos have made of late years in opposition to their present rulers, and in all those appeals which have been preferred by them against particular measures, though the grievances put forward were common to both classes, the Mahomedans have never united with them on any occasion; and as the Mahomedans are by far the most independent, and united, as well as redoubtable section of the community,—however disproportionate in numbers—this circumstance has always served in no small degree to weaken the representations of the Hindoos. . . . The most remarkable of [the rules adopted by the Mahomedan Association] will unanimously be acknowledged to be that which provides that "no measures should on any occasion be adopted that might in any measure appear inimical to the British Government". Such a resolution from the descendants of those from whose hands we wrested the Government of the country, and in whose throne we are now seated, is worthy of particular note, as shewing the difference of feeling which exists between the Mahomedans and Hindoos. It seems to wear the appearance of proud submission to those with whom they once contended on terms of equality, and to whom the dispensation of a higher Power has now given the ascendancy. It also precludes all idea of any union with the Hindoo Association [the British Indian Association], which altogether repudiates the principle. To whatever cause we may trace the resolution, it is a token of loyalty which can scarcely fail to prove gratifying to those entrusted with the responsibilities of this empire. Moreover, in an age of Associations, the more they are multiplied, the less will be the official embarrassment occasioned by them; and in one aspect, it may be said that they will serve as a counterpoise to each other.'323

321 Englishman, 8 May 1855.


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The Anjuman-i-Islami was established at a time when the people of India, both Hindus and Muslims, were becoming seriously alarmed by the sayings and doings of Christian missionaries and the support extended to the latter by British officials in the country. In order to mobilize support for their venture, the prime movers of the Anjuman decided to hold a public meeting at the Calcutta town hall on 16 July 1855. But on the day of the meeting 'some mischievous individuals . . . spread a report among the Moosulman population in the metropolis, that Government intended to convert them to Christianity by force, and the consequence was that a body of twelve thousand assembled at the Town Hall in a state of the greatest excitement, and the assembly was so uproarious that it was found necessary to dissolve it at once'.324 So ended
in failure the first attempt of the Muslims of Calcutta to organize a public meeting in the western style on their own. They did not dare to make another such attempt until October 1876.325

Even before the Anjuman-i-Islami was properly organized, it had to deal with a question which vitally affected its constituents. On 19 July 1855 the judicial authorities in Bengal had, with a view to improving the quality of the Indian bar, issued an order to the effect that all would-be pleaders in the civil courts in the presidency must pass an examination which required familiarity with certain law books in English. At a private meeting held on 4 September 1855 the Anjuman was declared to be formally 'constituted and established', at least ten days earlier than originally scheduled, and a petition was adopted which requested the lieutenant-governor of Bengal, in the name of the Anjuman, to rescind the above-mentioned order of the judicial authorities, because it was 'calculated to inflict a grievous injury' upon Muslims, who were 'at present but imperfectly, or not at all acquainted with English'.326 The petition of the Anjuman was supported by the Hindoo Patriot,327 but it was opposed by the Friend of India.328 It was readily granted by the lieutenant-governor of Bengal, F. J. Halliday, who was known to be generally sympathetic to the interests of Muslims.

323 Friend of India, 17 May 1855.

324 Ibid., 26 July 1855.

325 Hindoo Patriot, 9 October 1876. Significantly enough, this meeting was held to sympathize with Turkey.

326 Englishman, 11 September 1855.

327 Hindoo Patriot, 27 September 1855.

328 Friend of India, 13, 20 September 1855. Later, however, when the lieutenant-governor conceded the request made in the petition, the paper turned round and justified the concession. See Friend of India, 11 October 1855.

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Apparently encouraged by the quick and easy success which attended its first petition to the authorities, the Anjuman-i-Islami proceeded to improve its image. The 'special committee' appointed in May 1855 gave way to a regular 'committee of management' and attempts were made to secure members and money for the Anjuman in the mofussil.329 At a meeting of the Anjuman held on 28 October 1855 it was reported that '200 copies of a pamphlet containing a report of the proceedings of the preliminary meeting of the Association, . . . as well as 600 copies of another containing the rules, [etc.], had been 'circulated throughout India'.330 It was also reported at the same meeting that up to that date the Anjuman had 126 members, 85 of whom resided in Calcutta and the rest in the mofussil, that 'the money subscribed by all these members [had] amounted to a sum which [was] sufficient to defray all the present expenses of the institution and to keep it in operation', and that branches of the Anjuman had been established at Sylhet and Midnapore.331 At the initiative of Abdul Latif Khan, the Anjuman adopted a
resolution which said that 'the defective education of Mahomedans generally of this country is the main cause why they obtain so little advancement in the service of the Government, and . . . also in other walks of life; it is therefore the duty of the Association to ascertain the precise nature of such defects; how to remedy them, and to suggest such measures as may secure to the community better education in future'. Acting obviously on the suggestion made by the Hindoo Patriot,333 the Anjuman resolved that 'the Committee of Management open a correspondence with the British Indian Association, the Indigo Planters' Association, and the Chamber of Commerce; and keep themselves duly informed from time to time of the matters under the consideration severally of the said Associations; with the view that this Association be advised in case the Committee deemed it expedient that in any such matters it should co-operate, whether to petition the Government, or adopt such measures as were proper for each occasion'.334

Besides addressing a few memorials to the authorities on such subjects as the unsatisfactory state of the profession of mukhtiar (attorney) and the order of the inspector of jails in lower Bengal requiring every criminal prisoner to have his head and face close shaved once every fortnight,335 the Anjuman-i-Islami did precious little before the revolt broke out in May 1857. At a meeting held on 27 May 1857 the Anjuman passed resolutions condoning the 'mutiny' and pledging its loyalty and support to the British government.336 The services of some of the leaders of the Anjuman were utilized by British officials in order

329 Englishman, 1 November 1855.
330 Ibid.
332 Ibid.
333 Hindoo Patriot, 24 May 1855.
334 Englishman, 1 November 1855.
335 Ibid., 27 March 1857.
336 Ibid., 30 May, 14 June 1857.
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to tranquillize Muslim opinion in Calcutta during the crisis.337 Though the Anjuman survived the revolt and in November 1858 adopted a congratulatory address to the Queen on her assumption of the government of India,338 it seems to have faded away soon afterwards.339

The reasons for the early decay of the Anjuman-i-Islami are not difficult to surmise. The Anjuman lacked the necessary educational or popular, base to sustain its activity. The number of English-educated Muslims who had an adequate appreciation of modern politics was exceedingly small in Calcutta, or elsewhere in the country. Most of the leaders of the Anjuman were people who had not struck very deep roots into the soil of Bengal. It is highly significant
that the proceedings of the Anjuman were invariably carried on in Persian or Urdu. One of the
great weaknesses of the Anjuman was its inability to meet and discuss things in a public manner,
like the other voluntary associations of Calcutta. The Anglo-Indian opinion remained suspicious
of ‘an association of Moulvees’ carrying on its operations in ‘a hole and corner’ manner. The
Anjuman did not have a settled programme of work. As a leader of the Anjuman is alleged to
have told a friendly American missionary, C.H.A. Dall, in 1855: 'All that the Unjumun
looked to do was, to stay the path of progress. They had come together for the sole purpose of
getting up a petition to Government to be allowed to hold office and draw good salaries, without
a knowledge of English. It was a sort of indignation meeting against the injustice of putting
Hindoos into the best places for having acquired the language of their conquerors.'

Some very hard things were said about Indian Muslims by Anglo-Indians during and
immediately after the revolt of 1857. The latter were inclined to believe that the revolt would not
have been possible, or at least not acquired the widespread and violent character it did, but for
the alliance struck by Muslims with Hindus. There was also a feeling on the part of many Anglo-
Indians that Muslims, whom they had generally tended to patronize in preference to Hindus, had
been guilty of gross ingratitude in turning against their benefactors. But Anglo-

337 See letter of Qazi Abdul Bari, vice-president of the Anjuman in 1857, to the editor, Friend of
India, 24 November 1870.

338 Englishman, 19 November 1858.

339 Probably the last act of the Anjuman was the presentation of a valedictory address to
Halliday. See Englishman, 3 May 1859.

340 On 9 July 1855 the Hindu Intelligencer had very innocently written: 'The Hindus have long
been accustomed to hold public and private meetings for social and religious purposes. The
institution of the Punchayet has long existed among them from a very remote antiquity. But we
do not see the Mahomedans ever have had any such custom among them. They should, however,
introduce it now, in order to protect their interests and bind them close in social and fraternal
bonds.' It did not occur to the Hindu Intelligencer that Muslims did not need to meet at the town
hall, for they were already in the habit of congregating regularly at the mosque, especially on
Fridays.

341 See, for example, Englishman, 19 November, 2, 18 December 1858.

342 B. 1816; first foreign missionary of the Unitarian Church in America; arrived in Calcutta
1855; d. 1886.

343 See Dall's letter to the editor, Englishman, 28 December 1867.

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Indians knew full well that they could not stay in India even for a single day without the
assistance of Muslims, because, among other things, most of their personal attendants were, of
necessity, Muslims. They, therefore, began to make strenuous efforts soon after the revolt was quelled to reconcile Muslims to their rule. The main difficulty which Anglo-Indians had hitherto experienced in dealing with the followers of Islam in India was the absence of respectable Muslims who were also sufficiently westernized to act as intermediaries between their own community and their rulers. In the 'sixties they found a few such Muslims, chief among whom were Abdul Latif Khan in Bengal and Syed Ahmed Khan in the North-Western Provinces.

In April 1863 Abdul Latif, who had been an active member of the Anjuman-i-Islami in the 'fifties, took the lead, with the encouragement of many Anglo-Indians, in organizing the Mahomedan Literary Society at Calcutta. The chief objects of the Society were to interest Muslims in western knowledge, to promote social intercourse between Muslims and Anglo-Indians, and generally to act as a pressure group for the Muslim community. The Society succeeded in securing the support of many prominent Muslims from all parts of the country and in 1867 boasted of no less than 500 members. Abdul Latif, who acted as secretary to the Society and was, in fact, its life and soul, played a major role in persuading the British government to modify its educational policy in India so as to make it acceptable to Muslims. He also made himself useful to the authorities in various other ways, such as by acquainting them with the wants and views of his co-religionists and by securing fatwas in favour of the British raj. In the first few years of its existence the Society showed a fair amount of activity. It held 'monthly meetings' for the discussion of literary subjects and occasionally organized essay competitions. But it was not long before it began to content itself with holding an annual conversazione which brought together the elite of Calcutta society belonging to all communities, and with presenting addresses to high British officials. In 1868 the Urdu Guide bluntly told the Mahomedan Literary Society that its 'sham literary meetings and showy ostentatious Town Hall conversaziones . . . [were] not exactly the means to work out a revolution in the stagnant Mahomedan mind, or to exercise much perceptible influence on a society the most conceited and exclusive in the world'. In January 1876 the Times of India, annoyed by certain remarks contained in the Society's address of welcome to the Prince of Wales, which

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344 On 13 August 1863 the Friend of India wrote: 'Not half a dozen Mussulman gentlemen in Calcutta know English . . . . It is to be regretted that, from Moonshee Ameer Ali's ignorance of English, there is not one Mussulman at once worthy and able to act as a medium between Government and his co-religionists.'

345 Bengal Hurkaru, 9 April 1863; also 'Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Calcutta Mahomedan Literary Society . . .', in Englishman, 24 June 1864.

346 Englishman, 28 December 1867.

347 Abdool Luteef Khan, A Short Account of My Public Life (1885), p. 28.

348 A Quarter Century of the Mahomedan Literary Society of Calcutta (1889).

349 Urdu Guide, 7 March 1868, quoted in Englishman, 12 March 1868.
was obviously drafted by some friendly Anglo-Indian, launched a bitter attack on the Society. The paper called the Society 'a nominal' and 'a very queer institution' which realized 'most fully the description of the Anka, so frequently referred to in Oriental poetry as "in name renowned; but in the flesh unfound"', and accused the government 'of not simply countenancing, but of actually fostering shams'.350 Strangely enough, the Society found no other apologist at the time but the Hindoo Patriot.351

In the 1870s the educated Muslims of Calcutta were divided into two main factions: the one led by Abdul Latif and the other by Nawab Amir Ali Khan. The former was predominantly Sunni and the latter predominantly Shia in composition. Another distinguishing characteristic of the latter faction was that most of its prominent members hailed from Bihar.352 The differences between the two factions came to a head in late 1876 over the question of the right attitude to be adopted towards the Sultan of Turkey in his current troubles with his Christian subjects and neighbours. In May 1878 the faction whose leader was Nawab Amir Ali Khan set up a new Muslim organization in Calcutta called the National Mahommedan Association, with the declared 'object of promoting, by all legitimate and constitutional means, the well-being of the Mussulmans of India'. Though claiming to derive 'its inspirations [sic] from the noble traditions of the past', it proposed 'to work in harmony with Western culture and the progressive tendencies of the age'. It aimed 'at the political regeneration of the Indian Mahomedans by a moral revival, and by constant endeavours to obtain from Government a recognition of their just and reasonable claims'. It recognized, however, 'the fact that the welfare of the Mahomedans is intimately connected with the well-being of the other races of India' and did not 'exclude from its scope the advocacy and furtherance of the public interests of the people of this country at large'.353

The National Mahommedan Association was intended to fulfil the want of a recognized and bonafide political body among the Mahommedans, to represent faithfully and honestly to Government, from a loyal but independent standpoint, the legitimate wants and requirements of the Mussulman Community'.354 It tried to cater for the slowly emerging educated middle class amongst Muslims. It was frankly modelled on the Indian Association of A. M. Bose and S. N. Banerjea. Like the latter body, it attempted to organize branches all over the country. Within five years of its founding it claimed to have about a dozen branch or affiliated institutions and over 600 subscribing members—'all the "men of light and leading" . . . among the Mussulmans of this country'.355 Its life and soul

350 Times of India, 21 January 1876.

351 See Hindoo Patriot, 31 January 1876.

352 See Amir Ali to H. W. Primrose, private secretary to the viceroy, 10 March 1884, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, no. 104a.

353 Rules and Objects of the Central National Mahommedan Association and Its Branch Associations with the Quinquennial and Annual Reports and Lists of Members (1885), pp. 2-3.

354 Ibid., pp. 1-2.
was its secretary, Syed Amir Ali, a rising barrister, who soon replaced Abdul Latif as the chief Muslim confidant of British officials in Calcutta. Though the National Mahommedan Association had a few Hindus as 'honorary members' and on one or two occasions co-operated with Hindus, it tended increasingly to follow an exclusive and separatist line. It began by demanding that the British government should give preference to Muslims, because of the latter's backwardness and political importance, in matters of education and employment, and soon moved on to insist that competitive examinations, as a mode of selecting candidates for civil offices, should be abandoned and that Muslims should have separate representation on elective bodies. The financial resources of the Association were meagre. Its total income from subscriptions and donations during 1878-83 amounted to no more than Rs. 6,543.

It was no accident that almost simultaneously with the organization of the Mahomedan Literary Society at Calcutta by Abdul Latif in 1863, Syed Ahmed projected a Scientific Society at Ghazipur. Syed Ahmed was an avowed Wahabi, but, unlike most Wahabis, he had the shrewdness to realize that the British raj was too firmly established in India to be easily supplanted and that in the struggle for power which had already commenced in the country between the British on the one hand and the English-educated members of the majority community on the other, the interests of his own co-religionists would be best served by combining with the British. He, therefore, conceived it to be his mission to reconcile his community to British rule, or, as he himself put it, 'to make the Crescent and the Cross one body'.

356 B. 1849; barrister of Calcutta high court; member of Bengal legislative council 1878-80, 1881-3 and of Indian legislative council 1883-5; puisne judge of Calcutta high court 1890-1904; secretary of National Mahommedan Association 1878-90; d. 1928.

357 See The Memorial of the National Mahommedan Association to His Excellency, the Most Noble the Marquis of Ripon . . . Viceroy and Governor-General of India (1882).

358 See, for example, Amir Ali to H. W. Primrose, 10, 12 March, 12 April 1884, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, nos. 104a, 107a, 158a.

359 Rules and Objects of the Central National Mahommedan Association and Its Branch Associations with the Quinquennial and Annual Reports and Lists of Members, p. 13.
imparting western knowledge to Muslims. But as the vast majority of Muslims had neither the will nor the means to acquire western knowledge through the English language, Syed Ahmed, like so many contemporary Anglo-Indian 'Orientalists', deemed it essential to reach them through their own vernacular or classical languages. The primary object of the Scientific Society, which was formally inaugurated on 9 January 1864, was to translate works by western authors into oriental languages, especially Arabic, Persian and Urdu.363 It was not an exclusively Muslim body. Among its supporters and active members are to be found the names of many prominent Anglo-Indians and also a few Hindus. But the Scientific Society failed to prosper. Even the more ambitious scheme of a 'Vernacular' or 'Oriental University', with which Syed Ahmed identified himself soon afterwards, met with a similar fate. It was a sadder but wiser Syed Ahmed who turned his thoughts and energies to the foundation of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. He became convinced, particularly after his visit to Britain in 1869-70, that there was no short cut to western knowledge and that it had to be acquired directly through the medium of a western language, though it might be necessary to combine it with traditional Muslim learning in order to make it less unpalatable to his co-religionists. He also became convinced that the British government in India had no intention of reversing its policy of giving preference to the English-educated for the better-paid jobs and that if Muslims wanted to compete successfully with non-Muslims for those jobs, they must take to English education. Amongst the instructions issued by Syed Ahmed to the members of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College Fund Committee in 1872 we find the following which reveals how far he was prepared to push his theory of the 'special relationship' between the British and Muslims: 'They [the members of the Committee] shall be at liberty to apply for subscriptions to the Muhammadans, for whose benefit, as a nation, the College is to be established, and also to the Christians, who being "people of the Book", and Rulers of India, are doubtless willing to assist in the welfare of the Muhammadans as in that of the people of any other race. It shall not be lawful for the members to ask for subscriptions from any others besides the aforesaid two races; but if any gentlemen belonging to any other nation, or professing any faith other than the above two, shall contribute to the Fund of his own free will, the members of the Committee shall gratefully accept the same.'364

In order to promote English education amongst Muslims and to take advantage of the known willingness of the government to lend them a helping hand, associations grew up in other provinces of India as well. Of these associations, the Mahomedan Improvement Association of Madras (1873)365 and the Anjuman-
i-Islam of Bombay (1876)366 deserve special mention. During 1876-8 Muslims throughout India were profoundly stirred by events in the Near East. Meetings were held in many towns to express sympathy for Turkey and gratitude to the British government for its pro-Turkish stand. Scores of anjumans were formed to raise funds for the relief of the Turks. In the beginning most Anglo-Indians sympathized with all this demonstrative enthusiasm of Indian Muslims for Turkey because it was in line with the policy of the Tory government in Britain, but they were alarmed when it led to fraternization between Hindus and Muslims in India.

The transfer of the government of India to the Crown in 1858 probably did not make the British public or Parliament feel any greater responsibility towards that country than they had done in the past, but it did enhance the importance of agitating Indian questions in Britain in the eyes of most Indians. 'That the battle of Indian reform must now be fought out in England is, we believe, admitted on all hands,' wrote the Hindoo Patriot in 1863.367 The Native Opinion noted in 1865 that 'a Nabob deprived of his pension, a Raja shorn of his privileges, . . . Talookdars or Khotes threatened with invasion of their rights, representative bodies visited with undue neglect, all, all who are dissatisfied . . . look to Westminster for relief'.368 But the experience of Indians of working for the redress of their grievances through 'friends' or 'agents' in Britain had not been encouraging. The Hindoo Patriot revealed in 1866 that the British Indian Association had 'spent about Rs. 50,000 in employing London Agents . . . but these gentlemen made a snug sinecure of their appointment. They regularly drew their pay, but did little.' The paper went on to add: 'Bitter experience has thus taught the natives of Bengal to rely as little as possible on foreign aid in political agitation. It cannot be denied that there are several members of Parliament, who take the deepest interest in India and are ready to advocate its cause, but it is difficult to get them in an organized body. By private communication and intercessions their sympathy and advocacy may be secured, but they are not disposed to work on a Committee unless there be a question of overwhelming importance, and . . . such questions do not arise daily.'369 In 1864 the conductors of the Hindoo Patriot had started publishing an overland edition of their paper in order to correct 'misrepresentation of Native capacity and misapprehension of Native wants [which] so largely prevail[ed]' in Britain,370 but it is doubtful if it secured many readers there.

The India Reform Society in London,371 which had been of some help to Indian associations in the early 'fifties, had begun to disintegrate almost immediately


367 Hindoo Patriot, 3 August 1863.

368 Quoted in Friend of India, 9 February 1865.
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after the passing of the Charter Act in 1853, though it was kept going for many years principally through the efforts of John Dickinson, whom Cobden described as 'a single-minded devotee who labours like a galley-slave from the purest impulse of benevolence'.372 Bright, who had been chairman of the Society since 1855, despaired of effecting any good for India. In 1860 he wrote to a correspondent in Madras: '. . . I am not sanguine that we shall easily produce any change in the Indian Government. The whole concern is one of patronage—and those who hold the good things will not willingly give them up. The English people too are very slow, and very careless about everything that does not immediately affect them. They cannot be excited to any effort for India, except under the pressure of some great calamity, and when that pressure is removed, they fall back into their usual state of apathy. The English Government has always too much on its hands. To keep itself in power is considered its first duty, and there is little force or leisure to do anything else. It hands over India to Sir J. Hobhouse,373 or Mr. [J.C.] Herries,374 or Sir C. Wood, or Lord Stanley,375 and takes no further interest in it until an insurrection is announced, or a loan in England is necessary; and the Indian Minister is expected never to trouble his colleagues except in the last extremity. Parliament cares about India little more than the Cabinet,—and thus the interests of your vast population are left to the tender mercies of an exclusive service whose main object of adoration is patronage. I almost despair of anything being done here . . . .'376 In 1861 Bright resigned as chairman of the Society and was succeeded by Dickinson in that office.377 By 1865 the India Reform Society had ceased to exist.

In 1862 one C. Purushottam Mudaliar,378 who had gone to Britain in order to promote the claims of Prince Azim Jah379 to the nawabship, of the Carnatic, projected in association with certain other Indians then residing in London and probably also some Britons, a 'London Indian Committee' and a weekly paper to be called 'The Star of India' or 'The Champion of India' for 'raising India in the scale of nations'. The London Indian Committee was to correspond with associations in India. It was to meet once a month 'to ventilate and dispose of all questions of serious and grave importance'. The weekly paper was to be the 'English organ of Native interests in every part of the Peninsula of India


373 Better known as Lord Broughton.

374 B. 1778; statesman and financier; president of board of control 1852; d. 1855.

376 Bright to H. Nelson (chairman of the Madras anti-Licence Bill meeting), 14 January 1860, quoted in Athenaeum, 6 March 1860.

377 E. Bell, Last Counsels of an Unknown Counsellor, John Dickinson (1883), p. 31; also Sturgis, op. cit., p. 62.

378 Self-educated man; interpreter in Madras small cause court before departure for Britain in 1861; imprisoned without trial on his return to India in 1870s.

379 B. 1800; uncle of Muhammad Ghaus, Nawab of Carnatic, whom he succeeded, but only as Prince of Arcot, the title granted to him in 1867 with a pension; d. 1874.

[which] will not only advocate the firm establishment of the Native Princes and Zemindars, but also promote the general welfare and improvement of the Ryots'.

Mudaliar's projects were laughed out of court by Anglo-Indians. 'When the members of the Indian Civil Service, or the Officers of the Indian Army,' wrote the Madras Times, 'fail to obtain an hour's attention to their claims from the House of Commons, a knot of exotic Moodellars is not likely to be more successful. If Mr. Poorooshottum's Committee could make itself of essential use to a party, could even turn an election or two, it might have a chance now and then of gaining the ear of the Secretary of State . . . .' Mudaliar's rather aggressive and indiscreet writings embarrassed public men in India, who hastened to disown him. Even in Britain he could get none except a few Indians to support his plans.

Three years later some public-spirited Indians who were then in London for business or education, but who maintained contact with political associations in India, took the lead in establishing 'a centre of action and communication in England for the promotion of native interests'. At a meeting held at the University Hall, Gordon Square, on 24 March 1865, which was attended by 'almost all the principal Indian gentlemen now in London', it was decided to form the London Indian Society for the purpose of discussing all political, social, and literary subjects relating to India, and adopting such measures as may be necessary to acquaint the public in England with the views and feelings of the people of India on all principal questions that may arise from time to time'. It was also decided that 'only natives of India, including Ceylon, should be eligible to become ordinary members' of the Society. The meeting was 'unanimously of opinion that the influence of a body of men representing Indian interests and Indian sentiments would be completely lost if any other than the Indian element should enter into its essential constitution, but that European gentlemen who have distinguished themselves in some shape or other, by doing good service to India, would be elected as honorary members, without having, however, any voice in the management of the affairs of the Society'.

Amongst those who were elected honorary members of the Society at the inauguration meeting we find the names of John Dickinson, Robert Knight, Hodgson Pratt and Professor T. Goldstucker. The following constituted the committee of

380 Madras Times, 16-17 April 1862.
management of the Society: Dadabhai Naoroji, president; Naoroji Fardunji, treasurer; P.M. Mehta; H. Pesterji; 388 G. M. Tagore; M. M. Ghose; W. C. Bonnerjee, secretary; H. Dias; and H. F. Mutukisna. The London Indian Society did not live long. In late 1866 it was merged in the East India Association. The only subject of importance with which it concerned itself during its brief existence was that of the Indian civil service examination in its various aspects. Its chief significance, however, lies in the fact that its leading members were to distinguish themselves in Indian public life in the years to come. The East India Association represents the most ambitious attempt ever made to set up a comprehensive organization in London of all those who took any interest in India. It is said to have originated in a suggestion made by Sir Bartle Frere, then governor of Bombay. Its nucleus was provided by the rumps of the Indian Officers' Committee and the India Reform Society, and the London Indian Society. After about a year's preparatory work, the East India Association was formally launched on 1 December 1866. Its declared objective was 'the independent and disinterested advocacy and promotion by all legitimate means of the interests and welfare of India generally'. It intended to provide the British public and members of Parliament 'information and assistance on all Indian subjects within its power'. Membership of the Association was open to all, officials or non-officials, Europeans or Indians, on payment of an annual subscription of one sovereign or ten rupees. Local committees of the Association were to be formed in the important towns of India and the co-operation of independent public bodies in that country was invited.

All sorts of people were attracted to the East India Association: Anglo-Indians wanting to promote their interests or just to air their views; British public men in search of a cause or a constituency; and Indians anxious to better their own or their country's prospects. Despite some teething troubles, the Association grew rapidly. Its membership increased from 125 in March 1867 to 1,000 in early 1871. The vast majority of the members were, however, drawn from
388 B. 02; baptized 1839; visited Britain 1862-73; d. 1891.

389 Barrister; Queen's advocate and member of Ceylon legislative council.

390 Deputy Queen's advocate, Ceylon.


392 B. 1815; joined East India Company's service 1834; chief commissioner of Sindh 1850-9; member of viceroy's council 1859-62; governor of Bombay 1862-7; member of secretary of state's council 1867-77; governor of the Cape 1877-80; d. 1884.

393 Englishman, 17 February 1866.

394 Formed in 1861 by army officers of the old East India Company who felt aggrieved in consequence of the amalgamation of their troops with those of the Crown in 1860 and also known as the Amalgamation Inquiry Committee. Before its dissolution in 1866 it advised its constituents to support the projected East India Association. See Home News, 18 September 1866.

395 Ibid., 3 December 1866.


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India. The Association acquired a 'permanent home' at 55 Parliament Street, where it maintained a library and reading room. From July 1867 onwards it started publishing a quarterly journal containing reports of its meetings and the papers submitted for discussion. Though its committee of management was always dominated by retired Anglo-Indians, the Association secured the support of many distinguished British public men. It had no settled programme of work. It was composed of diverse elements who tried to pull it in different directions. In the first few years the Indians, with the active co-operation of some liberal-minded Anglo-Indians and Britons, were able to use the Association to some extent for advancing their country's cause. Papers were read at the meetings of the Association putting forward the Indian view on Indian questions, criticizing current official policies and voicing Indian wants and aspirations. Deputations waited on the home authorities to urge Indian claims and attempts were made to interest the British public in Indian affairs. But the number of the Indian members of the Association resident at any time in London, or that of their British friends, was very small. It was not long before the conservative-minded Anglo-Indians, realizing the dangers of allowing the Association to be used for propagating radical and pro-Indian views, asserted themselves and converted the East India Association into a mere debating society. Already in October 1867 the Englishman was urging Anglo-Indians to 'bestir themselves if they would provide a counterpoise' to 'the most dangerous fallacies' being enunciated by Dadabhai Naoroji and his friends from the platform of the
In July 1870 the London correspondent of the Bombay Gazette wrote that the East India Association was 'vastly improved now upon what it was in its early days' and he expressed what was obviously the prevailing view in conservative Anglo-Indian circles, that the Association should content itself with discussion and refrain from 'sending deputations to pester the authorities, or . . . petitioning Parliament to put the Government of India in commission'.

Nine years later the London correspondent of the Times of India reported with evident satisfaction: 'The meetings [of the East India Association] are now attended by men of influence and official position, and there is a great deal less of that carping querulousness at all that is, and unbounded admiration for all that is not, which once formed the staple of the speeches at the East India Association.'

The election of Richard Temple as president of the Association in May 1881 was symbolic of the fact that the Association had been taken over by those Anglo-Indians who were not friendly to Indian political aspirations.

The man who played the leading role in organizing the East India Association and in placing it on a sound financial footing was Dadabhai Naoroji. He had a strong belief in the sense of justice and righteousness of the British people. As he told a public meeting in Bombay on 5 May 1869: 'It is a peculiar trait in the English national character that when once a case is made out beyond all doubt, and the public is convinced as to what justice and righteousness demand from them, nothing whatever, no consideration of any kind, would stop them from doing what is right. Like the lion—a very appropriate symbol of English character—the English public is difficult to be roused, but when once roused no obstacle can stop it . . . All that is necessary is to make out a good case.'

But he had no illusions about the difficulty of interesting the British public in a distant country like India. 'A pin's head in the foreground of a picture', he remarked in 1868, 'occupies more ground than the highest hills in the far background. It struck me much one evening while attending the House of Commons, that the statue of Sir Robert Peel at the gate of Parliament House created far greater interest and more lively discussion, than the budget of the weal and woe of the two hundred millions of India.'

Naoroji had a clear idea of what he wanted to achieve through the instrumentality of the East India Association. The Association could 'bring India nearer to the mind of England than it at present is . . . [and] at least make that thinking portion of the English population, who in reality ultimately guide the rulers as well as the public in this country, acquainted with the wants and facts of India'. It could be of substantial help to the local associations in India by fighting their battles in Britain, especially over 'questions of important general principles and policy' and by directing and co-ordinating their activities to some extent. The local associations in India, in their turn, could help the East India Association by supplying it with money and information on all important subjects.
Both by its example and exertions, the East India Association provided, at least initially, some stimulus to political life in India. Hundreds of prominent Indians from all parts of the country enrolled themselves as its members and several local organizations were set up. But, while welcoming the formation of the East India Association and willing to give it a trial, the more experienced amongst the public men of India remained sceptical of its success or usefulness. The Hindoo Patriot, for example, wrote on 14 January 1867: ‘The field of operations before the East India Association is as wide as India, and we may fairly enquire whether there are elements in it possessing that varied knowledge of the wants and wishes of all classes of the Indian community, which is so essential to its usefulness. One great drawback to its success is the absence of an efficient native element in the Managing Committee, and we fear for years to come it will not be supplied. Military officers cannot be expected to know much about the natives of India, while retired civilians may from a fellow-feeling for their brethren in India withhold themselves from the agitation of questions affecting their character and good name. . . . We . . . wish that a provision were made for giving the non-resident members a sufficient voice in the affairs of the Association.’405 It was obviously because W. C. Bonnerjee and P. M. Mehta shared the views of the Hindoo Patriot that they vigorously opposed the idea of giving the managing committee of the East India Association untrammeled power of thinking and acting on behalf of the organization.406

The East India Association failed to realize its ambition of having branch or affiliated bodies in all the important towns of India. Its formation aroused little enthusiasm amongst the Indian community in southern India, but, thanks mainly to the efforts of a few Anglo-Indians and Eurasians, a Madras branch of the East India Association was established on 10 January 1868.407 It, however, did not thrive and went out of existence after a couple of years.408 The interest of the Bengalis in the East India Association was from the outset tempered with profound scepticism. They even tended to look upon it as ‘quite a Bombay concern’.409 Though a fairly large number of them, including leaders of the British Indian Association, became members of the East India Association, attempts to establish a branch of the latter association at Calcutta did not succeed, probably because they were frowned upon by the powerful British Indian Association. In western India the East India Association secured greater support. This was due largely to the influence and exertions of Dadabhai Naoroji. During his visit to his native land in 1869, and again in 1871, he persuaded several merchants, chiefs and princes in western India...
to make liberal donations to the funds of the East India Association and hundreds of his compatriots to enrol themselves as its members. Though the recently revived Bombay Association decided against getting mixed up with the East India Association, its leaders cooperated with Dadabhai Naoroji in setting up on 22 May 1869 a separate branch of the London association at Bombay. The Bombay branch was composed of the members of the East India Association spread throughout the presidency. Its attention was to be principally directed towards supplying accurate and authentic information to the head body in London, particularly on all questions relating to the Bombay Presidency;...towards suggesting or proposing practical measures in connection therewith;...towards diffusing a knowledge of Indian questions generally, particularly in connection with the work of the Association among the general body of the people here;...towards acting as a medium of communication between the Association and all those persons or bodies desirous of carrying on correspondence with it in the spirit of the aims and objects which it has undertaken to promote; and...towards raising funds for and acting generally

405 Hindoo Patriot, 14 January 1867.


408 For the activities of the Madras branch during the short period of its existence, see Madras Times, 6 March, 11 July, 28 October 1868, 23 February 1869.

409 E. Bell to S. C. Mukerji, quoted in F. H. Skrine, An Indian Journalist: Being the Life, Letters and Correspondence of Dr. Sambhu C. Mookerjee (1895), p. 84; also Hindoo Patriot, 14 December 1868, 6 March 1871.

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as the Agents of the Association'.410 Amongst the office-bearers of the branch association are found the names of many prominent public men of Bombay, both Indian and British, such as Jamshedji Jijibhai, president; Mangaldas Nathubhai, V. J. Shankarseth, Bairamji Jijibhai, D. M. Petit, C. N. Cama411 and Raymond West,412 vice-presidents; Dr. Bhau Daji, W. Wedderburn, S. S Bengali,413 V. N. Mandlik, W. Martin Wood,414 Raghunath Narayan, Shantaram Narayan, M. G. Ranade, Dr. Atmaram Pandurang,415 R. G. Bhandarkar416 and K. N. Kabra,417 members of the managing committee; and P. M. Mehta and B. M. Wagle,418 honorary secretaries. But even the Bombay branch of the East India Association showed little energy and earnestness, though it continued to exist for a long time. In 1876 the Native Opinion described it as 'a lifeless body'.419

The East India Association could not secure any tangible benefits for India. Even the two minor concessions for which it could claim partial credit, namely the grant of nine scholarships to Indians for higher studies in Britain and the appointment of a parliamentary committee to look into the finances of India, were withdrawn by the British government soon after they were made. All this naturally had a very demoralizing effect on the supporters of the Association in India.
Indian confidence in the East India Association was further undermined when Dadabhai Naoroji, who had been the only regular Indian member of the managing committee of the Association since its formation and latterly its honorary secretary, returned to India in 1873 following his appointment as diwan of Baroda. In August 1873 Naoroji Fardunji, then on a visit to Britain, told the Association that it 'should not rest content with the reading and discussion of lectures, but should give practical effect to them, and make suitable representations to Parliament, or to the Secretary of State for India'. When in 1875 the Association complained that it had not received from the people of India 'that degree of support . . . which it had reason to expect, and to which it may honestly lay claim', some Indian newspapers retorted that it had as a rule ignored those questions in which the people of India felt any practical interest. Three years later the Indian Mirror gave expression to the popular feeling in the country regarding the Association when it wrote: ' . . . what has the East India Association done? It is a convenient platform from which ex-Civilians now and then endeavour to enlighten the world with their exploded notions about Indian Government. But certainly the East India Association does not represent the people of India.' But the disappointment of Indians with

410 Journal of the East India Association, 1869, vol. iii, no. 3, p. 76.

411 Businessman.

412 B. 1832; joined East India Company's service 1855; judge of Bombay high court 1873 86; member of governor's council 1886-92; d. 1912.

413 B. 1831; son of a Parsi merchant in Calcutta; author and social reformer; visited Britain 1868; member of Bombay legislative council 1876-8; d. 1893.

414 Editor of Times of India.

415 B. 1823; physician; d. 1898.

416 B. 1837; educationist, orientalist and social reformer; member of Indian legislative council 1903-4 and of Bombay legislative council 1904-5; d. 1925.

417 B. 1842; editor of Rast Goftar; d. 1904.

418 Lawyer; d. 1887.

419 Native Opinion, 16 January 1876.


421 'Summary of the Operations of the East India Association from Its Foundation'. ibid., 1875-6, vol. ix, no. 3, p. 179.
the East India Association did not make them lose faith in the sense of justice of the British people or minimize the importance of agitating Indian questions in Britain. Already in the late 'seventies they had begun to search for other men and means in order to promote their objectives in the land of their rulers.

422 See Hindoo Patriot, 17 May 1875, and notice of Indian press comments in Pioneer, 5 June 1875.

423 Indian Mirror, 8 May 1878.

CHAPTER FIVE Discontent and Agitation, 1858-80

THE NORMAL STATE of the Indian finances even before the revolt of 1857 was one of chronic deficit. The revolt involved an enormous increase in military expenditure and by 1858-60 the deficit mounted to the unprecedented height of £31 millions. As usual, the government of India tried to meet this huge deficit by borrowing, and the public debt of India, which stood at £59 millions in April 1857, rose to £98 millions by April 1860, and the interest charge increased from £2.5 millions to £4.4 millions a year.1

Desperately anxious to augment its income, the government of India resorted to certain increases in indirect taxation, but as these proved inadequate, it was rather reluctantly forced to make an attempt at direct taxation. In August 1859 a bill was introduced in the Indian legislative council for a licence tax on trades and professions. The bill evoked an unexpectedly strong opposition both in the council and outside. The opposition in the council was headed by no less a person than Sir Barnes Peacock,2 the chief justice of the Calcutta supreme court and vice-president of the council. Acting almost as a spokesman for the non-official British community in India, Peacock attacked the bill principally because it exempted officials, landholders and fund holders from the payment of the proposed tax, and he insisted that before the council could consider the bill it must have a full and frank statement of public revenue and expenditure.3 The governors of Bombay and Madras counselled against the measure. The latter, Sir Charles E. Trevelyan, wrote: 'This tax would again cover the country with a swarm of ill-paid, unprincipled, ill-superintended native subordinates, with duties so favourable to underhand exaction, that it would be impossible to prevent them from preying upon the people. The experience I have had of the want of principle in making the returns of the Income Tax even in Christian England, makes me exceedingly dread the introduction of such an element of immorality and extortion.

2B. 1810; called to the bar 1830; made his reputation by obtaining the acquittal of Daniel O'Connell on appeal to House of Lords 1843; legal member of viceroy's council 1852-9; chief justice of Calcutta supreme (later high) court 1859-70; d. 1890.

Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, for January to December 1859, cols. 635-42.

into this heathen country. '4 He communicated to the government of India the views of high Madras officials to the effect that the proposed tax would arouse 'distrust', 'dissatisfaction', 'discontent', 'uneasiness', and 'disaffection' amongst the people.

The non-official British community in Calcutta, which had been at loggerheads with the administration for quite some time, was furious at what it considered to be an attempt on the latter's part to make it pay for the suppression of the 'native rebellion', and it raised the cry of 'no taxation without representation'. The Anglo-Indian press denounced the bill and the Calcutta Trade Association, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and the Indigo Planters' Association petitioned against it. A 'monster' protest meeting was held in Calcutta on 12 September 1859, representing all sections of the population but dominated chiefly by non-official Britons. The meeting condemned the Bill as being 'wholly wrong in principle as well as in detail' and suggested instead 'an equitable income and property tax' on all classes. The meeting also demanded a reform of the legislative council 'by the addition of independent and practical men as members' and a parliamentary inquiry 'into the general state of the finances of India, and into the causes of the discontent and distrust that exist with respect to the present administration of the Government'. These demands were later incorporated in petitions submitted to the Indian legislative council and the British Parliament.

The lead given by Calcutta was followed by Madras, Bombay, Ahmedabad and Poona, where similar indignation meetings were held and similar demands were voiced. There were, however, some significant differences between the agitation as organized at Calcutta and that at Madras and Bombay. The agitation at Calcutta was almost exclusively British. Despite their efforts, the Calcutta Britons failed to secure the co-operation of more than a handful of local Indians, mainly traders. This was due to many reasons. A bitter racial antagonism divided the two communities in Calcutta. The Indians in Calcutta looked upon Lord Canning as their friend and protector, and they sensed that the present agitation against the Licence Bill was essentially a continuation of the old Anglo-Indian vendetta against the viceroy. Moreover, the leaders of the Indian community in Calcutta were mainly zamindars, who could not be expected to ally themselves with the advocates of a general income tax on all classes, including the landholders. The agitation in Madras was also dominated by Anglo-Indians, but there they did not apparently encounter much difficulty in enlisting the co-operation of local Indian leaders, with whom their relations were on the whole satisfactory. But the Madras petition differed from the Calcutta one in demanding a substantial degree of decentralization in the administration of India and a far more radical

reform of the legislative council. The Madras petition urged that each presidency should have its own legislative council, containing non-official representatives of the various sections of the population, to deal with measures of an exclusively local character, subject to the veto of the governor, and that the distinction between imperial and local measures should be defined by the British Parliament. The Madras petition also urged that a representative system similar to that of the Ceylon legislative council be introduced into India and that a representative from each presidency, elected by the local legislature, be added to the supreme legislative council.7 In Bombay one section of the Indian community, under the leadership of Dr. Bhau Daji, co-operated with Anglo-Indians in protesting against the Licence Bill, while another, under the auspices of the Bombay Association, organized a separate demonstration on its own. The latter's petition confined itself exclusively to financial matters, but the former's petition was very comprehensive in its demands and suggestions.8

The secretary of state for India, Sir Charles Wood, realized the gravity of the situation in India and sent out to the country, as finance member of the governor-general's council, a renowned financial expert in the person of James Wilson.9 Soon after his arrival in India in November 1859, Wilson won over the irate non-official Britons to his side by taking them into his confidence, by withdrawing the hated Licence Bill introduced by his predecessor, by reducing the import duties, and by introducing the budget system. The chief remedy which Wilson proposed for the financial ills of India was a tax on all incomes above Rs. 200 per annum. Incomes above Rs. 200 and below Rs. 500 per annum were to be charged at the rate of two per cent and higher incomes at four per cent.10

It was now the turn of Indians to protest more loudly than non-official Britons. The British Indian Association of Calcutta denounced the proposed income tax as a violation of the permanent settlement.11 The Indian press in general complained that the tax was unsuited to Indian conditions, that it would involve prying into private affairs, that it would encourage harassment and extortion by officials, and that the taxable minimum was fixed very low. Indian opposition to the proposed income tax received some encouragement from the publication in April 1860 of the minutes of the governor of Madras, Trevelyan, and members of his council, containing a wholesale condemnation of Wilson's scheme of taxation,12 but it was short-lived. Trevelyan's 'rebellion' embarrassed Wilson, but it did not deter him from his course. Wilson knew that Indians were just

7Madras Times, 27 September 1859.
8See above, pp. 169-70.
9B. 1805; founded The Economist 1843; M.P. 1847-59; joint secretary to board of control 1848-52; financial secretary to treasury 1853-8; vice-president of board of trade 1859; first finance member of viceroy's council 1859-60.

10 Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, for January to December 1860, cols. 84-149.

11 Bengal Hurkaru, 23 April 1860.

12 The minutes were first published in an extraordinary supplement by the Madras Daily Times and Spectator, 31 March 1860.

then 'not in the mood to resist anything' and he had already assured himself that the bulk of non-official Britons in India would not unite with the former in active opposition to him. Trevelyan's open protest, in fact, strengthened Wilson's position. Non-official Britons in general denounced Trevelyan for his 'wanton indiscretion' in publishing the minutes of his council and characterized his action as an incitement to rebellion and a bid for 'complete independence' for Madras. Only a few non-official Britons in Madras and Bombay supported Trevelyan, but they did so chiefly because they felt that he had challenged the hated dominance of Calcutta and stood up for provincial autonomy. The viceroy and the secretary of state rallied to Wilson's support, though they were not entirely convinced of the wisdom of his policy. In June 1860 Trevelyan was recalled. The Indian associations of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras voted valedictory addresses to him in which they applauded his stand, sympathized with his fate and recorded the gratitude of the Indian people to him. But Trevelyan's recall convinced most thinking Indians that Wilson was in earnest and that any further opposition to his policy would be futile. As the Hindoo Patriot remarked: 'The success of the income-tax scheme now becomes sure. No opposition, perhaps, that will now be raised in India will avail. All will be identified with the Madras minutes, and all will share the fate of their author.'

On 1 August 1860 the income tax became law throughout British India. Indians generally acquiesced in what they called 'the mutiny tax' and derived some consolation from official assurances that the hated impost would last only five years. The press, however, continued to report that a spirit of 'sullen and ominous discontent' was abroad in the land and that all sorts of rumours about new and more obnoxious taxes to be levied were circulating. When Wilson suddenly died in Calcutta on 11 August 1860, it was not only the ignorant and superstitious part of the Indian population which saw in the event the hand of the Almighty raised in vengeance. The complicated and almost incomprehensible forms of assessment served a couple of months later added to the prevailing excitement in the country. But it was only in a few places, especially in the Bombay presidency, that this excitement found vent in organized demonstrations of protest in the traditional Indian style. In Bombay, Poona, Surat and Bassein, the people affected by the income tax, particularly the traders, held private meetings and resolved not to make any returns whatever. There were hartals and

crowds besieged the offices of the income tax assessors. Anglo-Indian newspapers denounced these attempts at passive resistance as 'rebellion' and called upon the government to assert its dignity by at once making an example of some of the most influential of the ringleaders of the opposition to the income tax, such as 'will teach them that the English Government is not to be braved with impunity'. The authorities issued new and simpler forms in the place of the old and complicated ones. They used their influence with the wealthy leaders of Indian society to break the combinations against the tax. They also punished some of the ringleaders of the agitation with heavy fines or imprisonment. The situation was soon under control and the collection of the income tax proceeded smoothly, though it did not add to the popularity of the British government in India. When Samuel Laing, Wilson's successor as finance member, arrived in Calcutta in January 1861, Canning told him emphatically that 'danger for danger, he would rather risk governing India with 40,000 European troops without new taxes, than 100,000 with them'. Laing abolished the tax on incomes below Rs. 500 per annum. He also dispensed with the licence tax and the tax on tobacco, which had been proposed by Wilson.

The attempt to impose direct taxation throughout British India after the revolt had two other extremely important consequences: it helped in the consolidation of Indian feeling against the government; and it led to the reform of the legislative system in India.

Objecting to the proposed licence tax on trades and professions throughout British India, a Madras civilian, William Robinson, had written in November 1859: '... I must avow a creed, that our political safety in India depends, in no small degree, on our taking no measures that tend to unite the now sufficiently dislocated interest, feelings, and objects of its various populations. They have naturally a common interest against conquerors, however just. Happily, they but partially know it, and they have few points of union; why then give the mahajan of the North West Provinces, the pandit, &c, of Benares, the sahukar of Bombay, the brahmin money-lender of Tanjore, and the moplah trader of Malabar, a common war-cry, by sudden, simultaneous, general legislation of an unpopular character? Legislation in India should be several; localized feeling and interests should be fostered, and taxation especially, should vary in character in
different parts of the country, and for the different populations, according to their respective circumstances and feelings. ... Why ... bring our population

20Bombay Times and Standard, November-December 1860. For instances in the past of similar resistance to taxation in India, see a leading article in Indian News, 2 November 1850.

21Bombay Gazette, 20 November 1860.

22B. 1812; financial secretary to treasury 1859-60; finance member of viceroy's council 1861-2; M.P.1852-7, 1859, 1865-85; d. 1897.


25B. 1822; joined East India Company's service in Madras 1842; member of governor's council 1873 8; acted as governor of Madras 1875; d. 1886.

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into direct sympathy with the people of other Presidencies, in a matter on which human nature is so proverbially sensitive? ... generalization should be avoided, and no cause should be given for general and violent discussion of financial measures required by the State.'26 Cruel necessity, coupled with a passion for centralization and uniformity, made the government of India neglect Robinson's warning, and the result was precisely what he had foretold. The unpopular income tax provided the people of India with a common grievance which promoted a feeling of unity not only among the various classes of the Indian population within each province but also among the people of the various provinces in the country. In 1860 India lay prostrate after the revolt and communications were relatively undeveloped, but the unanimity which the people of the different provinces displayed in condemning the income tax and in expressing their appreciation of Trevelyan was indicative of the fact that the touch of the imperial tax-gatherer was already making the whole Indian world kin.

The government of India's attempt, after the revolt, to impose direct taxation stimulated a new political life in the country. Not only did it lead to debate, controversy and agitation, it also brought forth the assertion that those who were to be taxed had a right to a knowledge of and a certain control over the expenditure of taxes. It revived the old demand for an introduction of non-officials into the supreme legislative council and the constitution of similar bodies in the provinces. Non-official Anglo-Indians were, in fact, louder and more insistent in making this demand than Indians. The revolt of 1857 had, of course, already underlined the need for associating Indians with the process of law-making in India,27 but it was the controversy over the government's new financial policy and the pressure of non-official Anglo-Indian opinion which really forced the hand of the viceroy and the secretary of state to attend urgently to the question of reforming the legislative council.28 Non-official Anglo-Indians were a clamant and powerful body. They had influential friends in Britain and even amongst high British officials in
India. The government was particularly apprehensive that they might, in their existing bitter mood, unite with Indians, as they actually did in Calcutta in December 1860 over the 'Mysore grant',29 and add to its embarrassments. It was, therefore, anxious to mollify them. But any inclusion of representatives of non-official Anglo-Indians in the legislative council would have, besides being bitterly resented by Indians, meant an undesirable increase in their influence in the government. It was, therefore, felt necessary to include Indians also as a counterweight to non-official Anglo-Indians.


27See above, pp. 105-6.

28See particularly dispatch from government of India to secretary of state, 9 December 1859, in Copy of Despatches from the Governor General of India to the Secretary of State for India, respecting the Constitution of Councils in India, Parliamentary Papers, 1861, vol. xliii, no. 307, pp. 280-7.

29See Englishman, 21 December 1860.

The Indian Councils Act of 1861 provided that for legislative purposes the governor-general's council should be enlarged by the addition of not less than six and not more than twelve members, nominated for two years, of whom not less than half were to be non-officials. The Act also provided for the addition of not less than four and not more than eight members, of whom not less than half were to be non-officials, to the councils of the governors of Bombay and Madras when they met for the purpose of law-making. The governor-general was authorized to create similar councils for Bengal, the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab.30

The legislative council at Calcutta had latterly exhibited a spirit of too much independence and behaved almost like a 'petty parliament'. The passage of the Councils Act of 1861 gave the secretary of state an opportunity to clip the wings of the Calcutta council and to define precisely its constitutional position. The Act introduced the safeguard of requiring the governor-general's prior sanction for the introduction of bills or contentious subjects and preserved his veto. Further, the council could only discuss motions for leave to introduce a bill, or bills actually before it. Judges, who had proved to be thorns in the side of the executive, ceased to be ex-officio members of the council. In his communications to the viceroy, the secretary of state was insistent that every care should be taken to prevent the council from developing into an independent body or a miniature parliament. No rules were to be made and no expressions used which tended to create an impression that there was a legislative council separate and distinct from the executive council. The additional members were to be treated as members of the governor-general's council when it met for the purpose of making laws.31

Finance was not the only worry of the British government in India in the years immediately following the suppression of the revolt. From the autumn of 1859 onwards it was confronted with a serious administrative and political problem in Bengal, where the cultivators on the
extensive indigo plantations in several districts defied their European masters and refused to sow indigo, even though some of them had received advances for this purpose. Indigo planting in India was a cruel and oppressive system, almost a kind of forced labour. The planters, exercising the powers of landlord and creditor, kept the cultivators in a state of complete dependence. The crop had become increasingly unprofitable to the cultivators, but they were pressed into sowing it, often by subterfuge, forgery and even force. Resentment against the system had been growing for years and the misdeeds of the planters had become a topic of indignant animadversion in the villages and even in the towns of Bengal. At last the long-suffering cultivators

30Act 24 & 25 Vic, c. 67.


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lost their patience and, with the encouragement and support of the more influential sections of Bengali society in the countryside, resorted to their traditional weapon of dharmaghat.32

The powers of combination and organization displayed by the cultivators in their struggle against the indigo planters surprised the authorities. Browne Wood, the special investigator appointed by the lieutenant-governor of Bengal, reported on the situation in the district of Murshidabad in early 1860: 'A regular league was . . . formed against indigo cultivation, oaths were subscribed to by both Hindoos and Mussulmans, Ryots of one village were called upon, by beat of drum, to assist those of another, if molested by the planters' servants, etc., and if pressed to cultivate indigo by such servants, they were to resist; signals were made and given, subscriptions raised; villagers turned out by the beat of drum and proceeded in large bodies armed to any alleged threatened spot; in fact, they had it all their own way, the Polics were afraid and had been bought over by the Ryots.'33 In September 1860 the lieutenant-governor, J. P. Grant,34 himself, while travelling by steamer in the Pabna district, was astonished to find the banks of the river Jumna lined with thousands of men, women and children calling for justice. He was impressed by their earnest though respectful and orderly demeanour and by their 'organization and capacity for combined and simultaneous action'.35 He submitted a report on the demonstration to the viceroy. The latter wrote to the secretary of state that the lieutenant-governor's report on the demonstration by the cultivators in the Pabna district 'for about a week . . . caused me more anxiety than I have had since the days of Delhi'. And he added: 'A people who can do this, and do it soberly and intelligently, may be weak and unresistful individually, but as a mass they cannot be dealt with too carefully; neither can there be any doubt that they feel a deep-seated grievance. From that day I felt that a shot fired in anger or fear by a foolish Planter might put every factory in Lower Bengal in flames.'36

The 'blue mutiny' continued to disturb the peace of rural Bengal for about three years. It spread from one indigo district to another and involved thousands of cultivators. Though marked by a few armed clashes and acts of incendiarism, it was by and large non-violent in character. The indigo planters, threatened with
32 On dharmaghat (strike), see Hindoo Patriot, 13 July 1854. Early in February 1854 the Anglo-Indian Calcutta Morning Chronicle wrote that 'the natives' were becoming anglicized and quoted as an instance a recent strike in Bombay. This prompted the Friend of India, 9 February 1854, to comment: 'On the contrary, strikes are thoroughly Oriental. An European growls and goes on. A discontented native stops work. Strikes are the orthodox method of expressing discontent throughout India. When a town considers itself oppressed, the shops are closed, and the organization is more perfect than in Europe. . . . Should there ever be rebellion in Bengal, it will take this form of passive resistance.


34 B. 1807; joined East India Company's service 1828; member of governor-general's council 1854-9; lieutenant-governor of Bengal 1859-62; governor of Jamaica 1866-73; d. 1893.

35 Kling, op. cit., p. 169.


238 financial ruin and fearing a general rebellion, sought the help of the British mercantile community of Calcutta and of the government. The government was torn between its sympathy for the white planters and its duty to the oppressed cultivators. It issued a notification telling the cultivators that they were not obliged to enter into contracts for the cultivation of indigo, but impressing upon them the duty of fulfilling their contracts once they had entered into them. It also sent troops to the disturbed districts, increased the powers of the magistrates to compel fulfilment of contracts, and set up a special commission of inquiry. The cultivators secured the sympathy and support of certain zamindars, educated Indians in Calcutta, Christian missionaries and British officials. The findings of the indigo commission reinforced the case of the cultivators and their friends against the planters. 37

The 'blue mutiny' hastened the decline of the indigo industry in Bengal and struck a blow at a vicious system of exploitation. The cultivators of Bengal had proved that they were capable of grasping and making a determined stand for their lawful rights. 'This conduct of the ryots', wrote the Hindoo Patriot, 'has taught two lessons: the one to our rulers and the other to our countrymen. The former have learnt not to reckon too confidently on the passive patience of the Bengali, and our countrymen have learnt that if India is ever to improve in her political condition, it will be not indeed by the force of arms but by the united will and inflexible determination of her sons never to yield their lawful rights to the voracious rapacity and insolent hauteur of any class of oppressors. They have learnt that unflinching perseverance to claim and assert whatever belonged to them by natural legal justice as creatures of the same creator or as subjects of the same sovereign is sure in the end to be crowned with success.' 38

The struggle of humble Bengali cultivators against European planters naturally added to the already existing racial antagonism in the country." But the evil was to some extent moderated by
the fact that certain European missionaries and officials had espoused the cause of the cultivators against people of their own race. When the Reverend James Long was tried and convicted for his part in the famous Nil Darpan affair, he became a martyr in the eyes of Indians. An Indian paid his fine and when, in 1861, Long left for England, a deputation of the Indian community, headed by the venerable Raja Radhakant Deb, waited on him and presented him with an address expressing their admiration and gratitude for his conduct. The indigo agitation served to quicken the social conscience of English-


39In 1861 Long wrote a preface to, and superintended the English translation of, the Nil Darpan, a satirical Bengali play by Dinbandhu Mitra directed against European indigo planters. He was indicted for libel and sentenced to Rs. 1,000 fine and a month's imprisonment.

40 Friend of India, 8 August 1861.

239 educated Indians. The earnestness which men like Harishchandra Mukerji, Shishir Kumar Ghose and Dwarkanath Vidyabhushan displayed in espousing the cause of the cultivators proved that the rising intelligentsia in the towns was neither isolated from nor indifferent to the lot of their humbler brethren in the villages. As the Bengal Hurkaru remarked: 'Whatever may be the foibles of "Young Bengal", want of sympathy with the poor and suffering is decidedly not one of them.'

The indigo disturbances of 1859-62 brought home to the British in India the dangers of a widespread agrarian uprising in the country. These dangers were heavily underscored by the Pabna riots in 1873 and the Deccan riots in 1875, though these riots were directed primarily against indigenous oppressors. There were many Britons who feared that both economically and politically India might go the way of Ireland. The preoccupation of British administrators in India in the later nineteenth century with the reform of the land-laws of the country was to no small extent due to this fear.

The variety of motives which prompted the British to promote English education in India in the first half of the nineteenth century can be summed up under two heads: their natural desire as rulers to impart what they considered to be their superior culture to their subjects; and their need to secure a class of anglicized Indian collaborators. The hopes and expectations of the British 'Anglicists', or at least some of them, were not entirely realized. For example, English education failed to destroy Indian religions and to advance appreciably the cause of Christianity in India. Missionaries were horrified to find that most English-educated Indians, especially those who had studied in non-missionary institutions, remained firmly attached to their own religions, though often critical of certain aspects of them, and became determined opponents of Christianity. Not
unnaturally, it was missionaries, most of whom were educationists as well, who were the first to have second thoughts about and express their dissatisfaction with the educational policy of the government as laid down by Bentinck and Macaulay in 1835.

Missionaries condemned the secular education given in government schools as being 'godless' and alleged that it was contributing to the growth of infidelity and disloyalty to the British government in India. They insisted that the teaching of the Bible should be an essential part of the curriculum in government schools. Missionaries looked upon government schools as rivals to their own and demanded that the government should withdraw from higher education, thus virtually leaving the field to them. They also demanded that their own schools should share in the state patronage to education in India. They advocated the introduction into India of the English system of grants-in-aid. Another complaint of missionaries was that not much had been done by the government for the sound education of the masses and that the cultivation of the vernaculars had been neglected. Missionaries still cherished the hope that western knowledge would ultimately destroy 'the castle of heathenism' in India, but an assault had to be made on that castle from both the top and the bottom—from the top through English and from the bottom through the vernaculars. And as destruction alone was not their objective, they wanted western knowledge to be combined with Christianity.

The concern of missionaries for the education of the masses and the state of vernacular literature in India was not entirely altruistic. By the middle of the nineteenth century missionaries had begun to despair of gaining many converts from amongst the higher classes and castes or English-educated Indians in the towns. Their only chance of success, they thought, lay with the lower castes and classes and the simple, unsophisticated masses in the villages. But these latter were difficult to get at. Experience had taught missionaries that preaching alone did not cut much ice with Indians. And even if it did, where was the army of preachers which would have been required to do the job? The easiest mode of reaching the Indian masses was, missionaries believed, by means of cheap vernacular literature. But in order to be able to read this literature, which was already being produced in plenty but finding few readers, the Indian masses must first be educated.

Missionaries were a very powerful interest group and they knew when and where to apply pressure in order to secure their objectives. Their views were ably represented before the select committees of Parliament in 1852-3 by Alexander Duff and others. Duff also succeeded in 'getting more and more of the ear of men in whose hands Providence has placed, for the present, the future destinies of India'. The latter were in a mood to listen to missionaries. Besides being in sympathy with the objectives of missionaries, they were themselves not entirely happy with the working and results of their educational policy. That policy had not been consistently or
uniformly followed in all parts of India. It had been a success in so far as it had generated a
desire and demand for English education in India and assured a fair supply of English-educated
Indians for subordinate administrative posts. But the progress of English education in India had
been very uneven. Bengal had raced ahead of the other provinces and Hindus had raced ahead of
Muslims in the matter of English education. In certain regions, such as the North-Western
Provinces and Bihar, there had been a definite resistance to English schools as they were feared
to be the instruments of proselytization. Even amongst Hindus only certain classes and castes,
especially those with a tradition of learning, had taken advantage of English education. The
assumption that the new learning would filter from the classes to the masses had begun to be
questioned. The education imparted had remained mainly literary in character and its acquisition
was sought primarily because it offered means of gainful employment in government service.
Already

43'Exeter Hall and Manchester denote briefly the two most powerful class agencies in England.'
Friend of India, 22 February 1866.


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there was a feeling in official circles that any further encouragement to such education was
unnecessary and dangerous, for it would only increase the number of highly educated Indians
who could not be employed and who would naturally become discontented.

Wood's famous education dispatch of 185445 was, as is well known, largely inspired by
missionaries, particularly Duff,46 but it also represented a coalescence of views between
officials and missionaries on the subject of educational policy in India. The dispatch laid down,
among other things, that government efforts should concentrate on the lower levels of education
and that higher education should be supported by those who were anxious for it. The government
was to withdraw from the field of higher education, except as a supporting agency. A grant-in-
aid system, frankly modelled after that prevailing in England, was to be brought into operation to
help independent educational institutions by subventions of money. Though the fear of
provoking a violent Indian reaction obviously dissuaded Wood from acceding to the demand of
missionaries for Bible classes in government schools,47 his dispatch did permit such
explanations of the Bible as 'pupils may, of their own free will, ask from the masters . . . [and]
provided that such information be given out of school hours'.48

Wood's dispatch implied no change in the primary object of British educational policy in India as
laid down by Bentinck and Macaulay in 1835. In fact, that object was emphatically restated to be
'to extend European knowledge throughout all classes of the people'.49 But the dispatch did
dimply a certain shift in emphasis from higher to mass education. The government was to direct
more of its attention and funds towards imparting western knowledge to the masses, a duty
hitherto insufficiently attended to.50 Moreover, while higher education would continue to be
imparted by means of the English language, the education of the great mass of the people was to be
effected by means of the vernacular languages of India.51
Wood's education dispatch of 1854 has received undue and exaggerated praise from historians. Its immediate practical results were meagre and disappointing.

45 For the text of the dispatch, see J. A. Richey (ed.), Selections from Educational Records. Pt. II. 1840-1859 (1922), pp. 364-93.


47 Wood himself, however, favoured the policy of rapid christianization of Indians on both religious and political grounds. As he wrote to Dalhousie in early 1854: 'I am clearly of opinion that no danger can arise to our rule in that country except from a national-religious movement. The greater the division of religions the less the danger, and the Christian part of the population is sure to be our firmest friends. I am therefore for increasing the number of Christians as fast and as far as I can (apart from all religious grounds) on political reasons alone, without offending the religious feelings of the natives.' Wood to Dalhousie, 8 February 1854, Wood Papers, MSS. Eur. F. 78/L.B. IV.


49 Ibid., p. 388.

50 Ibid., pp. 375-6, 389-90.


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Though it led to the creation of three examining universities in India, it encouraged the government to slacken its efforts in the cause of higher education and even to make it more expensive. 52 It did very little to promote the education of the masses or the diffusion of useful and practical knowledge. Its immediate, and in many areas the sole, beneficiaries were missionary institutions which readily took advantage of the grant-in-aid system. By thus providing for indirect subsidies to missionary bodies and enabling them more effectively to carry on their proselytizing work, Wood's dispatch served to increase the apprehensions of the Indian people regarding a collusion between the government and missionaries. Nor were the long-term results of the dispatch any better. In view of the utter inadequacy of the funds which the government could spare for education, it was perhaps inevitable that the education of the classes and the education of the masses should have been brought into opposition as claimants on the public revenues. But Wood's dispatch had the most unfortunate effect of encouraging many Britons to believe that the education of the classes was the rival, if not the enemy, of the education of the masses, and to belittle the claims of the former. By looking forward 'to the time when any general system of education entirely provided by Government may be discontinued, . . . and when many of the existing Government institutions, especially those of the higher order, may be safely closed, or transferred to the management of local bodies', 53 Wood's dispatch placed before the government in India a false and impracticable ideal which provided reactionary
officials with an excuse for their lack of exertion in the cause of higher education and the enemies of state colleges, particularly missionaries, with a powerful argument. The grant-in-aid system did promote the growth of English education in India, but it also led to the proliferation of sectarian and inferior institutions and a very uneven expansion of education in the country.

The revolt of 1857 provided the opponents of higher education in India with new arguments. 'Nana Sahib was an English-educated man', became the favourite argument of some Britons, while others maintained that had the government cared to educate the masses, including the sepoys, there would have been no revolt. Missionaries found in the revolt a confirmation of their oft-repeated view that the promotion of western education, without Christianity, in India was 'a blind, short-sighted, suicidal policy'.54 On the other hand, there were a few Britons, like Lord Ellenborough, who held that the revolt was due to the mistaken policy of the government in extending ostensible support to missionary schools which had created an all-pervading apprehension.

52See, for example, the correspondence between the director of public instruction in Bengal and the British Indian Association, published in Englishman, 22 June 1859.

53Richey (ed.), op. cit., p. 381.

54The phrase quoted is the Reverend Alexander Duff's. See Parliamentary Papers, 1852-3. vol. xxxii, no. 627-1, p. 89.

The revolt, however, did not cause any fundamental change in the educational policy of the government, which was restated in Lord Stanley's dispatch of 7 April 1859, but it did make the government more cautious and circumspect in the implementation of that policy in the future. Stanley's dispatch noted that 'the measures, and particularly the more recent measures, of Government for the promotion of education have been alleged to be among the causes which have brought the recent outbreak in the army of Bengal, and the disquietude and apprehension which are believed to have prevailed in some portions of Her Majesty's Indian territories'.56 The dispatch was at pains to emphasize the principle of religious neutrality.57 It also ruled that the grant-in-aid system should not be applied to vernacular schools as it made the government unpopular and created a prejudice against education.58 The revolt thus appears to have taught the government two lessons: first, that it was dangerous for the government to get too mixed up with missionaries in matters of education; and second, that, however desirable it might be to promote the education of the masses in India, it was highly imprudent to try to force the pace.

Even after the revolt missionaries and their friends continued to press for Bible teaching in government schools and for greater government effort to educate the masses. But the lessons of the revolt and its own financial difficulties did not allow the government to oblige them on either count.
In the 'sixties and 'seventies there was a rapid expansion of secondary education in the towns of India, thanks mainly to the demand of Indians for such education and their increased ability to take advantage of the grant-in-aid system. There was also a corresponding expansion of elementary education, but it was not as rapid as enthusiasts had hoped for. There were many reasons for this. The task required the creation of a great network of primary schools for which the government had neither the men nor the money. Moreover, amongst the masses in India, particularly those living in the villages, there did not exist the great desire and demand for education which the protagonists of vernacular education had naively assumed.

The rapid expansion of secondary and collegiate education in India in the 'sixties and 'seventies had very significant consequences. It increased the number of highly educated Indians for whom adequate employment opportunities did not exist. While education served to make them discontented with


57Ibid., pp. 446-9.

58Ibid., pp. 444-5.


their lot, lack of suitable jobs drove them to frustration. 'It is melancholy', wrote Sir Richard Temple, the lieutenant-governor of Bengal, early in 1877, 'to see men, who once appeared to receive their honours in the university convocation, now applying for some lowly-paid appointment, almost begging from office to office, from department to department, or struggling for the practice of a petty practitioner, and after all this returning baffled and disheartened to a poverty-stricken home, and then to reflect how far happier their lot might have been had they, while at school or college, been able to move in a healthier atmosphere of thought and freer walks of life. Nevertheless, with these examples before their eyes, hundreds, perhaps thousands of young men, persist in embarking on the same course, which can lead only to the same sad ending.'60 A year later the Hindoo Patriot remarked: 'The number of educated men is annually increasing by thousands, and how are they to live? The sort of education given to them chiefly qualifies them for Government employ or employment analogous to it, and that field is already overcrowded. Agriculture and trade are the only hope of the people, but unfortunately the men, who come out of the schools and colleges, have no experience in agriculture, while they have not the necessary capital for trade. What are they to do is the question of the hour.'61
The lack not so much of employment as of suitable employment for educated Indians was an evil most marked in the 1870s in Bengal, where higher education was most advanced, but it was by no means confined to that province. Its inevitable effect was to make educated Indians discontented with an alien government which not only gave them no relief or sympathy but even excluded them from higher posts in the army and the civil service. In 1854 Charles Wood had written to FJ. Halliday, then lieutenant-governor of Bengal: 'I do not see the advantage of rearing up a number of highly educated gentlemen at the expense of the State, whom you cannot employ, and who will naturally become depositories of discontent. If they choose to educate themselves, well and good, but I am against providing our own future detractors and opponents and grumblers.'62 By the 1870s there were clear indications that what Wood had feared in 1854 had actually come to pass. The non-availability of suitable government appointments naturally com-

60Minute by Temple in Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1875—76 (1877), p. 59. The Friend of India had written as early as 11 December 1856: 'Native education has gone so far that it has become one of the most serious problems of the day, what to do with your educated men? It is admitted that there has been over-production in a certain direction. The native pedlar, alumnus of the Hindoo College, who hawks damaged ribbons through Garden Reach, and when called a rogue, retaliates by a misquotation from Milton, but represents a formidable class of social solecisms, the abatement of which has become a public necessity.' And a correspondent had written to the editor of the Englishman, 16 December 1853, that 'of the many causes of sedition and troubles, enumerated by Lord Bacon, one is, the breeding of more "scholars than preferments can take off"'.

61Hindoo Patriot, 25 February 1878.


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compelled many educated Indians to turn to independent professions such as teaching, law and journalism, where they had greater incentive and freedom for taking part in public life. By the 1870s there was hardly an important town in India which did not possess a small nucleus of well-educated men, mostly engaged in independent professions, who took a lively interest in questions of political, religious and social reform.

As the number of English-educated Indians increased and they became more articulate and independent-minded, the prejudice of the average Anglo-Indian against them grew and hardened. Day after day and week after week, Anglo-Indian newspapers denounced English-educated Indians for being ambitious, conceited, insolent, ill-mannered, ungrateful, disloyal and deficient in moral as well as physical courage. They asserted that English education had gone too far in India and that it posed a serious political danger to British rule. 'The number of thinly veneered, but highly polished, students', remarked the Calcutta Englishman on 28 February 1870, 'who are every year turned adrift into the world from our Anglo-Indian schools and colleges is perfectly appalling. Puffed up with a notion of superiority to the rest of their countrymen, they are no longer content to apply themselves to the industrial pursuits of their forefathers, but demand employments more suited to the educational aroma with which they are imbued. Failing this,
they spread abroad over the land, diffusing a feeling of discontent wherever they settle down, and stirring up disaffection to the very Government whose fond weakness has given them whatever strength they possess.'63 The Madras Times wrote in 1872: 'The time will soon come when the Governments of India will have to revise their policy respecting English education. The results of the present policy are now alarming even its own parents, and impartial observers see that it will soon bring a serious danger upon the country. Those results are in a great measure discontent and incipient sedition. The policy of coaxing ambitious natives to accept a high scholastic education at the expense of ryots and coolies has not, on the whole, created any intelligent, useful, and grateful class of subjects, who can be depended upon to support those who have made them what they are. The result has rather been to create a class of disappointed men who regard themselves as defrauded creditors of the state if they are not appointed to offices of influence and emolument. . . . This state of matters presents a serious social and political problem. And the difficulty is every year becoming greater. The number of university matriculates and graduates is multiplying with enormous rapidity, and the number of disappointed office-seekers will soon be overwhelming.'64 The Bombay Gazette agreed with its southern contemporary and went on to say: 'There is a very general feeling existent at present among Englishmen in India and men at home who have been connected with India, that the fostering of English education among the young natives of this country has been carried out too far, and is producing not only disagreeable but also rather dangerous results. A strong opinion to that effect, has been expressed by everyone we have spoken to on the subject during the last year, and while young educated natives are apt to see a splendid vision before them in which Young India plays a most distinguished part, they are unaware of the strong reaction which has taken place regarding them in the minds of Englishmen. Even those of our countrymen who have been most active in the past in promoting the spread of European education in India are beginning to express the opinion, that though it was necessary to make such efforts in order to give a starting impetus to European education in India, yet, now that the start has been fairly made, it has become a question as to what amount of extraneous assistance should be given in the matter.'65

Educated Indians were not—as the Bombay Gazette averred—unaware of the strong reaction which had taken place regarding them in the minds of Englishmen. In fact, it was precisely because they were fully aware of this reaction that educated Indians became increasingly estranged from Englishmen and suspicious of the latter's professed solicitude for the education of the masses.

The Anglo-Indian reaction against the Indian intelligentsia was probably strongest in Bengal, where English education was most widely spread and claimed ever-increasing subsidies from the state, and where the English-educated class was politically the most articulate. The critics of higher education in Bengal demanded that the government should retire from even aiding higher
education and instead divert all its resources to the promotion of elementary education amongst the masses. The higher-versus-mass-education controversy, which had continued unabated in Bengal, became intensified in the latter half of the 1860s. This was partly due to the impact of the 'national education' movement then in progress in England and the government's own desire to economize in the face of renewed financial difficulties. Encouraged by the fact that their old friend Sir John Lawrence was now viceroy of India, missionaries increased their pressure on the government to withdraw itself from the field of English education and to divert all its energies and resources to the promotion of vernacular education for the masses. The government of India suddenly discovered that vernacular education was less widely spread in Bengal than in other parts of the country and in 1867-8 directed a rather reluctant local government to levy on all zamindars in lower Bengal a cess in order to raise the funds required for the purpose of extending vernacular education. The zamindars, through the British Indian Association, condemned the proposed cess as an infringement of the permanent settlement in Bengal. They also condemned the government of India for saying that it had done 'as much as a Government can do to place the benefits of education plainly and practically before the higher classes' of Bengal and that 'the State has never undertaken to provide funds for the education of the mass of the people'. They denied the allegation of the government of India that the zamindars and educated Indians had done nothing in the cause of popular education in Bengal.

It was not long before some high officials in the government of India joined missionaries and the Anglo-Indian press in emphasizing the dangers of a rapid expansion of higher education in the country, particularly in Bengal, and in insisting that the education of the masses had the greatest claim on state funds.

They too averred that the existing state expenditure on higher education was no longer justifiable, first, because those who took advantage of such education could easily afford to pay for it, and secondly, because it did not allow the government adequately to fulfil its primary obligation in the cause of mass education.
All these developments made educated Bengalis fear and suspect that the government was contemplating withdrawal from the field of higher education even as a supporting agency. In 1870 the government of India itself confirmed the worst fears and suspicions of educated Bengalis by making public its views on the subject of higher education. On 7 May 1870 the Supplement to the Gazette of India carried a resolution by the government of India in the finance department, dated 31 March 1870. After referring to an earlier resolution of 8 September 1869 in the same department, which had said that 'the time is fully come when the State should be relieved of some portion of the very heavy charge so long borne by it for the instruction of Natives of the Lower Provinces of Bengal in the English language',71 the resolution of 31 March 1870 went on to declare that 'the motives which induce the people to seek [English education] are prima facie sufficient for its rapid development without any contribution from the imperial finances'; whereas the desire for vernacular education, 'or, as might distinctively be said, for education in order to develop the intellectual powers, apart from the immediate purpose of securing material advantages'

was very low and required much artificial stimulus and encouragement. The resolution concluded by saying 'that it should be, in accordance with the views expressed by successive Secretaries of State, the constant aim of the Supreme and the Local Governments ... to reduce to the utmost the charge upon the State

69Ibid., pp. 501-23; also Indian Daily News, 4 September 1868.

70See, for example, the address of E. C. Bayley (secretary, home department) to Calcutta university convocation, in Englishman, 28 February 1870; and 'Some Remarks on the National Education League', by A. P. Howell (under-secretary, home department), in Transactions of the Bengal Social Science Association, 1870, vol. iv. pp. 1-37.


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for English education with a view to render it as self-supporting as possible'.72 The resolution was adopted at a time when the government of India was threatened with 'the ominous trisyllable deficit'73 and its primary motive was to effect economy. But, as the government of India admitted in a letter to the secretary of state, in order that the resolution might 'carry far more weight', it was deemed 'expedient' that it should be 'based on a definite and approved policy'.74

The publication of the 'rather loosely worded'75 resolution of 31 March 1870 was the signal for an agitation in Bengal which was unprecedented in intensity and magnitude. The Bengali press at once raised the cry of 'higher education in danger'. All those classes and communities which benefited or hoped to benefit from higher education were alarmed at the prospect of government withdrawing its aid to higher education. Contrary to the general view prevalent amongst Anglo-Indians, the vast majority of those who took advantage of higher education in Bengal, or
elsewhere in India, belonged to the middle and lower income groups, who could hardly afford to pay for their education. Without government assistance, most of the Indian high schools and colleges, which depended on the grant-in-aid system, would have closed down, and those who desired their children to receive higher education would have been forced either to maintain a few institutions of their own at increased cost or to send their children to the institutions run by missionaries, who made no secret of the fact that they looked upon education not as an end in itself but as a means to conversion.

Ordinarily, the British Indian Association would have convened a public meeting in Calcutta and dispatched a petition to the authorities protesting against their contemplated move. But it was felt that such a petition would be dismissed by the authorities as representing only the views of a few selfish and wealthy babus in the metropolis. The British Indian Association, therefore, deemed it prudent to associate the mofussil with its representation on the subject. In fact, the Association was almost compelled to adopt such a course because of the widespread manifestation of public feeling in the mofussil, where the demand for English education was rapidly growing and where the government's decision to withdraw its aid to higher education would have had far more disastrous effects than in Calcutta. In late May the Association gave notice of a public meeting to be held in Calcutta on 2 July 1870. Communications were addressed and even agents sent to important centres in the mofussil asking the people to hold meetings in protest against 'the anti-English-education policy' of the government and to send delegates to the great gathering in Calcutta scheduled for 2 July. Such protest meetings were held in forty-three different places throughout the province in the ensuing weeks. The meeting in Calcutta on 2 July 1870 acquired the character of a provincial convention or what the Bengali press called a 'national demonstration'. It was attended by 'more than two thousand persons', including representatives from seventeen districts of Bengal.
Speakers at the Calcutta meeting denounced the government's intention to withdraw its financial assistance to higher education. They charged the government with hostility towards educated Indians, particularly those from Bengal. They indignantly repudiated the allegation that English education was fostering disaffection to the British government in India. They denied that they were opposed to the education of the masses and suggested that money for such education should be found by cutting down excessive government spending on the army and the administration, rather than by starving higher education. They asserted that in aiding higher education the government was not, as some of its spokesmen had maintained, indulging in some extraordinary charity or generosity to the Indian people but merely performing its duty, for such aid was given out of state revenues raised through public taxation. They took the government of India to task for arguing that the expenditure on English education in Bengal was a very heavy charge on the state, while, in fact, it represented less than one per cent of the total revenues of the province. They disagreed with the Anglo-Indian view that the theory of 'downward filtration' of education had been proved wrong in India. They also challenged the Anglo-Indian view that higher education in India was a mere luxury, like the cultivation of 'tulips and exotics', and insisted that it was essential for the regeneration of the country in every walk of life.

The meeting adopted a memorial to the secretary of state to the effect that the recent resolution of the government of India was calculated to undermine 'the sound basis of Indian education, viz., European knowledge', and to destroy 'the prospects of the aided Anglo-vernacular schools, which feed the colleges, and where the bulk of the middle classes receive their education'. It went on to say: 'The practical result of the new policy announced by the Government of India would, your memorialists believe, be the surrender of English education of a higher order to the Christian missionaries, whose avowed object is to proselytize the people of this country and subvert their national religion. It may easily be surmised that such an issue will fill Her Majesty's native Indian subjects with the deepest discontent, for what could be more unsatisfactory to a nation than to see its own hard-earned resources placed in the hands of a body of propagandists, whose chief aim it is, as observed above, to overthrow its religious and social fabric.'

79A Full Report of the Public Meeting of the Native Inhabitants of Bengal on the Education Question Held at the Town Hall of Calcutta on the 2nd July 1870 . . . (1870), Appendix, pp. i-lxxxiv.

80 Ibid., pp. 1-2.

81 This was a reference to A. P. Howell's remark in which he had compared higher education to 'the tulips and the exotics' and mass education to 'the crops that pay'. See Howell, op. cit., p. 18.

82A Full Report of the Public Meeting of the Native Inhabitants of Bengal on the Education Question Held at the Town Hall of Calcutta on the 2nd July 1870 . . ., pp. 2-70.

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The agitation in Bengal on the question of higher education in 1870 represents a landmark in the history of India. It was the first attempt on the part of the 'educated classes to organize an agitation throughout a province and it revealed both their growing numerical strength and capability for concerted action. Henceforward they were a power to be reckoned with by the government. The Indian press in the other provinces gave the Bengalis moral support in their stand against the government. The agitation proved to be a success and became the model for future campaigns. The government appears to have been duly impressed. It explained away its resolutions and assured the public that it had no intention of withdrawing its assistance to higher education. The higher-versus-mass-education controversy, however, continued to drag on and the mistrust of government intentions by educated Indians persisted.

Anglo-Indians in general felt that the demand of the relatively well-to-do classes in India for continued state support to higher education arose solely from selfish considerations—from a desire to save their pockets and preserve their vested interests. They failed, however, to understand the real motive which lay behind the demand. It was stated by the Hindu Reformer of Bombay when it wrote: '... it is not true philanthropy to prevent English education, which alone can train up the people to self-government, from spreading far and wide over the land.... It is only English education that can enable the natives to fight with their rulers on equal ground. To withhold this knowledge from those who are desirous of acquiring it is to allow them to continue to be mere "down-trodden miserable slaves".'

The rapid expansion of English education after the revolt served to bring into bolder relief a fact which had been noticed even earlier, namely that those classes, communities and regions which took advantage of English education were gaining at the expense of others which failed to do so. This was particularly marked in the field of public employment where official policy favoured the English-educated.

The growing imbalance in the employment situation created new jealousies and intensified old ones between various elements of Indian society, between, for example, the aristocratic classes and the middle classes, between Hindus and Muslims, between Bengalis and non-Bengalis, and between Brahmans and non-Brahmans. Those who began to lag behind in the race of life became not only resentful of those forging ahead, but also of the government which allowed this to happen.

83 Ibid., p. 80.

84 Quoted in Bombay Gazette, 17 August 1871.

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The problem posed by the relative backwardness of Muslims in the field of English education and the consequent decline in their share of public employment in certain regions worried the government most. Muslims were the second largest community in India and as such they represented an important element in the social and political balance of power within the country which the British government was always anxious to maintain. In certain Anglo-Indian circles there was even a feeling that the British government was under a special obligation to help
Muslims because it had supplanted them as rulers in many parts of India. The part played by Muslims in the revolt of 1857, their continued hostility to British rule as manifested in the Wahabi movement, and their sensitivity to developments in the Muslim states of western Asia also underlined the need for making an extraordinary effort to conciliate them.

In order to attach Muslims to their rulers and to encourage them to take to western education, the British tried various expedients in the 'sixties, the most significant of which was the establishment, under official patronage, of 'literary' societies in several places in northern India, such as Calcutta, Muzaffarpur, Ghazipur, Aligarh, Delhi and Lahore. Though these societies often bore different names and were not always exclusively Muslim in their composition, their main objects were the same, namely to promote social intercourse between Anglo-Indians and Muslims, to diffuse western knowledge amongst Muslims through the medium of Urdu, Persian and Arabic, and to promote Muslim interests in general. Encouraged by such prominent Anglo-Indians as Sir Donald Macleod, G.W. Leitner and Sir William Muir,85 these societies began to demand increased state recognition and support for vernacular and classical education—the affiliation of purely vernacular institutions to Calcutta university, the bestowal of honorary degrees for high oriental scholarship, and the establishment of oriental colleges and universities where western arts and sciences would be taught through the vernacular only.

This new 'Orientalist movement' was inspired to no small extent by a certain jealousy of Bengalis, who because of their lead in English education were able to secure government jobs over almost all northern India, often at the expense of the sons of the soil. Naturally, Bengalis offered a strong resistance to it. But it must be said to their credit that they recognized the retrograde character of the movement and opposed it not merely because it was meant to injure their self-interest but also because they felt that it was detrimental to the intellectual and political progress of the country as a whole. As the Hindoo Patriot put it: 'We do not by any means deprecate oriental education—on the contrary we are warm advocates of the study of the oriental classics—but at the same time we hold that Western literature and science constitute the Promethean light, which will kindle the life of the nation. It is our deliberate opinion that the man, who would suppress English education, is an enemy to India and to civilization.'86

Rajendralal Mitra, himself a great orientalist, was of the same view. He asserted that the languages of India were not yet fully developed to be suitable media of higher education and that, instead of hindering, the study of English was helping the growth of these languages. He maintained that the study of English was absolutely essential to enable Indians to compete with Englishmen on terms of equality, to spread civilization and enlightenment, and to unify the country. 'It may appear strange', he remarked at the public meeting held in Calcutta on 2 July 1870, 'that at a time when the brave and patriotic Poles are exerting their utmost to defend their
national language ... we here should cry for a foreign tongue when our kind-hearted rulers wish to diffuse the blessings of education through the vernaculars of our country. But ... in Poland the vernacular is of the highest political importance; it is the great bond of union; it holds the people together as distinct from the other races of Europe; it preserves for them the annals of all that is dear to them, and contains a store of literature and science fully sufficient for all their requirements. Our vernaculars, on the other hand, (and we have many where the Poles have only one) are poor and undeveloped, and serve only to divide and disunite us. We yield not to the Poles in our love for our country and our race; but we feel that the best way to love them is to promote their welfare.... If patriotism means an insensate love of everything that is ours, whether good or bad, away with such patriotism. If it is to teach us to rest satisfied with our lares and penates, our language and our civilization, as they now stand, the less we have of it the better. Such patriotism requires us to hug our chains, and remain intellectual bondsmen for ever. True patriotism, however, is not a blind adherence to ancient customs, but an intelligent love for the welfare and advancement of our race, and if you really wish to serve your country, you should not hesitate a moment to spurn everything that stands in the way of progress; and import from foreign lands whatever is calculated to raise her in the scale of nations.'87

Instead of appreciating the arguments of Rajendralal Mitra, the Friend of India wrote tauntingly: 'Abuse of one's mother tongue and the glorification of an alien language—and that the language of the ruling race—is a new element in patriotism, the introduction of which has been reserved for the Bengalees.'88 There was, however, one Anglo-Indian newspaper which was not lacking in sympathy and understanding. 'The educated natives', remarked the Mofussilite, 'understand the whole question thoroughly. They were lukewarm in the cause of even English education so long as they apprehended it would have a christianizing effect on their countrymen. They now see that both they and the christianizers ... misapprehended its tendency, which is to wholly unfaith the people, while

86Hindoo Patriot, 23 May 1870.

87A Full Report of the Public Meeting of the Native Inhabitants of Bengal on the Education Question Held at the Town Hall of Calcutta on the 2nd July 1870 . . ., pp. 13-14.

88Friend of India, 7 July 1870.

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giving to them a common language, English, which may one day amalgamate the various races into a homogeneous and politically independent nation. Therefore are the educated natives all for English education; while for a very opposite reason, do the Friend of India and the proselytizers, advocate the starving of English Government colleges and schools, i.e., that the people may be indirectly forced to send their children to missionary institutions ....'89

The backwardness of Muslims, when compared with Hindus, in taking advantage of English education was the subject of much debate and controversy in the 'sixties and 'seventies. Various theories were advanced to explain the phenomenon, such as the loss of political power by Muslims, their decline in economic prosperity, their fanatical attachment to their own religion
and culture, coupled with their great contempt for infidels and everything belonging to them, and their neglect by the government. There is probably some truth in all these theories. But a more comprehensive and satisfactory explanation of Muslim backwardness in receiving English education is to be found in the relative absence among Muslims of those middle classes which alone among Hindus availed themselves of English education. Even among Hindus, it was not, generally speaking, princes, big landholders, traders, merchants, artisans or peasants who sent their children to English schools and colleges, but the moderately well-to-do middle classes, with a literary and professional background. Such middle classes were far less numerous among Muslims than among Hindus. This was due mainly to the conditions under which the Muslim community in India had come into existence and grown. The vast majority—almost ninety-five per cent—of the Muslim population of India in the nineteenth century consisted of either converts from Hinduism or the descendants of such converts; and it was almost entirely among the lower castes and the poorer classes of the population that conversions from Hinduism to Islam had taken place. Muslims did not have the same innumerable gradations of wealth and status as did Hindus. The Muslim community in India was more sharply divided than the Hindu community between a small rich class and a very large poor class.'

In 1869 there was a spurt of writing in the Anglo-Indian press on the subject of the condition of Muslims in India. The immediate cause for this obviously was the latest discovery of Wahabi ramifications in northern India. The viceroy, Lord Mayo, appears to have encouraged, if not actually commissioned, the scholarly civilian W.W. Hunter to inquire into the causes of Muslim discontent particularly in Bengal where the Wahabis had firmly entrenched themselves. The results of Hunter's inquiry were published in a celebrated book in 1871.93 They were, however, foreshadowed in a series of three articles which appeared in the Pioneer of Allahabad in the summer of 1869 and were most probably written by Hunter himself.94 In these articles, as in his book later, Hunter described the decay of the Muslim aristocracy in Bengal, the drying up of its earlier sources of income, the reasons for its reluctance to take advantage of western education, and its steadily being squeezed out of the higher ranks of civil employment by the rising class of English-educated Hindus. He strongly advised the government to enable Muslims to compete on equal terms with Hindus for well-paid government appointments by providing them with such means of western education as would be readily acceptable to them.

89Mofussilite, 26 May 1870.

90Richard Southwell Bourke, sixth earl of Mayo (1822-72). M.P. 1847-67; chief secretary for Ireland 1852-69; viceroy of India 1869-72.

91 B. 1840; entered Indian civil service 1862; director-general of statistics 1871-85; member of Indian legislative council 1881-7; president of Indian education commission 1882-3; author and journalist; d. 1900.

'Till this be done,' he wrote, '... it is vain to expect that the Mussulmans of Lower Bengal will be either a contented or a loyal population. By all means hunt down the Wahabees, and rout them out of the land ... but while ruthlessly lopping off the cankered members, let us endeavour to alleviate the cause of the disease.'95

The articles in the Pioneer were noticed with apparent approval by other Anglo-Indian newspapers and simultaneously with their publication the Bengal government appointed a commission to look into the question of Muslim education in the province. This 'sudden outburst of excessive sympathy' for Muslims on the part of Anglo-Indians prompted the Hindoo Patriot to suspect the motives of the latter and to ask whether it was not inspired by the growing Anglo-Indian jealousy of educated Bengali Hindus. The paper failed to see the alleged connexion between the failure of the Muslim aristocracy in Bengal to secure well-paid government jobs and the attraction of Wahabism for the Muslim masses in the province. The Hindoo Patriot insisted that the only effective cure for Muslim disaffection in Bengal to British rule lay in the spread of education, and not in petting the Muslim aristocracy in the province.96

Hunter was making a thinly disguised plea for official favouritism to Muslims in the matter of civil employment and for combining Muslim religious instruction with western education so as to make the latter more attractive to them. His views, which were largely a reflection of those held by certain prominent Muslim leaders such as Moulvi Abdul Latif and Syed Ahmed Khan, had a powerful impact on both Muslims and Anglo-Indians. They became the stock-in-trade of Muslim representations and of most Anglo-Indian comment on the subject in the years to come. Hunter never really cared to diagnose the disease. He merely argued a case. And in doing so he made use of such history and statistics as suited his purpose. He even tended to generalize about the condition of Muslims all over India on the basis of their particular situation

93 The Indian Mussulmans (1871).
94 Pioneer, 28 June, 2 July, 4 August 1869.
95 Ibid., 4 August 1869.
96 Hindoo Patriot, 2, 9 August 1869.

in Bengal. But all this did not matter with those whose political ends were reinforced by his views.

In August 1871 the government of India, under Mayo, issued a resolution on the subject of Muslim education,97 which said that from statistics recently submitted to the governor-general in council it was 'evident that in no part of the country, except perhaps the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab, do the Mahomedans adequately, or in proportion to the rest of the community, avail themselves of the educational advantages that the Government offers' and regretted that 'so large and important a class ... should stand aloof from active co-operation with our educational system, and should lose the advantages, both material and social, which others
enjoy'. The resolution added: 'His Excellency in Council believes that secondary and higher education conveyed in the vernaculars and rendered more accessible than now, coupled with a more systematic encouragement and recognition of Arabic and Persian literature, would be not only acceptable to the Mahomedan community, but would enlist the sympathies of the more earnest and enlightened of its members on the side of education.' The resolution also suggested that further encouragement should be given to 'the classical and vernacular languages of the Mahomedans in all Government schools and colleges', to the appointment of 'qualified Mahomedan English teachers' in 'avowedly English schools established in Mahomedan districts', to the assistance given to the Mahomedans 'by grants-in-aid to create [English] schools of their own', and to 'the creation of a vernacular literature for the Mahomedans'. The government of India called the attention of local governments to the subject and asked them to submit their opinions with a view to adopting 'some general measures in regard to Mahomedan education'.

The government of India's resolution of August 1871 conceded in principle almost everything that certain Muslim leaders, such as Abdul Latif and Syed Ahmed Khan, had been demanding, namely the use of Urdu as the medium of instruction for Muslims in primary and secondary schools, increased state assistance for exclusively Muslim educational institutions, and the combination of English education with the study of Arabic and Persian. Encouraged by the knowledge that the government was willing to oblige them, Muslim leaders and their Anglo-Indian friends stepped up their campaign for a speedy and effective implementation of the resolution. The murder of the chief justice, J. P. Norman,98 in September 1871 and that of the viceroy, Mayo, in February 1872 by alleged Wahabis helped, instead of hindering, their cause. They underlined the urgent need on the part of the government for spreading western education among Muslims and for conciliating the upper classes of that community while dealing more firmly with its lower and disaffected elements. In June

97 For the full text of the resolution, see Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Home Department, No. CCV (1886), p. 152.

98 B. 1819; puisne judge of Calcutta high court 1862-71; officiated as chief justice 1864-5, 1870-1; assassinated 1871.

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1873 the government of India, under Lord Northbrook, issued another resolution on the subject of Muslim education” which reaffirmed in stronger and more definite terms the policy enunciated in the resolution of 1871.

It is doubtful whether the government's new educational dispensation for Muslims encouraged them to take to higher western education in any marked degree. What it did do was to cut them off from the mainstream of secular education in India and to strengthen their sense of separatism, generally confined to their more or less exclusive educational institutions, instructed up to the secondary stage through the medium of Urdu, which was not everywhere the local vernacular, often ignorant of the regional language and literature, and compulsorily saturated with Arabic and Persian, even English-educated Muslims in India developed a mental culture which was different from that of their Hindu, Parsi or Christian counterparts. Thus the
government's new educational policy for Muslims, while unifying English-educated Muslims all over the country, resulted in isolating them from the English-educated Indians of the other communities. It promoted the growth of Muslim nationalism and Struck at the very root of Indian nationalism. It is interesting to note that, in thanking Northbrook for his resolution on the subject of Muslim education in 1873, the Mahomedan Literary Society underlined the leading principle of that resolution, namely that the state should 'apply its educational apparatus and aid so as they may best adjust themselves to existing languages and habits of thought among all classes of the people', and observed: 'In other words, the Government is now prepared to promote the "diffusion and advancement of real knowledge" among the Mahomedans of this Empire, under conditions which guarantee to them the cultivation of their dearly cherished ancient literature, their appreciation of which from generation to generation has constituted, and will continue to constitute, among other characteristics of vitality, an important feature of Mahomedan nationalism in India.'

One of the avowed objectives of the government of India in framing its new educational policy for Muslims in the 1870s was to enable them to compete on equal terms with Hindus for higher civil appointments. Without, however, waiting for the time when they were so enabled, some local governments set out immediately and rather ostentatiously to show undue preference for Muslims in making civil appointments. By constantly contrasting Muslims with Hindus, especially as regards their respective shares in government service and personal qualities, and occasionally discriminating in favour of the former, local governments and the Anglo-Indian press fostered much ill will between the two communities. It was not long before Muslims turned against the principle of competition itself and began to demand that their share in the administrative services in each province should be in proportion to their population. Once again the government of India partially yielded to their demand. In July 1885 it issued a resolution which said: '... there are a large number of appointments the gift of which lies in the hands of the Local Governments, the High Courts, or local officers. The Governor General in Council desires that in those provinces where Muhammadans do not receive their full share of State employment, the Local Governments and High Courts will endeavour to redress this inequality as opportunity offers, and will impress upon their subordinate officers the importance of attending to this in their selection of candidates for appointments of the class ... referred to. The subject of the extent to which Muhammadans are employed in offices under Government might usefully be noticed in the Annual Reports of provincial administration.'

By thus making Muslims the objects of its special attention in matters of education and civil employment, or at least encouraging them to think that they were so, the British government in India ensured, whether it willed it or not, that they, as members of a backward minority community, would always look up to it for the satisfaction of their 'grievances and claims'.
instead of joining hands with the relatively advanced majority community, namely the Hindus, in coercive political agitation. It is significant that the Mahomedan Literary Society of Calcutta, in expressing its gratitude to the viceroy for his resolution on the subject of Muslim education in 1873, had remarked: 'To the many millions of our race and creed in India there can be no better proof that we have but to make our wants and necessities clearly understood, and further that our rulers are only too anxious to devise schemes for meeting them.'102

On 23 September 1869 the Friend of India carried a leading article entitled 'The Increasing Difficulty of Governing India'. The writer took as his text the remark made to him by 'one who has spent a quarter of a century in the higher ranks of Indian officials', that the task of governing India was becoming more difficult every day; there was always something turning up: inundations, famines, visitations of cholera, financial deficits, difficulties of education and of providing for men who had been educated. The writer himself believed that it was easier to build up the empire bit by bit in the century 'from Plassey to the Mutiny' than to consolidate it and adapt it to the course of events since that time. Indians felt the change no less keenly than their rulers and the feeling found expression vaguely in the vernacular press and much more freely in conversation with old and observant Indians. There was a bustle and unrest about it which the Asiatic of all men abhorred. Everything was new, everything was changing, nothing was allowed to grow old. New laws, new procedures, and new ideas might be tolerated without a murmer, save from the orthodox, were it not that somehow they were accompanied by two very terrible drawbacks. It was twice as costly to live as it used to be; and almost every year brought with it some great physical calamity. Prices were always rising; and famines, plagues and storms visited the


102 Englishman, 22 October 1873.

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people with a frequency unknown in the quiet old days. 'The one element of truth in the Native opinion about recent English rule', added the writer in the Friend of India, 'is, however, this, that we do not give, or do not seem to give, India so much material happiness as it used to enjoy. As to the natural calamities, it is undoubtedly true that of late they have been numerous and striking. But our national conscience has been so quickened, that we observe, discuss and record such catastrophes with a bitterness and an accuracy unknown when only part of India was under our sway. A glance at the various official histories of famines previous to that of Orissa, will show how frequent these visitations were, what widespread destruction of life they caused and how indifferent the rulers, whether those of Delhi or the early East India Company, were to suffering. It is, however, the combination and recurrence of famines, flood and pestilence in the first ten years of the Government of the Crown, which are so startling. Hindostan proper was still suffering from the War of the Mutiny when, in 1861-2, it lost thousands by famine, and soon afterwards thousands more by cholera. In 1864 the seaboard and some of the richest districts of Bengal were swept by one of the most severe cyclones on record. A year after scarcity began to deepen into famine all over Orissa and Behar, and a million of people fell victims. The famine
spread away through Northern and Central and even Southern Madras. A year before that Western and Central India had been saved from famine, though not from starvation prices, only by the import of rice from the Eastern coast, which import exhausted the stocks and intensified the suffering there. All this time the richest districts of Lower Bengal were being wasted by an endemic fever which has not yet disappeared. In 1867 floods and storms took the place of drought in the delta of Bengal. In 1868 scarcity prevailed from the Sutlej to the Nerbudda, deepening in 1869 into famine and death and accompanied by cholera over a large portion of that country. Looking back over these years one thinks of the plague which, in the second century, swept the Roman empire from Persia to Gaul; and of the Black Death which colours the early history of England.'103

The writer in the Friend of India was, however, at pains to emphasize that in the eyes of the people of India such natural calamities were nothing to the pressure of high prices, and that, while some classes were daily becoming richer, the vast majority thought themselves to be growing poorer.104

One has only to bear in mind the facts enumerated in the leading article of the Friend of India, 23 September 1869, to realize how beneath the placid surface of life in India during the decade following the revolt of 1857 much discontent had been accumulating. This discontent became alarmingly manifest in the early 1870s. But before we go on to deal with how the groundswell became a movement, it will not be out of place to draw attention to the one good that the extraordinary combination and recurrence of natural calamities in various parts of India in the 1860s, as also in the 1870s, did. The enormous and widespread suffering which they caused, generated a good deal of fellow-feeling amongst the people of India. Thanks to the press, a major natural disaster in any part of India at once became known to people in other parts of the country and naturally evoked their sympathy. When, for example, a serious famine devastated the North-Western Provinces in 1860-1, public meetings were held and committees appointed to raise funds for the relief of 'their fellow-subjects' in that part of the country in such far-off places as Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Ahmedabad.105 At first such practical demonstrations of sympathy were confined to only a few important towns and they were often encouraged by British officials. But in later years they became more widely spread and were organized by Indians on their own. The knowledge that missionaries often took advantage of these natural calamities to convert their victims to Christianity also prompted Indian public men and associations to be more energetic in organizing relief operations on their own. A notable example of this was the relief work undertaken by the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha in the Deccan in the 'seventies.106

Probably no other single factor contributed more to the unpopularity of British rule in India in the 1860s than increased taxation. Even before the revolt of 1857 British rule had come to be

103 Friend of India, 23 September 1869.
104 Ibid.
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associated in the Indian mind with increased taxation. 'Heavy taxation and police oppression', the Hindoo Patriot had written in 1856, 'are ideas inseparable in the native mind from British rule.\textsuperscript{107} There was a proliferation of taxes—both imperial and local—after the revolt. Some of these taxes, such as the income tax and the various municipal imposts, were novel and their realization involved a great deal of corruption and oppression. In 1864 the viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, wrote: 'The people of India are impatient of taxation, except when it is of that peculiar nature to which they have long been accustomed. The tendency of the new modes of taxation is to irritate and even to oppress. We ought to avoid, so far as may be practicable, such fruitful causes of discontent.'\textsuperscript{108}

The most odious of the new imposts was of course the income tax and it was its re imposition in the late 1860s which brought the simmering discontent in India to a head. An expanding revenue in the first half of the 1860s had enabled the government of India to tide over the financial crisis caused by the revolt and to honour its pledge to the people by abolishing the income tax after five years. But soon after the abolition of the income tax in 1865 the government of India was financially in the red again. The chief causes of this renewed financial deficit were the general rise in prices and wages and the continued increase in government expenditure on the administrative services, army and public works. In 1867 the government of India was forced to levy a 'certificate tax', which was in fact an income tax, of 1 per cent on trades and professions. In March 1869

\textsuperscript{105} See, for example, Englishman, 21, 23 January 1861.

\textsuperscript{106} See above, p. 195.

\textsuperscript{107} Hindoo Patriot, 3 July 1856.

\textsuperscript{108} Quoted in Englishman, 26 April 1867.

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the certificate tax was converted into a general income tax of 1 per cent on all incomes above Rs. 500. This was raised in the latter half of 1869 to 2 per cent and again in April 1870 to 3\% per cent.\textsuperscript{109}

Opposition to the income tax began as soon as it was re imposed in the spring of 1867. The press both Indian and Anglo-Indian, drowned it in 'one shout of condemnation from every part of India'.\textsuperscript{110} Public meetings were held in the presidency towns and memorials were sent to the authorities protesting against the tax. But it was the raising of the tax to 3\% per cent in April 1870 which proved to be the proverbial last straw and imparted a new urgency and vehemence to the agitation against the tax. What appears to have annoyed the people most and shaken their confidence in the government was the raising of the tax twice in six months, the indecent haste with which the measure was rushed through the legislative council, and the apparent determination of the government to make the tax a permanent fixture in utter disregard of the feelings of those affected by it. The knowledge that the viceroy's executive council was divided over the issue served to encourage the agitators.
The renewed agitation against the income tax in 1870 had several interesting features. It united both Indians and non-official Anglo-Indians, not in one or two towns but all over the country, in common opposition to the government, which in itself was an extraordinary development. In fact, non-official Anglo-Indians were often more vehement in their denunciation of the government than Indians. It was the first agitation of its kind which continued uninterruptedly for a year until the government was forced to reduce the tax from 31/8 per cent to 1 per cent and to raise the minimum income liable to assessment from Rs. 500 to Rs. 750 per annum. It did not entirely cease until the tax was abolished by Northbrook in 1875. The agitation did not remain confined to the presidency towns but spread into the interior. 'Indignation meetings' were held in towns such as Allahabad, Banaras, Lucknow, Agra, Jabalpur, Ambala and Lahore, which probably had never before witnessed a political gathering. Nor was public indignation exhibited only by means of placards, meetings, speeches and memorials. There were reports, for example, of a hartal in Nagpur and rioting in Coconada. And later in 1870, when it appeared that constitutional agitation was making no impact on the government, a section of the Indian press, particularly in Bengal, began to suggest the desirability of resorting to 'passive resistance', involving a combined refusal to pay taxes, in order to exert greater pressure on the government. The Englishman, on the other hand, suggested that influential Indians and non-official Anglo-Indians in the various presidencies should combine to form 'an Indian Reform League' in order to carry on agitation


110 Friend of India, 19 September 1867.

111 See Englishman, 27 May 1870, and Friend of India, 1 September 1870.

112 Indian Daily News, 14 October, 22 November 1870. See also Gujarat Mitra, quoted in Bombay Gazette, 15 March 1871.

in India and England with a view to securing the better management of the revenues of India.113 The agitators against the income tax, both British and Indian, did not content themselves merely with demanding that the odious tax should be abolished or that the government should try to balance its budget by reducing its present excessive spending on such items as the army, the 'home charges', and public works. They went on to demand that a royal commission should be appointed to inquire into Indian affairs, that India should have some form of 'representative government', and that it should be represented in the British Parliament. One of the most perceptive comments on the movement against the income tax was made by the Pioneer of Allahabad. The newspaper wrote:...'... popular expressions of opinion are of two kinds. There are those ebullitions of public feeling which arise as the directly traceable effect of an isolated measure, and whose avowed object is simply to crush it at once by popular menace. There are those again which are called forth, not by a single act of Government, but are the consummation to long and steadily growing convictions, and which, seizing on a crisis like the present, utilize it as a vantage ground from which true progress can be urged with something like authority. In the
former, the people, altogether heedless of causes which have been working for years, seek to stamp out the obnoxious measure and then relapse into the old irrational listlessness; in the latter, the country has long been cognizant of certain tendencies in the administration, and seizes on the crisis as an opportune occasion for demonstrating, with the authority which events have given, fundamental defects in the system of Government." The Pioneer averred that the movement against the income tax was of the latter kind. It possessed a 'maturity of purpose' and a 'rational and intelligent energy'. Its conductors 'did not stoop to a mere vulgar clamour for relief from the tax, but, having found the active cause of the financial disaster to lie in the exclusion of the popular element from the State Councils, the irresponsibility of ministers, and the evident destitution of resource consequent on not taking the people into counsel, they craved a rectification of those errors as the only sure way of restoring confidence to the nation and a surplus to the treasury.'

The sustained and widespread agitation against the income tax in 1870-1 was not only proof of the enormous growth in public opinion that had already taken place in India, it also contributed to the further consolidation of Indian public opinion. The Englishman was not far from the truth when it wrote on 20 April 1870: 'The next generation will probably ascribe to Sir Richard Temple's Budget the first step towards the formation of a genuine Public Opinion in India.' Even those Anglo-Indian observers who in the past were inclined to deny the existence of a public opinion in India now began to emphasize that a more or less definite public opinion had been created in the country and that the government must not fail to take it into account.

113 Englishman, 28 September 1870.

114 Pioneer, 14 May 1870.

115 Englishman, 20 April 1870.

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The income tax subjected the Queen's government in India to 'a hurricane of unpopularity' such as it had never before faced. At a public meeting held in Calcutta on 18 April 1870 Ramanath Tagore asserted that he had heard people pray for the restoration of the East India Company, because it was less exacting in the matter of taxation. A correspondent to the Urdu Guide wrote that all the benefits derived by the country from British rule had been nullified by the taxes imposed and that 'the people do not from their hearts wish the continuance of British power'. The Pioneer wrote on 2 January 1871: 'From the Chambers of Commerce in our great presidency towns, to the poor despoiled villagers in the swamps of the delta, a great cry of oppression and wrong has come up, —a cry that, after passing through the whole gamut of remonstrance, protest, and denunciation, has now settled into an ominous monotone of concentrated sullen hostility. ... English supremacy in India has been more sapped by these nine months of universal ill-feeling than it would have been by half a dozen defeats in the field. We implore Government to believe that we speak only the bare truth. No one but a journalist who sits at the receipt of public opinion, and has letters from all sections of the community pouring into him from day to day, can sound the depths of obloquy and detestation into which the Income Tax has this year dragged the British administration.' Officials had a similar story to tell. A
collector in the North-Western Provinces, writing to the lieutenant-governor, described the income tax as 'monstrous and disgusting', and added: ... it is no wonder that it has given rise to deep and widespread discontent which we may never perhaps be able to root out. The harm which has been done and is being done by the tax is incalculable.'120

A community of suffering is often the strongest bond of union. By providing the various peoples of India with a common grievance the income tax served also to unite them. 'For the first time in the history of British India', noted the Pioneer, 'all classes and castes have been united... for the purpose of resisting the extortions and oppressions done by Government officers, and done in the name of the State. A sense of common wrong gradually verging closer and closer towards disloyal hatred to our rule has supplied the nexus,...'121 The Indian Daily News remarked: 'Discontent upon a financial question—such discontent as now prevails—is a patent political danger to a country like India. It bands together all her different tribes against her rulers, and unites them, with the perilous links of a common dislike and a common oppression. It creates

116 Pioneer, 13 March 1871.

117 Indian Daily News, 20 April 1870.

118 Quoted in Friend of India, 16 June 1870.

119 Pioneer, 2 January 1871.

120 E. G. Jenkinson, collector of Saharanpur, to W. Muir, lieutenant-governor of North-Western Provinces, 24 July 1870, enclosure in Muir to Mayo, 30 July 1870, Mayo Papers, Add. 7490/56. For the opinion of Bombay officials about the disaffection caused by the tax, see Sir W. R. Seymour Vesey Fitzgerald, governor of Bombay, to Mayo, 15 September 1870, ibid., 53a.

121 Pioneer, 2 January 1871.

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a state of things for which no surplus can make up, and which no surplus is powerful to remove. The cause which induced a common sympathy may cease to operate; but the sympathy will remain. The feeling of the hardship of an alien rule will, in fact, be intensified in, say the bosom of the Maharatta, when he knows that the Punjabee, the Madrasee, and the Bengali share his thoughts, and sympathize with his exasperation.'122

Soon after the agitation against the income tax was intensified in the spring of 1870, the Anglo-Indian press began to write about the prevalence of serious unrest and disaffection in the country. 'We ask the lofty dwellers of Simla', observed the Indian Daily News on 29 June 1870, 'if they are aware that we even now live on the borders of insurrection? Are they aware of the intense feeling of disaffection that prevails throughout the land?'123 The Englishman of 30 June 1870 remarked: 'We have never, in a pretty long journalistic career, seen the inhabitants of these provinces in a state of such irritation, and of such ill-will to the financial policy of Government, as they are at present.'124 'We are not', said the Pioneer on 29 July 1870, 'writing wildly ...
speaking from facts within our knowledge, we can declare that the sentiment of dislike and disloyalty is fast increasing among the people of these provinces—a sentiment which betrays itself less in murmurs, than in insolence of bearing and scarcely disguised threats of aggression.'125 The Mofussilite wrote on 22 September 1870: 'It is almost idle to repeat that a feeling of the ugliest kind pervades the entire native population of this Presidency. Never within the memory of the generation, has the "mind" of the people been in a more undesirable condition as regards their British rulers. The evil is least visible in the Punjab and the upper Jumna districts; but from Delhi to the sea prevails that dread feeling of expectancy—an expectancy that any moment may occur something to directly unsettle the whole community, which those of Indian experience have learned to regard as very ominous.'126 The Calcutta correspondent of The Times dilated upon the considerable 'dissatisfaction' and 'discontent' prevailing in India,127 and The Times devoted, in its issue of 9 November 1870, a leading article to the consideration of the same subject. And so it continued day after day for months and years. All sorts of alarmist rumours circulated amongst Anglo-Indians in northern India. Nor was the scare confined to northern India. Reports from western and southern India suggested that things were not very much better there. Some panicry British officials appear to have suggested to their Muslim proteges that they should publicly assure the British government in India of their community's loyalty to it. The result was a spate of fatwas from Muslim divines in northern India in 1870-1 declaring that India was not a darul-harb and that

122 Indian Daily News, 28 November 1870.
123 Ibid., 29 June 1870.
124 Englishman, 30 June 1870.
126 Mofussilite, 22 September 1870.
127 The Times, 8 November 1870.
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it was not incumbent upon Muslims in the country to indulge in a jehad against their alien rulers.

Most observers in 1870 were agreed that, though the income tax was the greatest and most immediate cause of the unrest in India, there were various other long-standing causes which had contributed to it. The Times referred to 'the stiffness of an uncongenial rule in matters of justice and revenue; the weight of a taxation which, though neither partial nor oppressive, is grinding from its very regularity, and the irksomeness at other points of a civilization which has not yet been naturalized'.128 Anglo-Indian newspapers in India talked of over-legislation, over-taxation, the tendency of British rule constantly to meddle and innovate, the hardness and narrowness of British character, the complete isolation of the rulers from the ruled, the alienation of the natural leaders of Indian society without winning over to British rule those whom they formerly led and still influenced, Muslim fanaticism and dissatisfaction with British rule, the innate and incurable
dislike of any people for the foreigner, the impoverishment and ruin of certain classes and communities in India, the spread of education and the creation of ambitions which could not be satisfied, and so on. The Indian press had its own tale of woe to tell. The Indu Prakash of Bombay, for example, published in September 1870 a list of fifty-six 'Indian grievances' calling for parliamentary inquiry and redress.129 They received a rather sympathetic notice in the Times of India,130 but the Pioneer was so annoyed by them that it remarked: 'May they not all be summed up in the one great grievance,—the presence of the English in India.'131

It is difficult to judge how serious the unrest in India was in 1870-1. Popular discontents are easier felt than fathomed. It is quite possible that the Anglo-Indian press tended to exaggerate the seriousness of the unrest prevailing in India fearing that it might lead to an outbreak similar to that in 1857 or even in order to frighten the authorities into abolishing the income tax. Non-official Anglo-Indians had done a great deal to whip up agitation against the income tax. It was their violent outcry against the tax which encouraged Indians to speak out more loudly than ever before. But the alliance between non-official Anglo-Indians and Indians against the income tax was entirely opportunistic and extremely fragile. There was no love lost between the two communities. And even while they were working together for the repeal of the tax they had not ceased to snipe at each other. By reducing the income tax in March 1871 the government of India succeeded not only in taking the heat out of the agitation against its financial policy but also in breaking the marriage of convenience between non-official Anglo-Indians and Indians.132 Henceforward non-official Anglo-Indians lost almost all interest in their earlier demands for the appointment

128Ibid., 9 November 1870.

129Cited in Pioneer, 8 October 1870.

130 Times of India, 11 October 1870.

131 Pioneer, 8 October 1870.

132 See Mayo to Salisbury, 9 June 1871, Mayo Papers, Add. 7490/43, no. 134.

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of a royal commission to inquire into Indian affairs and the reform of the legislative councils in India on a representative principle. It is also not without significance that there was very little mention of unrest in India in the Anglo-Indian press during the months immediately after the reduction of the income tax in March 1871.

But it was not long before 'discontent and danger in India' once again became the favourite theme of Anglo-Indian journalists. This was chiefly due to the violent activities of the Kukas in the Punjab in June 1871, the assassination three months later of Chief Justice Norman at Calcutta by an alleged Wahabi and the publication almost at the same time of W. W. Hunter's sensational book on the Indian Musalmans. A feeling of crisis and fear now gripped the small British community in India, both official and non-official. When in January 1872 the Kukas again
created trouble in the Punjab, British officials there lost their nerve and summarily had sixty-five of them blown away from guns.133 And then on 8 February 1872 what had been vaguely feared by some actually happened: the viceroy, Lord Mayo, was murdered in the Andaman Islands by a Muslim. Anglo-Indian attention had ever since the late 'sixties, if not earlier, tended to concentrate on the alleged Muslim discontent and, though the government of India very prudently played down in public the political significance of the murders of Norman and Mayo by Muslims, there can be little doubt that the two crimes reinforced its already growing conviction that of all the various communities in India the Muslims were the most disaffected and dangerous and that special efforts needed to be made to conciliate them.

The dominant tendency of the British administration in India from 1833 to the revolt of 1857 had been increasing centralization. It was dictated by the needs of an alien administration which was still busy extending or consolidating its territories and it was aided by the development of communications. But no amount of centralization in India could do away with the regional feelings and interests which were firmly entrenched in the subcontinent. If, for example, the incorporation of the Assamese, Bengalis, Biharis and Oriyas into one province could not make them feel that they were one homogeneous people, it was hardly to be expected that the mere subordination of the various provincial administrations to the governor-general in council at Calcutta would make either those administrations or their subjects forget their separate identities and interests. Regionalism or provincialism, as it was called in those days, affected even the Britons in India, particularly those who were officials. In an editorial entitled 'Anglo-Indian Provincialism', the Friend of India wrote on 8 July 1869: 'No one has better opportunities for becoming a citizen of the world than the Anglo-Indian. . .. Yet in relation to India and Indian subjects the English resident is often bitterly provincial.'134 In 1870 the viceroy, Mayo, publicly appealed to the

133 S. Gopal, British Policy in India 1858-1905, pp. 100-1; M.M. Ahluwalia, Kukas (1965), pp. 87 ff.

134Friend of India, 8 July 1869.

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British officials in India 'specially to avoid provincialism'.135 This provincialism of Anglo-Indian officials has often been attributed to their long stay in a particular province, to their pride in the traditions of service in that province, and to their natural resentment against dictation and interference from the central government. But it also had a deeper cause. Officials, even when they are foreigners, cannot but be responsive to the feelings, wants and aspirations of the people who are in their charge. As the Hindoo Patriot put it: 'Government even in a conquered territory cannot fail to be the people's organ without ceasing to be itself.'136

Centralization had come under severe attack even before the revolt of 1857 from both Anglo-Indians and Indians, especially in the so-called subordinate presidencies. We have already noted in an earlier chapter how in their petitions to Parliament in 1852 the Bombay Association and the Madras Native Association had bitterly complained that the supreme government at Calcutta often acted without due regard to the conditions and requirements of the distant provinces and
demanded greater independence for local governments in matters of administration and legislation. In order to remedy the recognized drawback of want of local knowledge in matters of legislation, the Charter Act of 1853 had provided for the inclusion in the legislative council at Calcutta of four experienced official representatives from Madras, Bombay, Bengal and the North-Western Provinces. This had, however, failed to satisfy the critics of centralization in India. The Hindoo Patriot, for example, had insisted in January 1856 that 'federalism is the principle upon which alone British government can be constructed in this country with the best advantage both to the rulers and the ruled'.

John Bright's famous speech in the House of Commons on the Government of India Bill on 24 June 1858, attacking excessive centralization in the hands of the governor-general in council, gladdened the hearts of the advocates of decentralization in India, though few shared his extreme views regarding the abolition of the office of governor-general and the splitting of British India into five entirely separate administrations. The Madras Crescent wrote on 27 July 1858: 'To the readers of the Crescent, the idea of each presidency managing its own internal concerns and corresponding directly with the home government, under the superintendence of a mixed council, is a familiar proposal coeval with the establishment of the journal [in 1844], the abolition of the Supreme Government is new, and a change that would neither lighten the burden of the Indian Government nor contribute to the welfare and loyalty of the separated states; for instead of the spirit of concord we should have the demon of rivalry; a

135 Ibid 19 May 1870.

136 Hindoo Patriot, 6 January 1859.

137 See above, pp. 64, 67.

138 Ilbert, op. cit., p. 91; H.L. Singh, op. cit., p. 76.

139 Hindoo Patriot, 24 January 1856.


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consequence far more certain, in our opinion, as the effect of "each supporting its own independence, and its own government", in complete isolation, than that of building them up into one great empire in federal connection, the interests of the whole shaped and watched over by a competent authority residing on the spot.' Asked by the Bombay Association in late 1858 for its opinion on Bright's speech, the committee of the Calcutta British Indian Association remarked that 'it is the ablest protest that has yet been uttered against the system of centralization which pervades the administration of India', and it added: 'Indeed the Committee can conceive of no system of administration more prejudicial to the improvement of the races inhabiting India, and more pregnant with mischief to the essential interests of Government than a deep-laid, widespread, and elaborate centralization, which now prevails in this country. A central power, however skilful and enlightened, cannot of itself embrace all the details of the existence of so
vast a nation or rather of so many nations as those of India. ... The tendency of centralization ... is uniformity, but the distinguishing feature of the Indian communities is variety. A single nation may thrive under centralization, for there the principle of the unity of action has a wide field for play. But centralization for a number of nations, each at a different stage of progress and with various degrees of intelligence, can have no principle for its basis for it is the practical confusion of all principle imaginable. Hence in India centralization is an anomaly. The Governor-General in whom the whole power of governing 200,000,000 people is centred is scarcely able to grasp it. There has necessarily been a division and subdivision of that power to a degree that has made good government subordinate to a show of order, tranquillity and method in the diversified departments of public affairs, the perfection of which is the only merit of a centralized bureaucracy. Hence the Governor-General, omnipotent according to the principle of the system, has in practice and in fact the smallest power for action. He is on all sides fettered, as he in return fetters all that move within his circle. And centralization in order to be powerful, must have a distinct and consistent policy. In India, however, that cannot be. Theoretically absurd, practically it is impossible. Every new Governor-General, sheltered under this anomalous constitution, stamps his own policy upon the administration, which however loses its effect, as experience teaches us, as soon as that Governor-General departs. Thus society is required a new lease of life and action at every change in the head of the administration. ... A system of administration ought to be provided for India which can give adequate development to the law of progress in all parts of the country equally and without stint.'142

Due probably to its geographical situation and relative neglect by the central government, the demand for autonomy was strongest in the presidency of Madras and for that reason it was called 'the Ireland of India'. 'We never met a Madras man,' wrote the Friend of India on 3 March 1858, 'who did not believe his Presidency deliberately oppressed by the central Government. We never saw a Madras paper in which the odium of checking reform was not thrown upon the authorities in Calcutta. The one political feeling, which in Madras rises to the dignity of a passion, is for the independence of the Presidency. It is very nearly as strong, though it is from local causes and more thorough official discipline less obvious, at Bombay.'143 It was no accident that the governor of Madras 'rebelled' against the central government in 1860 and that his action was applauded by the people of the presidency, both British and Indians.144 Had it not been for the fact that the government of India desperately needed extra revenue after the revolt, it is doubtful whether it would have paid any heed to the demand for greater freedom and autonomy by the provinces. 'A despotism is never polite except when it has designs on the purse.'145 Trevelyan's 'rebellion' in 1860 brought home to the viceroy and the secretary of state in a dramatic manner the lesson that if the provincial governments were expected to co-operate in raising the new and odious taxes they should be cajoled rather than coerced. The result was the Indian Councils Act of 1861 which restored to the governments of Bombay and Madras the powers of legislation which had been taken away from them in 1833 and provided for the extension of the same
privilege to the other provinces. In 1862 Bombay, Madras and Bengal got their own 'legislative councils'.

The Indian Councils Act of 1861 represented a major step in the direction of decentralization in India. Its short-term effects were, however, counteracted by certain contemporaneous developments. One of these developments was the increased surveillance exercised by the home government, through the secretary of state for India, over the government of India after the revolt which compelled the latter, in its turn, to tighten its control over the provincial governments. The second development was the organization by the government of India of its finance and public works departments in the early 1860s with a view, among other things, to closely scrutinizing provincial spending. But both these developments, particularly the latter, led to constant tension and friction between the centre and the provinces. The centre accused the provincial governments of extravagance and of always raising their claims while trying to reduce their contributions. The provincial governments, on the other hand, accused the centre of parsimony, of constant worrying interference, and of unfair assignments. And so the acrimonious quarrel continued throughout the 1860s while the financial difficulties of the government of India multiplied and grew. Not infrequently the secretary of state was invoked to act as mediator by the governments of Bombay and Madras, who had direct access to him and were inclined 'to regard the Government of India more as an equal than as a superior'.

Much of this had been foreseen as early as 1860 by the Hindoo Patriot, which had also recommended what was the only sensible alternative, namely 'a federal division' of India. The paper had written on 28 January 1860: 'The apportionment of the assets and liabilities of the Indian government among the different provinces which make up the British Indian empire—each according to its needs and capacities—is the first condition of their improvement. No amount of legislation, no skill in finance, no dexterity in management, can rescue the country...
from its present miseries until that is effected. Above all things, the financial embarrassments of the empire, sought to be remedied by increased taxation, will present never-ending difficulties until the provinces are divided, and each is made to bear its own burthen. ... Each Indian governorship, whatever its means and whatever its responsibilities, yearns for the free employment of the one, nor seeks to repudiate the other. What then can stand in the way of the federation of these discordant elements of an otherwise strong empire? 150

What stood in the way of a federal division of British India at the time—and even much later—was that it was an American and not an English idea 151 and, more importantly, that it involved a relaxation of central authority, with all its possible risks to the stability and integrity of the raj. But the difficulty of raising adequate funds to meet the growing expenditure of the provincial governments, as well as its own, by central taxation alone forced the government of India increasingly in the 1860s to allow the provincial governments to levy local taxes for local requirements. And at last in 1870-1 the government of India, faced with a persistent financial deficit and wiser from its experience of trying to maintain a centralized financial system, took a significant, though cautious and well-guarded, step in the direction of financial decentralization. It transferred certain subjects of more or less local character, such as police, jails, education, medical services, roads and civil buildings, to the provincial governments, with fixed assignments of revenue in order to meet their charges. The provincial governments were required to prepare their own local budgets on the basis of their assignments. 152

The authors of the scheme of financial decentralization in 1870-1 had expected that it would, among other things, contribute to the development of local self-government in India. 153 The expectation was not belied. Already in the 'sixties

149 Ibid., pp. 142-52. The quotation is from p. 152.

150 Hindoo Patriot, 28 January 1860.

151 For example, the Friend of India, 26 December 1867, denounced the proposal to decentralize the finances of the country as 'the policy of Americanising India'.


153 Resolution of government of India in finance department, 14 December 1870, no. 3334. Gazette of India, 31 December 1870, pp. 854-9, para. 22. See also Mayo to H.M. Durand, 270

various provincial governments had taken steps not only to reorganize the few long-established municipalities, such as those in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, but also to create new municipalities in almost all the important towns of India. This sudden and enormous expansion of 'local self-government' was due not to any desire on the part of the authorities to satisfy an existing public demand or to train the people in the art of self-government, but merely to raise money for local needs, such as sanitation, education and civic improvements, without charge to
the general revenues. The municipalities were neither representative nor self-governing bodies. They were composed of government nominees and dominated by officials. By saddling the meanest town in the country with the privilege of a municipality in the 1860s the British government in India incurred a good deal of unpopularity. The operations of the municipalities were in themselves generally desirable, but they involved novel and increased taxation and an unaccustomed interference with popular habits and prejudices. As the Englishman noted in 1867: 'Municipal government is acceptable to a people in proportion as it is local self-government. The very creation of municipalities evokes a sense of the right to such government, which is rudely offended when the practical result is to be found to be nothing more or less than local government by delegates from central authority.... It is hardly to be wondered at that the unpopularity of British rule in India has been intensified by the introduction of a municipal system, which compels the communities affected to pay for bringing foreigners into more immediate collision with their habits, their institutions and their homes.' There were also complaints that the municipalities were extravagant and oppressive, that they were composed of toadies, and that they cared more for the comforts of Europeans than for the needs of Indians.

But the extension of the municipal system in the 'sixties did much to stimulate political life in India. Whether they co-operated with the system or remonstrated against it, Indians acquired new ideas of public rights and responsibilities. The operations of the municipalities, which affected every section of the population in the towns, became the subject of animated discussion, both in private and in public. Soon, however, Indians, particularly the educated middle classes who had a better appreciation of the municipal system and felt excluded from it, realized that the system had come to stay and it was no use merely condemning and cursing it. The only way to stop the exactions and oppressions of the municipalities, they felt, was to control them. They, therefore, began to demand that the municipalities should be elected, representative and responsible bodies, freed from official control. Their demand was supported by enlightened non-member of viceroy's council, 29 April 1870 and to W. Muir, 17 June 1870, Mayo Papers, Add. 7490 /39, nos. 107, 177.

154 For an excellent account of the extension of 'local self-government" in India during the 'sixties and 'seventies, see A.P. MacDonnell, 'A Memorandum on the Growth of Local Self-Government in India with special reference to the Elective Principle', Home Public Department, April 1888, nos. 31-8, National Archives of India.

155 Englishman, 10 September 1867.

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official Britons, especially those in the presidency towns, who were often more familiar with the practical working of local self-government at home than were officials and who were as resentful as Indians of official arrogance and mismanagement. In the 'seventies, under persistent popular pressure or the new stimulus provided by the scheme of financial devolution or both, the various provincial governments partially conceded the principle of election in the constitution of a number of municipalities.
The concession of the principle of election with regard to the municipalities in the 1870s, partial and limited though it was, marks a milestone in the development of representative institutions in India. Its immediate effect was to reinforce the demand for the election of non-official members of the legislative councils. It also caused what may be called a mutation in the public life of the country. The actual working of the elective system, with all the premium that it put on new qualities of leadership and new modes of social mobilization, served steadily to bring to the forefront of public life in India the younger, English-educated middle classes, often at the expense of the older, aristocratic classes. The splits in the existing political associations and the rapid growth of new ones in India in the 'seventies were not entirely unconnected with municipal developments. Already in the 'seventies some of those Indians who later played such an important role in national affairs were beginning to distinguish themselves in municipal affairs.

Bernard Shaw's famous quip about the Englishman in The Man of Destiny, that he does everything on principle and his watchword is always duty, but he never forgets that the nation which lets its duty get on the opposite side to its interest is lost, can probably find no better illustration than in the British government's handling of the question of the admission of Indians to the covenanted civil service, better known as the Indian civil service, in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Indian civil service was thrown open to all natural-born subjects of Her Majesty in 1853 on the principle that careers should be open to talent without distinction of class, creed or colour. There was no risk in asserting this principle at a time when it was hardly expected that any Indian would be competent, rich and daring enough to enter into a competition with the pick of the intelligent youths of the United Kingdom, carried on at their own doors and based upon the educational system of their own schools. As Charles Wood, then president of the India board, wrote to the governor-general, Dalhousie, in 1853: '... this seems to be a point of honour, and we have arranged our matters so that they [Indians] may come here and be admitted. But I cannot say that I either expect or wish them to do this to any extent.'157 When in 1856 the British Indian Association of Calcutta pleaded with the India board that the existing system of holding the examination for the civil service in London alone was unfair to Indians and proposed that the examination should also be held in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras,158 it was met with the strange reply that its proposal was unacceptable because it meant, 'in effect, that every year ... a certain number of the Hindoo and Mahomedan subjects of her Majesty shall be admitted into the civil service, without competition with other classes of the Queen's subjects, and under a lower standard of qualification than that required from others'.159 In the decade following the revolt of 1857 the Indian demand for holding simultaneous examination for the civil service in India grew and became more insistent, being partly reinforced by the Queen's proclamation of 1858,160 but the British government found new and apparently more plausible reasons for not conceding it. It was argued, for example, that the holding of the civil service examination in India would benefit only the English-educated classes,

156See, for example, W. Martin Wood, Municipal Affairs in 1868 (1868) and James Wilson, Local Self-Government in India (1869).

157 Wood to Dalhousie, 24 November 1853, Wood Papers, MSS. Eur. F. 78/L.B.IV.
particularly the Bengalis and the Brahmans, who lacked ruling power; that it would be unfair to
the martial races, such as the Sikhs and the Pathans, and the uneducated masses, who preferred to
be ruled by English sahibs rather than by Indian babus; and that it would result in Indians
inundating the service and undermining its efficiency and esprit de corps.

The Indian civil service in effect was the government of India and most British statesmen,
Conservative and Liberal alike, were naturally anxious that it should always remain
predominantly, if not exclusively, British in composition. As the holding of the civil service
examination in India was likely to imperil the predominance of the British element in the service,
they were absolutely determined that it should never be allowed. They knew it was 'a mockery to
tell [Indians] that they may come and compete in Westminster if they like',161 but it had the
double merit of keeping Indians out and of enabling the British to parade their adherence to the
principle of open competition for the civil service. Soon, however, Indians caused another, and a
more serious embarrassment to the British government. Realizing that entrance into the Indian
civil service was worth crossing 'the black water' and taking the British government at its word, a
few of them actually began to 'come and compete in Westminster' in the early 'sixties. And in
1863 the unexpected happened: an Indian, named Satyendranath Tagore,162 succeeded in
passing the Indian civil service examination. The event created quite a scare in Anglo-Indian
circles, where it was regarded as the thin end of

158For the text of the petition of the British Indian Association on the subject, see Englishman,
20 January 1857.

159 Ibid., 9 June 1857.

160The Queen's proclamation of 1 November 1858 said, among other things, that "so far as may be,
our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to office in our
service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity duly

161Sir Stafford North cote, secretary of state for India and later Lord Iddesleigh, to Lord Napier,
governor of Madras, 25 August 1867, Iddesleigh Papers, Add. MSS. 50048, fo. 5.

162B. 1842; served in Bombay presidency; retired from Indian civil service 1897; d. 1923.

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the wedge. The British government reacted swiftly to the threat. Believing that Tagore's success
at the written examination was due largely to his securing a total of 728 marks out of the possible
1,000 for Arabic and Sanskrit and fearing that other Indian candidates might repeat his
performance in the future, the British government reduced the marks allotted for these languages
by 250.163 In 1869 four Indians succeeded in passing the civil service examination. This so
frightened the then secretary of state for India, the Duke of Argyll,164 that he hurriedly scrapped
a scholarship scheme which had only recently been introduced to enable nine Indians to go to
Britain each year for higher studies, lest it might increase the number of Indian candidates for the
civil service.155 it should never be forgotten, and there should never be any hesitation in laying
down the principle,' he wrote to the viceroy, 'that it is one of our first duties towards the people of India to guard the safety of our dominion.'

The scholarship scheme had been devised as a sop to Indians who demanded the holding of simultaneous examination for the civil service in India. But the success of Indian candidates at the civil service examination in London prompted the British authorities, both in India and in Britain, to have second thoughts about the wisdom of making Indians eligible for the examination itself. They began increasingly to assert that the system of competitive examination was unsuited to Indians, because in their case intellectual acuteness was no indication of fitness to govern, and to show their preference for the system of nomination. Of the 40 Indians who competed for the civil service between 1862 and 1875, not more than ten were successful. And of those successful, only six were Bengalis. But an impression was sought to be created that Indians, particularly Bengalis, were taking over the Indian civil service. Schemes began to be devised for bribing Indians out of the competitive system by nominating a few of them to well-paid jobs. Educated India, however, refused to be bribed and continued to demand 'a fair field and no favour', that is the holding of the civil service examination simultaneously in India and in Britain.

It was while these developments were taking place that Lord Salisbury, as secretary of state for India, reduced in 1876 the maximum age at which the civil service examination might be sat from 21 to 19. Whether or not this reduction was aimed primarily at making it more difficult for Indians to 'come and compete in Westminster', its effect was unmistakably so. Educated Indians had opposed the reduction of the age-limit from 22 to 21 in 1866 as being prejudicial to their chances. They could not be expected to welcome the further and more drastic reduction of 1876. In fact, they looked upon it as another clever and cruel move on the part of the British
government to effectively thwart their ambition for entering, or even competing for, the Indian civil service and decided to offer strong resistance to it.

The civil service question was eminently suited to become the battle-cry of an all-India movement. It united men of different classes, creeds and provinces in India by providing them with a genuine grievance and a righteous cause. Moreover, educated Indians throughout the country felt very strongly about it, because with it were associated not only their ambitions for place and power but also their dreams of ultimate self-government. Credit is, however, due to the leaders of the Indian Association of Calcutta, particularly S. N. Banerjea and A. M. Bose, for being the first to discern that the civil service question was 'indeed a national question' and that it called for 'a national movement'.169 They opened correspondence with leaders of public opinion in other parts of India with a view to organizing a 'national protest' against the recent order of the secretary of state reducing the higher age-limit for the civil service examination from 21 to 19. On 24 March 1877 a public meeting was held in the Albert Hall,170 Calcutta, at which speakers denounced Salisbury's action as an ill-concealed attempt to exclude Indians from higher office in their own country, in violation of the solemn pledges given earlier by the British government. The meeting resolved to submit a memorial to Parliament drawing the latter's attention to the principles and pledges contained in the Charter Act of 1833 and the Queen's proclamation of 1858, and demanding not only the restoration of the higher age-limit for the civil service examination, but also the holding of that examination simultaneously in India and in England. A committee, representing all sections of the Indian community in Calcutta, was appointed to draw up and forward the proposed memorial to Parliament, and S. N. Banerjea was deputed to travel all over the country in order to mobilize support in favour of the memorial. During the summer of 1877 Banerjea toured the chief towns of northern India—Lahore, Amritsar, Meerut, Delhi, Aligarh, Agra, Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad, Banaras and Patna—as a 'Special Delegate' of the Indian Association. In the following winter he visited Bombay, Ahmedabad, Surat, Poona and Madras in the same capacity.171 The procedure which he adopted in his travels was as follows. Long before he visited a particular town, letters were addressed by the Indian Association to the well-known public men of that town. On his arrival at the town, Banerjea called upon local dignitaries and with their help convened a public meeting at which speeches were made denouncing the reduction in the higher age-limit for the civil service examination and resolutions identical with those of the Calcutta meeting of 24 March 1877 were adopted. Copies of the civil service memorial prepared by the Calcutta committee—in English or in the regional language—


170 For the proceedings of the meeting, see Statesman and Friend of India, 27-8 March 1877, and Proceedings of the Public Meeting on the Civil Service Question Held at the Town Hall of Calcutta [on 24 March 1877] (1879).

were distributed and a local committee was formed to collect signatures and forward them to Calcutta. In his travels through northern India, Banerjea was substantially aided by the presence of a sizable Bengali community in the various towns of the region. The latter not only provided Banerjea with valuable contacts, but also enabled him to organize branches of the Indian Association at many centres such as Lahore, Agra, Kanpur and Allahabad. Emboldened by the success of its efforts in India, the Indian Association deputed in April 1879 one of its most talented members, Lalmohan Ghose,172 to go to Britain as its delegate in order to lay before the British public the grievances of the Indian people regarding the civil service and other questions. Arriving in Britain in the following summer, Ghose succeeded in securing for his mission the sympathy and support of many leading British liberals such as William E. Gladstone,173 John Bright, Henry Fawcett, Charles W. Dilke,174 David Wedderburn175 and F. W. Chesson.176 He addressed many public meetings, of which the most important was the one held at Willis's Rooms, Westminster, on 23 July 1879.177

The civil service agitation of 1877-9 had several significant features. Writing about the meeting held in Calcutta on 24 March 1877, at which the campaign was formally launched, the Friend of India had observed: 'Orthodox Hindus, Mussulmans, Brahmans, Christians, drawn together in unison, with one common object, is a sight which every true friend of Indian progress, and every one who is alive to the signs of the times, be he friendly or unfriendly, must regard with keen interest.'178 Calcutta was not quite a microcosm of India. -But it was such a divided and faction-ridden city that any question which could unite its population stood a fair chance of uniting the population of the entire subcontinent. So it was with the civil service question. In the subsequent months similar demonstrations of unity were witnessed in many other towns of India. The Madras Standard noted in December 1877 that the civil service movement was 'becoming a national movement'.179 To Indian patriots the most gratifying

172 B. 1849; barrister; president of Indian National Congress 1903; d. 1909.

173 B. 1809; prime minister of Britain 1868-74, 1880-5, 1886, 1892-4; d. 1898.

174 B. 1843; politician and author; M.P. 1868-86 and 1892-1911; under-secretary to foreign office 1880-2; president of local government board 1882-5; d. 1911.

175 B. at Bombay 1835; elder brother of Sir William Wedderburn; M.P. 1868-74, 1879-82; d. 1882.

176 B. 1833; son-in-law of George Thompson; journalist and philanthropist; secretary of Aborigines Protection Society from 1863 until his death in 1888.

177 For the proceedings of the meeting, see The Times, 24 July 1879.

178 Friend of India and Statesman, 30 March 1877.

179 Madras Standard, 31 December 1877. See also Times of India, 11 December 1877.
aspect of the civil service movement was the union it had brought about between men of diverse
castes, creeds, classes and regions in the country. The Indian Mirror averred that 'whatever be the
success of the present agitation, the union itself is a very great gain. India united can overawe
any wrong-doer.'180 The secretary of the Indian Association wrote: 'The result of this first
attempt, to unite in a bond of common sympathy and common action the different peoples of
India, is full of hopeful augury for the future. Independently of the direct results which may be
expected to flow from such a unanimous outburst of national sentiment on this question of vital
interest to the people of India, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the indirect
advantages of such a movement in evoking the sentiment of a common and united nationality.181

Banerjea's 'triumphal progress'182 through various parts of India in connexion with the civil
service agitation in 1877 marks an epoch in the political history of the country. Though religious
leaders like K. C. Sen and Dayanand Saraswati had already—following a very ancient
tradition—tooured the subcontinent in order to propagate their views, Banerjea was the first
Indian to do so on a purely political mission. His travels and stirring speeches established his
reputation as an all-India political leader. Thanks to his endeavours, the Indian Association
developed contacts with leading public men and bodies all over the country which it could utilize
for a gitational purposes in the future. For Banerjea himself the tours meant a 'discovery of
India'. Writing about his trip to the Punjab and the North-Western Provinces in the summer of
1877 he remarked: 'There is a hidden but deep undercurrent of political feeling in the people of
the Punjab and the North-Western Provinces. They may appear apathetic, with but little hope of
having their grievances redressed, or of seeing any improvement in the administration of the
country. But they are not insensible to the interests of their fatherland. They are not deaf to the
calls of patriotism; and above all, they have loving and sympathetic hearts, and are ever willing
to extend the hand of brotherhood to their countrymen of the other Presidencies. Wherever I
went, I was treated like a brother, and one entitled to sympathy. My relations with them were of
the most cordial character; and my intercourse with Hindustani gentlemen was but the
interchange of ideas and feelings between countrymen, with kindred hopes, sentiments and
aspirations. I never noticed the faintest spark of jealousy, nor indeed any feeling of uneasiness, in
our having taken the initiative, in this great national cause. For me and our cause there was
nothing but sympathy; and, perhaps, there was even gratitude for the efforts of our Association.
It is my most earnest hope and desire, that the intercourse between the people of Bengal and the
people of the Punjab and the North-Western Provinces, and indeed the pother peoel of the
Presidencies in India, should go on increasing, and that we should know one another much more
intimately than

180 "Quoted in Bombay Gazette, 10 July 1877.

181 The First Annual Report of the Indian Association, 1876-77, p. vii; also quoted in Bagal,
History of the Indian Association, p. 20.

182 H.J.S. Cotton, New India or India in Transition (1885), p. 16.
is the case at present. The surest and the most stable hope of an Indian regeneration must be founded upon this increasing intercourse, upon the augmented sympathy which is sure to follow, and the steadfast desire to make united efforts in all questions of national importance.183

The extremely skilful and thoroughly constitutional manner in which the civil service agitation was carried on impressed even Anglo-Indians. The Times of India wrote on 24 December 1877: 'The really remarkable feature of the whole movement is the moderation, the good sense, and political tact which have distinguished it from first to last. The agitators—we use the word in no invidious sense—had unquestionably a strong case, but it has lost none of its strength in their hands. They assumed no disputed or disputable principles; they raised no irrelevant issues; and they indulged in no unworthy sneers. They took their stand on distinct pledges of the English Government and past acts in conformity with those pledges. Their appeal lay not to the rights of man or the rights of nations, but to those specific pledges, and it was supported by broad views of political utility. Now this is emphatically the English style, the style on which we are accustomed to pride ourselves, and of which we sometimes fancy we possess the exclusive monopoly. But there are really strong reasons for believing that the Hindu people have learnt, or at least are learning, the English style in politics with remarkable quickness, and already on occasions which touch them nearly apply it with almost English closeness and cogency. The feeble and partial opportunities which they now possess for displaying these gifts is a fact which must be taken into consideration, if we would form a fair estimate of the progress they have already made. Our present point, however, is the unquestionable weight which a fact of this kind gives to their arguments and representations in the present discussion. A race that can conduct a political campaign with such ability has already won half the battle.'184 But probably the most significant feature of the civil service agitation of 1877-9 lay in the fact it was the first instance of a political agitation coordinated on an all-India basis by Indians themselves. The agitation against the income tax in the early 1870s was equally widespread, but there was little coordination in it and Anglo-Indians played a more prominent role in it than did Indians. The leaders of the Indian Association, particularly S. N. Banerjea and A. M. Bose, were men with an all-India outlook. They set out deliberately to organize 'a national movement' on the civil service question. But they were acting not entirely without precedents to guide them. As the Hindoo Patriot claimed on 9 July 1877: 'In 1870 the British Indian Association set an important example by organizing local or representative meetings in the mofussil on the great education question of the day. . . . Following this example the Indian Association has deputed one of its ablest members to test the opinions and feelings of the


184 Times of India, 24 December 1877.

people of Northern India ... '185 It is quite possible that the success achieved by the British Indian Association in 1870 in organizing a province-wide movement encouraged the Indian Association seven years later to organize a countrywide movement, following similar methods. But probably a more relevant experience on which the leaders of the Indian Association drew for
organizing their 'national movement' on the civil service question was that provided by the widespread inter provincial missionary and organizational work of the Brahma Samaj, with which they were closely acquainted.

There were three western institutions to which Indians took most readily in the nineteenth century, namely the press, platform oratory and public associations. Of these the first was by far the most important and its contribution to Indian political life has probably been the greatest. The Friend of India was right when, in noticing the first faint beginnings of an Indian-owned press in Calcutta, it wrote in 1821: 'Had no other event followed from our arrival in the East than the introduction of a Press among the Natives, we should have conferred a boon on India for which generations yet unborn, must bless the British name.' Following the example of its Anglo-Indian counterpart, the Indian press was always inclined to be 'again the government' and advocated particular interests and views. But until the revolt of 1857 Indian newspapers were few in number and had a small and limited circulation. The authorities, therefore, did not take much notice of them. The Friend of India, which under J. C. Marshman and Meredith Townsend, was one of the very few pro-government newspapers in the country and which also kept a close watch on the Indian press, repeatedly assured the authorities that the Indian press was 'perfectly innocuous' and that there was no danger—'at least till the end of the present Yooga'—of its being able to 'set the Ganges on fire'. Similar assurances were given by most witnesses before the select committees of Parliament in 1852-3.

The outbreak of the revolt in 1857 forced the authorities not only to pay greater heed to the Indian press, but also to have second thoughts about the wisdom of Metcalfe's action in 1835 in removing all restrictions on the freedom of the press in India. It was felt that the press had, through its 'seditious articles and habitual depreciation of the character of our Government and misrepresentation of its acts', been at least partly responsible for the catastrophe. It was also felt that if attention had sooner been drawn to the utterances of the Indian press, much valuable information would have been gained regarding the workings of the Indian mind. As an emergency measure, Canning introduced in June 1857 a 'Gagging Act' which placed all newspapers under strict control for twelve months. It was aimed primarily at Indian newspapers, 189 which were, in effect, its real victims.
It was during the revolt that the suggestion was first made, by Bartle Frere in Bombay and by the Reverend James Long in Calcutta, that all Indian newspapers should be regularly read by trustworthy persons and their contents brought to the notice of the government. The indigo disturbances in Bengal served to underline the value of the suggestion. In his evidence before the indigo commission in June 1860 and again, a year later, in his statement before the court during his trial in connexion with the famous Nil Darpan affair, Long emphasized the great importance of the Indian vernacular press as a genuine exponent of native opinion and the barometer of the native mind and strongly advised his countrymen in India, for their own future security, to keep themselves regularly informed of its contents. The Hindoo Patriot, in its issue of 12 June 1861, and a missionary conference held in Calcutta in July 1861 expressed their approval of Long’s views. In August of the same year Canning publicly admitted the importance of systematically and officially reporting on the publications of the Native Press. The idea was welcomed by the British Indian Association in the hope that it would enable the government to become better acquainted with the real opinions and feelings of the Indian people. But two more years were to elapse before it was put into practice.

In May 1863 the government of Bengal established the office of 'Reporter on the Native Press'. Every vernacular newspaper and periodical published in the presidency was to be obtained, read and if necessary reported on. The duty was entrusted to the official Bengali translator, the Reverend John Robinson, assisted by two Indians. The Friend of India, speaking apparently on behalf of the government, assured Indian newspapers that it is not intended to exercise anything like a censorship. They may write what they please, and the more honestly the better, but there will be no interference with them unless they expose themselves to the provisions of the Penal Code. The day is past when any check beyond that which the public weal and morality demand from all newspapers alike, will be

189See Canning's speech, 13 June 1857, in Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, from January to December 1857, col. 300.

190Frere's suggestion is referred to in Elphinstone's minute, 24 June 1857, published in Bombay Times, 28 June 1857. For Long's disclosure later about his private recommendation to Canning, see Journal of the Society of Arts, 23 March 1877, vol. xxv, no. 1,270, p. 421. A similar suggestion was made by C.E. Trevelyan in his famous letters to The Times in 1857. See The Letters of Indophilus to 'The Times' (1858 ed.), p. 49.

191 Parliamentary Papers, 1861, vol. xlv, no. 72-1, p. 95.

192 Friend of India, 27 June 1861.

193 Ibid., 8 August 1861.

194 Ibid., 15 August 1861.

195 Bengal Hurkaru, 8 October 1861; also Tenth Annual Report of the British Indian Association for the Year 1861 (1862), p. 14.
recommended for the native journals. It is the expression of their honest opinion, not its concealment, which the English want.'196 From October 1863 on weekly reports on Indian newspapers in Bengal, containing extracts from vernacular newspapers translated into English, began to be submitted to the local government. Copies of these reports were supplied to officials in the presidency, to other provincial governments, to most Anglo-Indian newspapers, and even to some Indian newspapers in the country. Other provincial governments gradually followed Bengal and by the early 1870s arrangements had been made for regular reporting on the vernacular press throughout India, including the princely states.

One of the greatest difficulties which the British faced as rulers of India was that of knowing what the people of India really felt and thought about them and their actions. As the Friend of India wrote in 1863: 'Never has there been an empire on earth in which the gulf between rulers and ruled has been so wide or remained so long unbridged, as in the case of the English in India.... But while Hindoos and Mussulmans have learned more of their rulers in the past five years than in the previous century, we have not made an equal advance in knowledge of them. . . . The whole structure of [Indian] society is calculated to shut us out from an acquaintance with their real life and motives. Those who mix most freely with the English do so because they become de-Hindooised, and they give us no more knowledge of their countrymen than the Presidency cities do of India. And even were there no caste or superstitious shrinking from us, the mere fact of having something to fear or to expect from Government shuts the mouths of our subjects or teaches them deliberately to mislead us.'197 The system of regular reports on the Indian press provided the British in India with an excellent means of ascertaining the real views and feelings of their subjects, but it is doubtful whether they used it to their best advantage.198 Most human beings believe what they like to believe. The British in India were no exception to this general rule. Already there was a tendency on their part to dismiss the Indian-owned English newspapers as being 'too much of a reflex of those edited by Englishmen' and representing only the opinions of a handful of 'denationalized babus'.199 Greater familiarity with the Indian-owned vernacular newspapers served more to irritate than to enlighten them. Most British readers of the highly selective extracts from the vernacular newspapers in India, whose English translations were contained in the official reports, came to regard the conductors of those newspapers as fools or knaves, as persons either incapable of appreciating the good intentions of their rulers or determined deliberately to misrepresent them.

196 Friend of India, 21 May 1863.

197 Ibid.

198 'I suppose there never was an administration of equal importance which received so much information and which was so ill-informed.' George Aberigh-Mackay, Twenty-One Days in India (1880), p. 209.

199 Friend of India, 10 September 1863.
The 'sixties and seventies witnessed a rapid expansion of the press in India. This was due not only to the spread of education, the development of the means of communication and the Towering of postal charges, but also to the growing realization by Indians that if was 'a characteristic feature of the English rule that Those who cry most are always heard'. By 1875 there were about 400 Indian-owned newspapers, with an estimated circulation of about 150,000. Even allowing for the alleged fact that a newspaper in India was 'like a political placard on the walls of Paris or London' and that each copy was, on average, read by ten to twenty people, the number of newspaper readers in India in the 1870s would not have been very large, keeping in view the vast population of the country. But as William Digby and Roper Lethbridge pointed out at the time, it included 'the directing, active sections of the population'.

The majority of Indian-owned newspapers were in the vernaculars, appeared weekly and circulated less than 500 copies. Bengalis excelled in both English and vernacular journalism. Calcutta had the only Indian-owned English daily newspaper in the country, called the Indian Mirror. The largest selling, and probably the cheapest, vernacular newspaper in India at the time, the Sulabha Samachar, was also published from Calcutta. Except for the recently started Indian Spectator, Bombay had no high-class Indian-owned English newspaper which could compare with the Hindoo Patriot, the Bengalee and the Indian Mirror of Calcutta. But vernacular journalism was more vigorous in the western presidency than anywhere else in India. Not only had Bombay more vernacular or Anglo-vernacular newspapers—and these published from many more stations—than any other province in India, the tone of its newspapers, especially those in Marathi, was 'at once bolder and more outspoken in censure of some of the acts of the authorities'. The North-Western Provinces and the Punjab had a large number of Indian newspapers in Urdu or Hindi, but most of them were of an inferior variety and had a small circulation. They were more interested in the political condition of Afghanistan and the movements of Russia than in the doings of the government. Dig by rightly ascribed the inferior character of the Indian press in upper India to the bribery and bullying to which it was subjected by British officials there. Strangely enough, the Indian press in south India was 'behind nearly all others in India in number, power, and influence'.

In the decade following the suppression of the revolt, British officials in India

200 Hindoo Patriot, 12 June 1876.


202 Bombay Gazette, 12 April 1877.

203 B. 1840; served in Bengal educational department 1868-76; press commissioner 1877-80; M.P. 1885-92; d. 1919.

204 Digby, op. cit., p. 363; Lethbridge, op. cit., pp. 462-3. The phrase quoted is Digby's.
appear to have adopted, on the whole, a sensible policy towards the Indian press. They kept a close watch on Indian newspapers, occasionally reprimanding those who, in their view, abused their freedom and rewarding those who were considered to be loyal and responsible by means of indirect subsidies. The fact, however, that it had few firm and consistent supporters amongst the press, whether Indian or British, and that its acts were often severely criticized or misrepresented, continued to be a source of great anxiety to the government. Despite formal prohibition, British officials continued to write for the press. The idea of establishing a government newspaper was periodically discussed, but the objections against it were found to be insuperable.

In the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, there were clear indications that the official attitude towards the Indian press had begun to harden. In 1867 an act was passed which provided for the compulsory registration of printing presses and newspapers in the country, and in 1870 the Indian penal code was amended so as to make the exciting of disaffection to the government, 'by words, either spoken or intended to be read, or by signs, or by visible representation or otherwise', a penal offence. The Indian press was naturally blamed for the prevailing unrest in the country. There can be little doubt that some of the Indian newspapers were becoming increasingly bold and outspoken in their criticism of official policies and in voicing Indian grievances and demands. Their principal topics of discussion were the injustice and tyranny of the British government, its utter want of consideration towards its subjects, the insolence and pride of Britons in India, the drain of wealth from the country and the growing pauperization of the people, the exclusion of Indians from higher jobs in the army and the civil service, the partiality and preference shown for Britons in employment and the administration of justice, over-taxation and over-legislation, the denial of any voice to Indians in the government of their own country, and the attempts of the British government to emasculate the Indian people materially, mentally and morally. Moreover, they had now begun to discuss, openly or covertly, the desirability of gaining independence from British rule and the means to be adopted for that purpose.

Following the murders of Norman and Mayo in 1871 and 1872 respectively, the government of India came under increased pressure, from several Anglo-Indian circles, to restrict the freedom of the Indian press. Soon after his arrival as viceroy in India, Northbrook was strongly urged by the lieutenant-governor of Bengal, Sir George Campbell, to check the 'unbridled license' allowed to the vernacular press by tightening the laws of sedition. But Northbrook was a good judge of men and things. He knew that Campbell had made himself
209 B. 1824; joined East India Company's service 1842; judicial commissioner of Avadh 1858-62; judge of Calcutta high court 1862-7; chief commissioner of Central Provinces 1867-8; lieutenant-governor of Bengal 1871-4; member of secretary of state's council 1874-5; M.P. 1875-92; d. 1892.

210 Campbell to Northbrook, 2 July 1872, Northbrook Papers, MSS. Eur. C. 144/13.

extremely unpopular in Bengal as he had been 'rubbing up the Natives the wrong way by using sharp expressions and by acting a little hastily'211 and that, having been trained in the more authoritarian traditions of the upper provinces, he was unduly sensitive to press criticisms. 'I am inclined to think', he wrote to Campbell, 'such criticisms are, on the whole, an advantage. We are very ignorant of the feelings of the people; we have no representative institutions to give us the advantage of hostile criticism of our measures before they are put into the shape of law, and the press may to a certain extent supplement the deficiency. ... It is far more safe that these things should be said openly than ... without the knowledge of Government.'212 In 1873 Campbell renewed his pressure for a more stringent law which would enable the executive to deal summarily and severely with offending newspapers 'without all the eclat of a long prosecution'. But Northbrook refused to yield to it.213 There was, however, one point on which Northbrook agreed with Campbell, namely that the practice of supplying Anglo-Indian newspapers with copies of the official weekly reports on Indian newspapers was undesirable, because by reproducing offensive titbits from those reports, Anglo-Indian newspapers gave them wider publicity and created unnecessary alarm. He, therefore, issued an order in 1874 that the weekly reports on Indian newspapers should be treated as confidential papers and circulated only to the principal officers of the government.214

In November 1874 a Bombay civilian, F.P. Lely,215 published a long article on the vernacular press in the Indian Economist of Calcutta, a monthly edited by Robert Knight and subsidized by the government, which attracted a great deal of attention.216 'The natives of India', wrote Lely, 'have little reason to complain as they do about the Disarmament Act so long as the most formidable of all weapons—the pen—is not included in the list proscribed by Section VI. ... With such alacrity has the mild Hindoo beaten his spear into a pen and abandoned the hill-fort for the printing-office that there is now scarcely a single town of any size within our territories which has not its Mitra (of the people) or its Chabuk (for the sirkar).217 With the help of extracts culled from the official weekly reports on Indian newspapers, Lely tried to prove that the tone of the Indian vernacular press, particularly in Bengal and Bombay, was extremely seditious and 'that unless something is soon done to alter it or to neutralize its effect we may as well give up all hope of basing our Empire on the goodwill of the people and trust to our guns alone'.218

211 Northbrook to P. Wodehouse, governor of Bombay, 29 May 1872, ibid.

212 Northbrook to Campbell, 20 July 1872, ibid.

213 See correspondence between the Bengal government and the government of India, reproduced in C. 2040 (1878), pp. 33-7.
In 1875, consequent upon the appearance in many Indian newspapers, notably the Amrita Bazar Patrika of Calcutta and the Indu Prakash of Bombay, of articles vehemently denouncing the government for the trial and deposition of the Gaikwar of Baroda, the secretary of state, Salisbury, advised the viceroy, Northbrook, to prosecute the offenders.219 Salisbury was no believer in the virtues of a free press in India. His view was that, under 'despotic' rule newspapers were an 'unmixed nuisance' and that the government of India "will have to increase [its] preventive power over them'.220 He also appears to have been influenced by the contemporary scare about the Indian press created by certain prominent newspapers in Britain.221 But Northbrook refused to be hustled into taking any precipitate action. He even laid most blame on the British and Anglo-Indian press and thought it unfair to single out the Indian press for punishment.222

It is ironical that the viceroy who decided to deprive the Indian press of the liberty it had so long enjoyed was the author of a poem on 'The Liberty of the Press', which contained the following significant lines:

'... Voice will lead to speech,

Speech to intelligence, intelligence

To liberty. . .'223

But Lytton, who succeeded Northbrook as viceroy of India in April 1876, was Salisbury's nominee and it is not improbable that he went out to India with a mandate from his chief to impose restrictions on the freedom of the Indian press. He addressed himself to the task soon after his arrival in India. But he encountered vigorous opposition from the law member of his council, Arthur Hobhouse.224 In a forcible minute, dated 10 August 1876, Hob house expressed his 'almost invincible repugnance to stir in the matter'. Any differential legislation against the Indian press, he argued, would be 'class legislation of the most striking and invidious description, at variance with the whole tenour of our policy' and its effect would be that 'all the forces of Native society, newspapers, Associations and others, will be brought to bear against us'. He even maintained that Anglo-Indian newspapers were often actually worse and did 'more than the
Native ones to bring the Government into contempt and odium'. 'The one subject on which Indian newspapers 'do unanimously, eagerly, persistently.

219 Secretary of state to government of India, 6 May 1875, quoted in E.C. Moulton, Lord Northbrook's Indian Administration 1872-1876 (1968). p. 269; also C. 2040 (1878), p. 29.

220 Salisbury to Northbrook, 21 May 1875, Northbrook Papers, MSS. Eur. C. 144/12, no. 23.

221 See letter of R.C. Caldwell, late editor of Athenaeum and Daily News, Madras, to The Times, 17 May 1875; Pall Mall Gazette, 17, 20 May 1875; Daily News, 19 May 1875; and Observer, 23 May 1875

222 Northbrook to Salisbury, 14 June 1875, Northbrook Papers, MSS. Eur. C. 144 12, no. 29; C. 2040, p. 29; Moulton, op. cit., pp. 159-60, 269-71.

223 Quoted in Dig by, op. cit., p. 356.

224 B. 1819; called to the bar 1845; law member of viceroy's council 1872-7; member of judicial committee of privy council 1881-1901; created baron 1885; d. 1904.

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and often angrily complain, is that of class preferences', but there they 'are right, and are only contending for the same objects with our own Government'. In his view, those who raised the question of a free press in India raised a still deeper and wider question, namely whether it was right to promote the education of Indians. As a true liberal, he insisted: 'Neither knowledge nor freedom of speech can be acquired without some unpleasant excesses. We have chosen the generous, I think the wise, policy of encouraging both, and we ought not to be frightened because some of the symptoms appear. People who increase their knowledge are sure to be discontented unless their power increases too, and will probably be impatient to acquire that power; and people who have newly acquired freedom of speech are likely at times to use their tongues without discretion. All that we must take as the drawback necessarily attendant on the benefit of having a more intelligent and less reticent people in India.'225

Sedition, like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder. Or, so at least it did in Bengal in the 1870s. The Bengali press, which Campbell considered to be seditious, was given a clean bill of health by his successor. Temple publicly and repeatedly testified to 'the loyalty and goodwill of the Bengali press towards the British Government and nation, and towards British rule in the main'.226 But Ashley Eden,227 who succeeded Temple as lieutenant-governor of Bengal in January 1877, was of the opinion that the Bengali press was thoroughly disloyal and that it 'preach[ed] rank sedition, and even talk[ed] of a war of independence'.228

Significantly enough, it was only after Eden had been installed at Belvedere and after Hob house had left India that Lytton wrote his notorious 'confidential' minute of 22 October 1877, in which he took note of the steadily growing evil of seditious writing in the Indian press and emphasized the urgent need to stop it. He expressed his belief that there was 'a real distinction' between the
Anglo-Indian and the Indian press. The former, 'however vituperative and mischievous, . . . does not attack the supremacy of Her Majesty's Government, and, of course, has no desire to subvert it', whereas the latter, 'however insignificant its attacks may be, is occasionally influenced . . . by a desire, real or pretended, to subvert the English regime, and to substitute Native rulers'. But as this distinction could not be defined and formulated in a legal enactment, without incurring the charge of racialism, he suggested that the proposed law restricting the freedom of the Indian press, to be modelled after the Irish coercion law of 1870, should, 'in the first instance, be extended only to papers published in the

225 C. 2040, pp. 37-41.


227 B. 1831; joined East India Company's service 1852; secretary to Bengal government 1862-71; chief commissioner of Burma 1871-7; member of viceroy's council 1875; lieutenant-governor of Bengal 1877-82; member of secretary of state's council 1882-7; d. 1887.

228 Quoted in C. 2040, p 42.

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Vernacular languages'. 'It is only these', he allowed himself to believe, 'that circulating among uneducated classes can do serious mischief. Sedition circulated in the English language appeals only to a small section of the people who are of necessity tolerably educated, and capable of judging of the value of such writing. It may gratify their taste, but it is not likely to mislead them into a foolish action.'229

Having, by the end of February 1878, obtained the assent of all local governments, except that of Madras, to the principle of restrictive legislation against the vernacular press in India, Lytton proceeded 'by a sort of coup d'etat, to pass a very stringent gagging Bill.'230 He used the prevailing excitement in India over developments in the Near East and his own desire to escape to Simla as convenient excuses not only to secure by cable the approval of Salisbury but also to rush the measure through the legislative council at a single sitting on 14 March 1878, without giving either the Indian people or the secretary of state's council in London a chance to consider it.231 The 'Act for the better control of Publications in Oriental Languages', better known as the Vernacular Press Act, which Lytton hoped would 'enable us to behead the hydra at one sudden stroke',232 authorized magistrates, with the previous sanction of local governments, to demand bonds from printers and publishers and either a deposit of such sum as the local government might think fit or the submission of proofs for inspection. If any newspaper published anything which the government regarded as objectionable, it would be warned by a notification in the Gazette. If this warning were disregarded, the deposit, the machinery and copies of the newspaper could be confiscated. The only appeal against the action of a magistrate or a local government was to the governor-general in council. A press commissioner was appointed who was entrusted with the giving out of official intelligence and the supervision of the vernacular press under the Act, but whose real function was to manage the press.233
Lytton's coup d'etat did not catch the Indian public napping. The latter had been prepared for some such action by persistent reports and discussion on the subject in the Anglo-Indian and the British press during at least the last two years. In fact, it was largely the fear of an impending censorship of the press which had prompted the Indian journalists, who had assembled at Delhi on the occasion of the imperial darbar, to organize in December 1876 a 'Native Press Association'. But the Vernacular Press Act was much more Draconic than anything that had been expected, and, not unnaturally, it was universally condemned by the Indian press. Even a section of the Anglo-Indian press was highly critical of the Act, particularly of the manner in which it had been passed. Opposition to the Act in India was reinforced by the knowledge that several prominent journals and politicians in Britain, including the great Liberal leader W.E. Gladstone, had pronounced the measure retrograde and impolitic.

The Indian Association of Calcutta took the lead in convening a public meeting to protest against the Act. Messages of sympathy with the objects of the meeting were secured from several political associations in different parts of the country. The meeting, which was held on 17 April 1878 in Calcutta and attended by about 4,000 people, mostly students, adopted a resolution which said that 'of the manifold blessings which have been conferred by the English nation and the English Government on the people of this country, they have esteemed the freedom of the Press as one of the greatest, as it has been of immeasurable service in helping the cause of their intellectual, moral and political progress'. The resolution deplored 'the withdrawal of this inestimable boon, so far as a most important section of the Press is concerned' and characterized the Act as 'calculated to restrain the legitimate freedom of discussion which the Vernacular Press had up to this time enjoyed, and by shutting up the natural outlet of popular opinion and feeling to produce the very evil of popular discontent and dissatisfaction which it is intended to prevent, to arrest the development of Oriental literature, and to deal a serious blow to the cause of native progress and good government in India'. A memorial against the Act was later forwarded to Gladstone, who presented it to Parliament along with similar other memorials received from Poona and Bombay. The opposition in Parliament forced the government to publish the papers connected with the passage of the Act, which brought to light the serious objections raised against the Act by Hob house, by the government of Madras, and by several prominent members of the secretary of state's council. An extremely important debate on the subject took place in the
House of Commons on 23 July 1878 in which the opposition, led by Gladstone, exposed the hollowness of the case made out by the government of India for muzzling the vernacular press in India and bitterly criticized the sudden and secret manner in which the Act had been passed. Though the opposition motion was defeated, knowledgeable observers had little doubt that the Act was already dead and would not long remain on the statute book.

The agitation against the Vernacular Press Act in 1878 apparently followed what had by now become a familiar and well-established pattern of political protest in India—sustained criticism in the press, accompanied by public meetings, memorials and attempts to get the issue raised in the British Parliament with the help of sympathetic M.P.s. It was, however, not entirely lacking in certain distinctive features of its own. The conduct of the secretary of the British Indian Association, J.M. Tagore, who was the only Indian present in the legislative council when the Act was passed, in supporting the action of the government, allegedly under pressure from the viceroy, and the failure of the British Indian Association later to co-operate with the Indian Association in agitating against the Act, served to discredit the British Indian Association in the eyes of the public. By contrast, the Indian Association gained enormously in popular esteem because of the bold stand it took over the Act. But it was not merely a case of the Indian Association gaining in popularity and prestige at the expense of the British Indian Association. It was indicative of the fact that leadership in Calcutta was passing from the upper ten to the educated middle classes.

The meeting of 17 April 1878 was probably the first which the educated middle classes had organized in Calcutta entirely on their own, without the co-operation of the wealthy zamindars and even despite their opposition. This in itself was a fact of some significance and did not go unnoticed at the time. A speaker at the meeting, Rasbihari Ghose, who later became president of the Indian National Congress, regretted 'the absence of Maharajas and Rajas, of Nawabs and Khan Bahadurs' on the occasion and added, 'but, after all, they are only the Corinthian capitals of society. They may add grace and beauty to the structure, but they do not constitute the structure itself.' The Brahmo Public Opinion of 25 April 1878 expressed the view that 'the fact that such an influential and crowded meeting could be called and rendered successful, without their [the zamindars'] co-operation and aid, is a matter of sincere congratulation to the people at large; and ... marks an epoch in the social and political history of Bengal'. The significance of the event had not dimmed in the memory of S. N. Banerjea, who played the most important part in it, when he recalled it almost half a century later. 'It was', he wrote in his autobiography, 'one of the
most successful meetings ever held in Calcutta. It sounded the death-knell of the Vernacular Press Act, and, what is even more important, it disclosed the growing power of the middle class, who could act with effect for the protection of their interests, even though the wealthier classes were lukewarm, and official influence was openly arrayed against them. It was a lesson which the middle class of Bengal never forgot, and which they have since utilized in many useful directions. It indeed marked a definite and progressive stage in national evolution; and it was the creation of the builders of the Indian Association."241

Students had been taking a keen interest in Indian public life since almost the beginning of the nineteenth century. But of late an attempt had been made to organize them into 'unions' in Calcutta and elsewhere in Bengal by S. N. Banerjea and A. M. Bose242 and they had begun to exert their influence in a rather marked and systematic manner. Their presence in such overwhelming numbers at the meeting in Calcutta on 17 April 1878 provided yet another evidence of their growing politicization. It was not long before the Indian press began discussing the question whether it was desirable for students to take part in politics.243 And on 25 April 1879 the Indian Mirror was constrained to write in warning: 'If our young men go on as now, they will probably become as factious agitators as the students in Russia.'244

The agitation against the Vernacular Press Act served to underline the value of closer links between the press and political associations in India. Links between the two had always existed. Political associations had their official or semiofficial organs and the conductors of the press were often active members of political associations; but political associations had so far needed the press more than the press had needed political associations. In the nineteenth century associations and representative institutions were still in their infancy in India. The press, therefore, provided the only regular and ready means of agitating public questions. As a matter of fact, journalists were virtually the only full-time public men in India. But journalists are dispersed and by nature highly individualistic. They are, therefore, not easily organized. This was proved by the fiasco of the Native Press Association.245 When the vernacular press of India was put in fetters in 1878, it was the political associations of Calcutta and Poona which came to its rescue. The lesson was not lost on the Indian press, which began to preach the value of more effective political organization with far greater zeal than it had done ever before. In September 1878 the Indian Association appointed a committee to watch over the interests of the vernacular press in the country.246 Though most members of the committee belonged to Calcutta, it also included the names of a few prominent public men from such far-off places as Allahabad,
Lucknow, Amritsar and Lahore. Probably the committee did nothing. But the move was significant as indicative of the persistent endeavours of the leaders of the Indian Association to promote inter-provincial cooperation on matters of common interest.

By making vernacular journalism dangerous the Act of 1878 gave indirect encouragement to the growth of Indian-owned English newspapers. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 'the most subtle and ingeniously exasperating of Bengali organs, . . . transformed itself between two issues from a bilingual to an English journal, and thus slipped, with derisive chuckles, out of the grasp of Sir Ashley Eden'.247 The second half of 1878 witnessed also the birth of the Hindu at Madras and of the Deccan Star at Poona, which later merged with the Mahratta.

Another far more significant outcome of the Vernacular Press Act was that

243 See the controversy between the Bengalee and the Indian Minor on the subject in April-May 1879.

244 Indian Minor, 25 April 1879.

245 See above, pp. 204-5.

246 Bengalee, 14 September 1878.


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the powerful voice of Gladstone was raised against it. 'India', wrote the Bengalee, 'has won no small triumph in enlisting the sympathy and good will of the greatest of English statesmen and orators.'248 The Act gave him the greatest pain249 and on 23 July 1878 he moved in the House of Commons that all proceedings which might be taken by the authorities under the Act should be laid before Parliament from time to time. He condemned 'the haste and secrecy of the transaction' by which the government had reversed a wise and liberal policy which had been pursued in India for over forty years and on the whole proved satisfactory. In his view the government had failed to establish either that the Indian press was seditious or that an emergency existed in India. He deprecated the severe and summary powers assumed by the executive in India under the Act and the distinction made between the vernacular and the English press. He admired the 'consideration, intelligence and measured tone of language' with which Indians had argued their case against the Act in their petitions. He insisted that once certain rights and privileges were granted to Indians they should not be retracted and that the Indian authorities should know that 'the eye of Parliament was upon them'. In the government of India, he observed, 'difficult as is the task we have in hand, we have in good faith taken our stand upon the only ground that makes that task hopeful or possible—namely, that we shall endeavour to govern India for the good of those in India, and that, however we may associate the retention of our Indian Empire with British interests, we shall not allow a consideration of British interests so to warp our minds as to divert it from that which we feel to be our first and highest duty—namely,
the direction of all our proceedings in that country by the best lights we possess, and with all the assistance we can get towards the promotion of the welfare of the people. It is no exaggeration to say that not only have we taken up that ground, but that the people of India know and believe that we have taken up that ground.'250

Gladstone's speech was music in the ears of Indian patriots. It revived their drooping faith in Britain, the British Parliament and the British Liberals. The Indian Association called a public meeting in Calcutta on 6 September 1878 to thank Gladstone and other M.P. s who had supported the cause of the vernacular press in India. The meeting adopted a resolution which said that 'it considers the late debate in the House of Commons on the Vernacular Press Act as an auspicious event for the cause of good government in India, which ... shows that the leaders of the English nation have no sympathy with the arbitrary, intolerant and repressive policy of that measure, that they recognize the claims of the people of this country to the rights of British citizenship, and acknowledge the necessity of governing India according to the principles of English rule, and the responsibility of Parliament to secure the practical application of those principles'. The meeting also adopted an address to Gladstone in which it expressed the

248 Bengalee, 13 July 1878.


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hope 'that the interests of India may occupy a place in your heart, that her grievances may find in you a willing listener, that you will allow us from time to time to appeal to you as a kind and sympathizing friend, and that your powerful eloquence and the weight of your great influence may always continue to be exerted in defence of the best interests of the helpless and unrepresented millions of India, in the promotion of their welfare, in the redress of their grievances, and in the securing to them of those English institutions, which it is the boast of England to have called forth to life, in her own free soil, and which it will be her highest glory to transplant to those countries which own her supremacy and rejoice in the blessings conferred by her rule'.251

The importance of enlisting the sympathy and support of Englishmen at home had always been recognized by Indian patriots. Even before Gladstone had spoken on 23 July 1878, the Indian Mirror had written: 'We fight for our rights in India; we have the daily mortification to see the representations ignored; our demands receive no response from the rulers. But it must be understood that the only soil on which constitutional agitation bears fruit is, not India, but England. If we wish to gain our privileges ... we should instantly pack off to England and there commence our agitation. Thousands of political associations may crop up throughout the country; but it must be remembered that it is Englishmen at home, and not those out here, who will grant our prayers.'252 But the apathy of British politicians to Indian questions had become proverbial and a debate on India in Parliament was invariably an occasion for the house to empty. When, therefore, 360 M.P. s voted on Gladstone's motion regarding the Vernacular Press
Act on 23 July 1878, the unique event was hailed in India 'as a hopeful augury of the awakening interest of Englishmen in the great questions of Indian policy and administration'.253 The sentiments expressed by Gladstone and other Liberal and Irish M.P. s during the debate encouraged Indians to hope that they might rely on the Liberal and Irish parties to do justice to them.

Gladstone was inclined to regard the Vernacular Press Act 'as an isolated error', 'entirely as an isolated Act and not as an Act indicating, in any sense, a despotic disposition or high-handed designs on the part of the Government of India'.254 But already there were some Britons who had condemned the Act as providing a fresh instance of Tory 'Imperialism in India' on the part of a government which had been responsible for conferring the title of 'Empress of India' on the Queen, for indulging in the pageantry of the darbar while India was in the throes of a famine, and for the re imposition of the licence tax in India. The dispatch of the Indian contingent to Malta and the outbreak of the war with Afghanistan later in the same year served to reinforce their view. The cry was readily taken up by Indians. 'It is patent to all', wrote the Amrita Bazar Patrika on 13 June 1878, 'that the English nation is gradually drifting towards Imperialism.'255

The passage of the Vernacular Press Act almost coincided with the beginning of one of those rare phases in British history when party politics grew exceedingly sharp and bitter. The result of this development was that India, which had generally been treated as being above party, was drawn into the vortex of party strife in Britain. The strife even spilled over to India and affected the Britons there. The speeches and writings of Liberal politicians became increasingly critical of Tory policies in India. Experience had taught Indians to be suspicious of the rhetoric of British politicians, especially those in opposition. But the utterances of Gladstone, Bright, John Morley256 and Ripon rang so true that Indians would have been less than human if their hearts were not filled with joy and hope as they scanned them.

In the judgement of some contemporary observers, economic and political discontent grew to alarming proportions in India towards the close of Lytton's viceroyalty. 'We always entertained a fear,' wrote the Indian Mirror on 27 September 1882, 'that if the last viceroyalty had run its full course, India would not have escaped without witnessing some great convulsion.'257 In 1883 William Wedderburn described to W. S. Blunt258 'the state of things at the end of Lytton's reign as bordering on revolution'.259 P. M. Mehta remarked in 1884 that 'there never was a more anxious and critical period in the history of British rule in India, than when Lord Lytton resigned the reigns of office. He left the country in a state of doubt and perplexity, of alarm and
uneasiness. '260 A. O. Hume26' wrote in 1886 that under Lytton 'the cup of national endurance and patience seemed almost full' and that the latter's 'incapacity to realize the conditions of the country, his reckless desire to glorify his rule and his apparent want of any higher principles ... all but wrecked the British Dominion in the East'.262 It is impossible to test the validity of these opinions, which, incidentally, are those of Lytton's critics and were recorded long after he had ceased to be viceroy.

255 Amrita Bazar Patrika, 13 June 1878.

256 Author and statesman; b. 1838; chief secretary for Ireland 1886. 1892-5; secretary of state for India 1905-10; created viscount 1908; d. 1923.

257 Indian Mirror, 27 September 1882.

258 B 1840; traveller, politician and poet; visited India 1878, 1883-4; d. 1922.


260 The Public Meet in Honour of Lord Ripon on his Retirement from the Viceroyalty and the Reception in Bombay (1884), p. 4.

261 B. 1829; son of Joseph Hume; joined East India Company's service 1849; secretary to government of India 1870-9; retired 1882; general secretary of Indian National Congress 1885-1906; returned to Britain 1892; d. 1912.

262 [A.O. Hume], The Star in the East: or, the Bengal National League (1886), p. 6,

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But if the unpopularity of a ruler with his subjects be any indication of the latter's discontent, it must be admitted that no viceroy in the nineteenth century left the shores of India with fewer marks of regret or honour from the indigenous population than did Lytton in June 1880.263

263 The only Indian public bodies which presented valedictory addresses to Lytton in June 1880 were the Mahomedan Literary Society and the National Mahommedan Association of Calcutta. But their gesture, though not without significance in itself, was probably due to 'official pressure', which was alleged to be "brought to bear on some natives of position, with a view to squeezing out of them an expression of admiration for Lord Lytton'. See Indian Daily News, 25 May 1880. The texts of the addresses are to be found in Englishman, 21 June 1880. See also Statesman and Friend of India, 21 June 1880, and Bengalee, 26 June 1880, for criticism of the action of the two Muslim associations.

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CHAPTER SIX The Rising Tide
THE LANDHOLDERS' SOCIETY, established in Calcutta in 1838, represented the first attempt at organizing a modern political association claiming to speak on behalf of a particular interest throughout British India. It was a joint Indo-British pressure group of a fairly sophisticated kind. The Society did not meet with much success in organizing branches in the mofussil. Nor did it have a long life. But the idea of an all-India political organization had been born and continued to live on. The establishment of the British Indian Association in 1851 marked another stage in the development of the same idea. The Association was entirely Indian in composition. Though dominated by the Calcutta zamindars, it claimed to represent the people of British India as a whole, and not any particular interest. The ambition of its founders was to make it a central, national organization, with branches all over the country. In this they did not succeed. The Madras branch soon disaffiliated itself from the parent association and became the Madras Native Association. Bombay and Poona set up their own independent local associations. The few branches which the British Indian Association established in the mofussil of Bengal did not flourish. But as the most active political organization in India, situated in the metropolis of the raj, possessing ample funds and served by many able, experienced and public-spirited men, the British Indian Association occasionally spoke and acted on behalf of the country as a whole. It also tried to promote co-operation between the various parts of the country on matters of common interest. In its early years the British Indian Association resented the allegation that it was an organization of the Bengali zamindars,¹ but with the passage of time it almost came to live up to the allegation. The more successful it was, the more exclusive, respectable and unrepresentative of the community it became. By the late 'sixties, the educated middle classes of Bengal had begun to feel that the British Indian Association had ceased to subserve their interests and that they should have a separate organization of their own. The East India Association, founded in London in 1866, failed in its grand design of having branch or affiliated associations in all the important towns of India. The Calcutta British Indian Association remained suspicious of a London-based institution. So probably did the Bombay Association. The branch association formed in Madras failed to prosper. Only the Bombay branch of the East India Association showed some sign of life. It was, however, not long before the East India Association came to be dominated by conservative Anglo-Indians and lost what little value it had had as a focus of attraction for the local associations in India. The experiment of having a central organization in London, presiding over and coordinating the activities of the various local associations in India, was a fiasco.

Though the Indian Association's reach exceeded its grasp, its establishment in 1876 was symbolic of the growing popularity of the idea of a national organization in India. The Indian Association had a pronouncedly patriotic purpose. Inspired by the ideals of western liberal nationalism and frankly following western models of political organization, its leaders deliberately tried to stimulate sentiments of national unity, transcending existing differences of

¹ See for example, the remarks of P. C. Mitra at the meetings of the Association in 1855 and 1857 in Englishman, 18 May 1855, 9 July 1857, and the editorial comments of Hindu Intelligencer, 14 May 1855, and Hindoo Patriot, 6 January 1853 (quoted in Englishman, 15 January 1853), 22 May 1861.
class, creed and region, and to give to their association a pan-Indian character. Two different models of a national organization were current in India in the 1870s. One was that of a central organization, presiding over and coordinating the activities of its branch and affiliated associations spread all over the country. The other was that of a periodic convention of representative public men from all parts of the country for consultation and co-operation on matters of common interest. The leaders of the Indian Association began by pursuing the first model but were soon forced by the facts of Indian life and a realization of their own limitations to settle for the second.

By the late 1870s sufficient modernization appears to have taken place in India, especially as regards the spread of education, the growth of mass communications, increased urbanization and the rise of the new professional classes, to provide conditions for the creation of a national organization according to the second model. Already in 1877-8 some tentative and unsuccessful efforts in that direction had been made. What was probably needed for these efforts to be renewed and crowned with success was 'the occurrence of political crises of systemic magnitude' and, since human institutions are the creation of men of flesh and blood and do not spring to life spontaneously, the emergence of the right leadership. Both these needs were fulfilled in the 1880s.

English-educated Indians were, by their training, inclined to be sympathetic to the Liberal party in Britain. But, as that party's policy in regard to India had not been any different from that of the Tory party and as it had conferred no particular boon on English-educated Indians, the latter had become rather cynical about its professions. They were, therefore, pleasantly surprised to find Liberal politicians living up to their principles and denouncing in no uncertain terms the reactionary and adventurist policies of the Tory government in India in the late 'seventies. The British general election of 1880 was the first in which matters of Indian policy figured as party political issues. It, therefore, attracted a great deal of attention in India. The Calcutta Indian Association and the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha issued separate appeals to the British electors in which the wants and grievances of the Indian people were set forth and the hope was expressed that the Liberal party would be returned to power. The public men of Bombay and Calcutta raised between themselves a sum of Rs. 9,000 towards meeting the election expenses of Henry Fawcett, who had already established himself as 'the M.P. for India'. The Indian Association also sent Lalmohan Ghose to England to exert himself on behalf of India and, if possible, himself to seek election to Parliament as a Liberal candidate.

The resounding victory of the Liberals at the polls in the spring of 1880 filled educated Indians with great joy and expectation. The Brahmo Public Opinion, for example, which came out with a red border to mark the occasion, wrote: 'Rejoice India! Rejoice all our countrymen! Show that you sympathize with the lovers of Freedom and Independence. Prove by demonstrations that you welcome the friends of Liberty and Progress, of Peace and Justice. Let cries for Mr. Gladstone
and his coadjutors rend the skies from Himalaya to Cape Como-rin.'6 The Anglo-Indian Friend of India, itself a pronounced supporter of the Liberal cause, noticed that while the Indian press was full of great admiration for and had unlimited faith in Gladstone, it was not devoid of the good sense to understand that all things were not possible even to the most powerful prime minister, and quoted an extract from the Amrita Bazar Patrika to prove the point.7 'Intelligent men in India,' the Patrika had written, 'do not expect the Liberals to perform impossibilities. We do not ask them to grant every privilege at once that a British subject ought to enjoy. But we do ask them to do a great deal for us. It is easier to talk than to act. The Liberals have talked in a noble and generous manner, which it would be unjust and ungenerous to take advantage of. It is impossible for them to act as they have preached, but yet there must be a sincere endeavour to act up to the promises made by them. And if this is done, it will satisfy the people of India, and God will bless their endeavours.'8 The less liberal-minded Anglo-Indian papers, however, ridiculed the tendency of educated Indians to treat the victory of the Liberals in Britain as their own and advised them to moderate their expectations of the new government.9 But undaunted by these attempts to throw cold water on their enthusiasm, the Indian Association called a public meeting in Calcutta on 12 May 1880 at which speeches were made and resolutions passed expressing satisfaction and thankfulness at the result of the election in Britain.10 Speaking on the occasion, S.N. Banerjea remarked: '... we rejoice not merely because we believe that the repressive measures of which we have been complaining will be repealed under the auspices of the Liberal party, but also because we expect important concessions from that party. The question of representative government looms in the not-far-off distance. Educated India is beginning to feel that the time has come when some measure of self-government must be conceded to the people of this country. Canada governs itself. Australia governs itself. And surely it is anomalous that the grandest dependency of England should continue to be governed upon wholly different principles. The great question of representative government will probably have to be settled by the Liberal party, and I am sure it will be settled by them in a way which will add credit and honour to that illustrious party, and will be worthy of their noble traditions.'11

3 For the texts of the appeals, see Indian Mirror, 20, 24 March 1880

4 Ibid., 4 May 1880.

5 Bengalee, 13 March 1880.

6 Quoted in Friend of India and Statesman, 5 May 1880

7 Ibid. The Friend of India had since 1875 come under the control of Robert Knight.

8 Ibid.

9 See, for example, Englishman. 15, 19 May 1880, and Indian Daily News, 21 May 1880.
Lytton's policies in India had been so severely criticized by some of the Liberal leaders who formed the new government in Britain in April 1880 that he took the unusual step of resigning his office as viceroy, a step which underlined the fact that India had ceased to be above British party politics. The new viceroy, Lord Ripon, had 'somewhat of an hereditary interest in India', his grandfather having been governor of Madras and his father president of the India board. He himself was no stranger to India. In the 'fifties he had been a member of the India Reform Society and in the 'sixties he had served briefly first as undersecretary and later as secretary of state for India. Ripon was a staunch Liberal with a dash of the radical and the socialist. 'But', as Dr. S. Gopal rightly observes, 'if radicalism shaped his opinions, religion gave him faith and endeavour.' In 1873 he had put his conscience over his career and embraced Roman Catholicism. He went out as viceroy to India inspired by a sense of mission that he had been chosen by God to do some good for the people of India.

Ripon shared Gladstone's 'anti-imperialist' views about British rule in India. According to Gladstone, the possession of India conferred no real advantage on Britain; instead it added enormously to Britain's administrative and defence responsibilities. But Britain had of her own motion wedded the fortunes of that country and never could in honour solicit a divorce. In governing India, Britain had undertaken a most arduous but a most noble duty which she was pledged to.

10 For the proceedings of the meeting, see Bengalee, 15, 22 May 1880.

11 Ibid., 22 May 1880; also Palit (ed.), op. cit., p. 168.


13... I have thought much about Indian questions all my life.' Ripon to Northbrook, 14 November 1881, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/5, no. 122.

14 Sturgis, op. cit., p. 28.


16 Ibid., p. 3.

17The description is E. Dicey's. See his 'Mr. Gladstone and Our Empire', Nineteenth Century, September 1877, p. 293.

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India and to mankind to perform. Britain's title to be in India depended on the condition that her being there was on the whole beneficial to the Indian people and was so recognized by the latter. India should be governed primarily in the interests of Indians. The rights and privileges of Indians as British subjects should gradually be extended. The administration of the country should continually adapt itself to the growth of the Indian mind. Wars and waste should be
avoided in India. Parliament must always keep an eye on the Indian authorities. The tenure of British rule in India was, by its very nature, provisional. The British should, therefore, so conduct themselves in India that there was no sudden, violent, or discreditable severance, and that when they finally went, they might leave a good name and a clean bill of account behind them. In the interval given to them, they should not only govern India justly, but also labour steadily to promote the political training of her people.18

Almost every viceroy who went out to India did so with some sort of a programme of work to be done there, however tentative or trivial. We do not know precisely what Ripon thought to be his mission in India, beyond his desire to give effect in that country to the temper and energy of British liberalism and to reverse some of the policies of Lytton, especially those with regard to Afghanistan, the Vernacular Press Act and the Arms Act.19 From the very beginning Ripon became the centre of controversy. A section of the British press and public criticized his appointment as viceroy on the ground that he was a 'papist' and prophesied that he would run into difficulties with British officials in India, most of whom were alleged to be either agnostics or evangelicals of very determined views.20 The Tory papers, both in Britain and in India, warned Ripon of the dangers of trying to put his radical doctrines into practice in India and of reversing the policies of his predecessor. One of them even insisted that 'no great changes are required in our system of Government at present, unless it is that less favour should be shown to the Natives ... we can do better without them ... in any of the higher offices of the State.'21

If the Tory papers left Ripon in no doubt that they wanted no change in the existing administration of India, educated Indians too made no secret of their hopes and aspirations of him. In their writings in the press, in their memorials

18 This bald summary of Gladstone's views on India is based on the following sources: Hansard, Third Series, 1858, vol. cl, cols. 1615-33; ibid., 1878, vol. ccxlii, cols. 48-66; Gladstone to Norlhbrook, 1 October 1872, Northbrook Papers, MSS, Eur. C. 144/20; 'Aggression in Egypt and Freedom in the East', Nineteenth Century, August 1877, pp. 149-66; 'Liberty in the East and West', ibid., June 1878, pp. 1154-74.

19 Speaking at the Leeds Liberal Club on 28 January 1885, after his return to Britain, Ripon disclosed that when Gladstone asked him to go as viceroy to India in 1880 'he commended especially two questions to my zeal and immediate attention. The first was the necessity of bringing the unhappy war which was then going on in Afghanistan to a speedy and honourable conclusion. The second was to pay close attention to the condition of Indian finance, which was at that time creating some uneasiness in this country.' Times of India, 18 February 1885.

20 See, for example, Spectator (London), 1 May 1880.

21 Quoted in Indian Mirror, 22 June 1880.

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to the British government and in their addresses to Ripon on his arrival in India, they put forward the following main demands: a parliamentary inquiry into the affairs of India; increased
employment of Indians in the higher services; the extension of local self-government; the reform
of the legislative councils on the representative principle; a permanent settlement of the land
revenue all over the country; continued state support for higher education; no sacrifice of Indian
revenue in order to help Lancashire; the abolition of vexatious direct taxes; and the repeal of the
Vernacular Press Act and the Arms Act. Though a reformer by nature, Ripon was inclined, as he
once claimed, to proceed cautiously and without undue haste, and even incases about which he
might individually have had no doubt, he felt it right carefully to inform himself as to the facts
and circumstances of the case, as it related to India, before he attempted to act upon any
preconceived notions he might have derived from his English experience. He, therefore, took
some time before making any move in the direction of Indian reforms.

In view of the circumstances in which Ripon had relieved Lytton as viceroy of India at Simla on
8 June 1880, it was generally expected that he would take an early opportunity to indicate in
what ways his Indian policy was going to be different from that of his predecessor, which the
new Liberal secretary of state of India, Lord Hartington, had earlier, while in opposition,
described as 'the acarnation and embodiment of an Indian policy which was everything which an
Indian policy ought not to be'. But Ripon refused to oblige an eager public. It was not until 18
September 1880 that he made a speech which provided some clue to his basic approach to the
problems of British rule in India. Opening an exhibition of fine arts at Kennedy House, Simla, he
remarked: '... in all things in India, it is our duty, not to stifle or overpower the national life of the
country, but to develop and uphold it. If we were here only for a day, holding our position solely
by our power, and retaining our grasp on India merely from the lust of empire, then we might
perhaps desire that all national feelings, all recollection of their early history, all love of their
characteristic art, should die out of the hearts of the Indian people. But if we believe, as I believe,
that we occupy—our present place in India in the course of God's providence, hot merely as
passing conquerors, but with a great work to do for the people of the country, which will be
interwoven with their history, and which has its due part to fulfil in their progress, then it should
be our aim to keep alive all that is high and beautiful and noble in their past national life, and to
encourage

22See his speech in the Indian legislative council on the Criminal Procedure Bill, 2 March 1882,

23 Spencer Compton Cavendish, marquis of Hartington and eighth duke of Devonshire (1833-
1908). Chief secretary for Ireland 1870-4; secretary of state for India 1880-2; secretary of state
for war 1882-5; lord president of council 1895-1903.


them to reverence and to admire it... it should be our endeavour more and more in this country,
not to destroy, but to improve; not to overthrow the traditions -and native civilization of some of
the most ancient races of the earth, but to elevate and purify and develop them; to retain and
strengthen what is good, to remove what is false and evil, and thus to wed together in
indissoluble and prolific union the earliest and latest developments of the Aryan races. I am the
last man in the world to shrink from changes which the advance of time renders necessary, or cling to obsolete usages merely because they are old. I have no sympathy with the dry and barren spirit of conservation which struggles to preserve institutions and habits from which all life has departed; but, at the same time, I am strongly convinced that reform, to be real and effective, must be tempered by reverence, and must be a growth, and not a mere construction; and, while I would give the people of India the fullest benefit of modern science and modern knowledge, of Western progress and Western civilization, I should desire to blend them with their own historical traditions so as to supplant no portion of them, except by something better, and to retain the harmony and continuity of their national life.'

These were admirable sentiments and they were duly noted and commented upon by the Indian press, but they failed to satisfy educated Indians, who continued assiduously to scan the viceroy's utterances for some more definite indication of the specific reforms he was likely to carry out. While descending to the plains in early November 1880, after a five-month stay in Simla, during which the complications with Afghanistan had eased and he had probably had time to survey the Indian scene and make up his own mind to some extent, Ripon was presented with an address of welcome by the municipality of Dehra Dun. Replying to this address, Ripon remarked that he had it 'in charge from Her Gracious Majesty the Queen-Empress to look closely into Municipal Government, as it is there that political education is acquired'. The remark was at once seized upon by the Indian press as a pointer to at least one field in which the viceroy might be expected to carry out certain reforms. The demand for representative government had been gathering force in India for quite some time. It had recently gained impetus from the support extended to it by certain liberal-minded Britons, such as M.J.M. Shaw Stewart and Sir David Wedderburn. Some thoughtful and farsighted Indians


26 Pioneer, 10 November 1880. For a slightly different version of the remark, see Times of India, 16 November 1880. The allusion to the Queen-Empress seems to have been stylistic only.

27 Joined East India Company's service in Bombay 1848; collector and magistrate of Canara 1862-8; acting chief secretary to Bombay government 1868-9; member of Indian legislative council 1866-9; retired from the service 1875. In a letter to the secretary of state, 16 October 1879, Shaw Stewart outlined a scheme of representative councils for India. See Bengalee, 3 April 1880; also Shaw Stewart's reply to a communication from the Indian Association of Calcutta in ibid., 2 October 1880

28 On 13 February 1880 Sir David made a motion in the House of Commons 'to call attention to the importance of conferring upon the people of India some measure of representation,

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had already realized that local self-government had to precede national self-government, i.e., the organization of the local boards on an elective basis was necessary before the legislative councils could be reformed on the representative principle] But too often the demand for representative government in India was made in very general terms. In July 1879 that staunch liberal and
sincere friend of India, R. D. Osborn, found fault with a speech of L. M. Ghose in London on the very ground that he had asked for representative institutions in India without suggesting any definite and practicable scheme for their introduction, and he had himself opined that the most promising line of advance would be by way of 'genuine municipal independence'. The very life of India, Osborn had written, 'is at present being literally throttled out of it by incompetent rulers, and the first thing essential is to loosen the grip of this suffocating pressure. The difficulty always is to select that which should be set free without being met by the retort that to free this or free that is dangerous to the stability of British rule. But the most panic-stricken Russophobe that ever drew the breath of life cannot suppose that the Calcutta Municipality is likely to rise in rebellion, and slay Sir Ashley Eden in Belvedere. Neither, I should think, is there to be found even among Bengal Civilians, any one who would have the effrontery to assert that there is not sufficient intelligence in Calcutta for the management of the municipality without the inspired presence of a Covenanted Civilian. Here, then, is a reform, at once definite and feasible, and from which as a centre, municipal independence might gradually extend throughout the Bengal Presidency. Representative Government, it must be remembered, is simply a means for giving expression to the different organized forces in a country; and the only way in which a town or a district can become an organic whole—a unity, that is, conscious of a common life and common interests—is by means of independent municipal institutions.

Osborn's advice appears to have gone home with Indian politicians, especially with the leaders of the Calcutta Indian Association, who, probably stung by his criticism of L. M. Ghose's speech, also took up his challenge to Indians to produce a definite and practicable scheme of representative government for India. The Bengalee, which was the organ of the Indian Association and edited by S. N. Banerjea, began to discuss the subject with great zeal and in May 1880 the Association appointed a committee to prepare a scheme of representative government for India. Letters were addressed to prominent public men and either in the Legislative Councils, or otherwise. Hansard, Third Series, 1880, vol. ccl, cols. 593-8. See also his reply to a communication from the Indian Association of Calcutta in Bengalee, 21 February 1880.

29B. at Agra 1835; joined East India Company's military service 1854; opposed Disraeli's and Lytton's policy in India; retired as lieutenant-colonel 1879; sometime tutor to Paikpara wards; edited Indian Observer (Calcutta) and Statesman (London); d. 1889.


organizations in India and to a few friends in Britain asking them to favour the Association with their views on the subject. It was proposed that on the receipt of these views a scheme would be drafted which would be 'submitted for the acceptance of the whole of India' and incorporated in a memorial to the British government.
While the Indian press was still discussing the subject and the Indian Association was busy maturing its own scheme of representative government for India and in the process becoming more than ever convinced that 'local self-government must precede national self-government', there came the news of what Ripon had said at Dehra Dun. Indian politicians took it to be a declaration of policy. When Ripon visited Poona about a month later, the Sarvajanik Sabha presented him with an address of welcome in which it recalled with gratitude and approval his remark about municipal institutions. The leaders of the Indian Association decided to launch an agitation for local self-government. They issued a circular to the district towns throughout Bengal inviting them to petition the government, under the provisions of section 16 of the Bengal Municipal Act of 1876, which empowered the local government to introduce the elective system into the constitution of a municipality if asked for by one-third of the ratepayers of that municipality, for the reorganization of their municipalities upon a popular and elective basis. They also sent agents into the mofussil to educate and organize public opinion.

The reaction of the Indian press and public bodies to his remark at Dehra Dun must have impressed Ripon, more so on his arrival in Calcutta early in January 1881. He might have even noticed that, though the Indian press was generally appreciative of the unusual honesty and sincerity of his utterances, it had begun to show signs of impatience with him because he had, despite having been in India for over six months, made no definite move either to rescind his predecessor's unpopular measures, which had been so vehemently condemned by Liberal politicians while in opposition, or to initiate any reforms of his own. It is probably not without significance that soon after his arrival in Calcutta Ripon suggested to the secretary of state, Hartington, the possibility of a more general introduction of the elective system in municipalities. Though Hartington never cared to respond to his suggestion, Ripon construed his silence as consent and in May 1881 invited local governments to express their views on the subject. The replies of local governments indicated that elections, wherever tried, had proved moderately successful.

Taking advantage of the second quinquennial review of the central governments

32 Bengalee, 3 January 1880. 33 Ibid., 1 January, 12 March 1881. 34 Times of India, 4 December 1880.

35 Bagal, History of the Indian Association, p. 49; also Bengalee, 20 November 1880-12 March 1881.

36 Ripon to Hartington, 26 January 1881, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/3, no. 5.

37 Ripon to Hartington, 29 October 1881, ibid., no. 56.

38 S. Gopal, The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon 1880-1884, p. 90.

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contracts with the provinces, Ripon, with the active assistance of his finance member, Evelyn Baring, issued a resolution on 30 September 1881, which asked local governments to ascertain
which items of receipt and charge could most suitably be transferred for administration by
committees 'comprising non-official, and wherever possible, elected members', and also to
suggest measures which might be necessary for a further extension of local self-government.40
The resolution was generally welcomed in India, though fears were expressed in certain quarters
that it might be a prelude to increased taxation. From Britain the prime minister conveyed his
approval saying 'that administrative perfection is not always, and at all costs, to be pursued,
when the alternative is local self-government'.41

Encouraged probably by the reception accorded to his resolution of 30 September, Ripon, who
was getting 'more Radical every day',42 suggested to Hartington in December 1881 the
advisability of introducing a representative element into the legislative councils in India by
allowing a certain proportion of their members to be elected by the municipalities of the larger
towns. The reform would, the viceroy argued, be highly appreciated by the people of India and
promote their 'political education'; it would prevent the councils from becoming shams and
subject government bills to real discussion; it would be a substantial assistance to the authorities,
for it would enable them to ascertain the views of the public and give them an opportunity of
expressing their real intentions and removing misunderstandings. Ripon saw no reason to fear
that the change which he was recommending would lead to 'evil consequences', though he did
not deny that it would 'lead to a further advance along the same road of extended self-
government and the concession to the people of this country of a larger share in the management
of their own affairs; but then according to my way of thinking that is the road along which we
ought to travel'.43 Hartington, however, reacted very coldly to Ripon's suggestion44 and
ultimately turned it down on the ground that it was premature and risky.45 Ripon, therefore,
decided to put all his heart into the work of promoting local self-government in India. On 18
May 1882 Ripon issued another resolution46 in which he explained clearly 'the general mode' in
which he wished 'to see effect being given to the

39B. 1841; private secretary to Northbrook, viceroy of India, 1872-6; finance member of
viceroys council December 1880-August 1883; British agent and consul-general in Egypt 1883-
1907; created Baron Cromer 1892, viscount 1899, earl 1901; d. 1917.

40Resolution of government of India in finance department, 30 September 1881, no. 3353.
Gazette of India, 1 October 1881, pp. 449-59; also Correspondence between the Secretary of
State for India in Council, the Government of India, and the Various Local Governments, on the
Proposed Measures for the Extension of Local Government in India, Parliamentary Papers, 1883,

41 Gladstone to Ripon, 24 November 1881, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/5, no. 151.

42 Ripon to W. E. Forster, 26 May 1881, ibid, no. 56.

43 Ripon to Hartington, 31 December 1881, ibid., B.P. 7/3, no. 70.

44 Hartington to Ripon, 27 January, 3 February 1882, ibid., nos. 6, 8.

45Hartington to Ripon, 26 December 1882, ibid., B.P. 7/5, no. 156.
principle of local self-government throughout British India'. 'It is not, primarily, with a view to improvement in administration', he said, 'that this measure is put forward and supported. It is chiefly desirable as an instrument of political and popular education.' In the beginning there would doubtless be many failures, but if officials accepted the policy loyally and set themselves 'to foster sedulously the small beginnings of the independent political life', realizing that 'the system really opens to them a fairer field for the exercise of administrative tact and directive energy than the more autocratic system which it supersedes', the period of failures would be short and real and substantial progress would very soon become manifest. Ripon did not attach much value to the commonly advanced theory 'that the people of this country are themselves entirely indifferent to the principle of self-government; that they take but little interest in public matters; and that they prefer to have such affairs managed for them by Government officers'. There was 'rapidly growing up all over the country an intelligent class of public-spirited men, whom it is not only bad policy, but sheer waste of power, to fail to utilize'. The ever-increasing burden and difficulties of administration made it imperatively necessary 'to induce the people themselves to undertake, as far as may be, the management of their own affairs, and to develop, or create if need be, a capacity for self-help in respect of all matters that have not, for imperial reasons, to be retained in the hands of the representatives of Government'.

Ripon avowed his belief that local self-government had not failed in India. It had 'not yet been, in any general or satisfactory fashion, fully and fairly tried'. Previous attempts in that direction had, he said, been 'too often overridden and practically crushed by direct ... official interference'. In the few cases where real responsibility had been thrown upon local bodies and real power entrusted to them the results had been very gratifying. He favoured the creation of local boards—both municipal and rural—with jurisdiction over areas sufficiently small to ensure that all their members had an interest in and knowledge of the entire locality. The boards should contain at least a two-thirds majority of non-official members, who should be chosen by election wherever practicable. The franchise and forms and methods of election could be decided by provincial governments, after consulting the leading citizens of each locality. 'Patient and practical experiment' was required 'to call forth and render effective that desire and capacity for self-government which all intelligent and fairly educated men may safely be assumed to possess'. The boards should have freedom of initiative and real power and responsibilities. Government 'control should be exercised from without rather than from within'. The boards should be allowed, wherever possible, to elect their own chairmen and they should have definite and adequate funds at their disposal. Ripon did not go out to India to wind up the British raj there. Nor did he

Supplement to Gazette of India, 20 May 1882; also Parliamentary Papers, 1883, vol. li, no, 93-1, pp. 25-32.
believe that the winding up of the British raj in the near future would be anything but a misfortune for the people of India itself. But he had the intelligence and the foresight to realize that a new spirit was abroad in India and that, unless provided with safe, constitutional outlets, it was bound to run into dangerous channels. He had also the sympathy and understanding—so rare in alien rulers— which enabled him to appreciate the natural aspirations of a subject people and to desire to guide them to their ultimate end. In a private memorandum written in December 1882,47 he emphasized the necessity and wisdom of his policy of extending local self-government in India. He pointed out that 'the spread of education, the existence and increasing influence of a free Press, the substitution of legal for discretionary administration, the progress of railways, telegraphs, &c, the easier communication with Europe, and the more ready influx of European ideas, are now beginning to produce a marked effect upon the people; new ideas are springing up; new aspirations are being called forth; the power of public opinion is growing and strengthening from day to day; and a movement has begun which will advance with greater rapidity and force every year. Such a condition of affairs is one in which the task of government, and especially of practically despotic government, is beset with difficulties of no light kind; to move too fast is dangerous, but to lag behind is more dangerous still; and the problem is how to deal with this new-born spirit of progress, raw and superficial as in many respects it is, so as to direct it into a right course, and to derive from it all the benefits which its development is capable of ultimately conferring upon the country, and at the same time to prevent it from becoming, through blind indifference or stupid repression, a source of serious political danger.' Ripon hoped that his local self-government measures 'will not only have an immediate effect in promoting gradually and safely the political education of the people, which is in itself a great object of public policy, but will also pave the way for further advances in the same direction as that education becomes fuller and more widespread'. The British rulers of India, he said, must gradually adapt their system of administration to the changes taking place in the thoughts, desires and aims of the intelligent and educated men of the country 'if they do not wish to see it broken to pieces by forces which they have themselves called into being, but which they have failed to guide and to control'. There are of course', Ripon added, 'always two policies lying before the choice of the Government of India; the one is the policy of those who have established a Tree Press, who have promoted education, who have admitted natives more and more largely to the public service in various forms, and who have favoured the extension of self-government; the other is that of those who hate the freedom of the Press, who dread the progress of education, and who watch with jealousy and alarm every thing which tends, in however limited a degree, to give the natives of India a larger share in the management of their own affairs. Between these two policies

47 Memorandum on the policy of the Government of India in regard to Local Self-Government, [26 December 1882], Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, no. 262; also enclosure in Ripon to Kimberley, 26 December 1882, ibid., B.P. 7/3, no. 78.

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we must choose; the one means progress, the other means repression. Lord Lytton chose the latter, I have chosen the former, and I am content to rest my vindication upon a comparison of the results.'
Ripon was not concerned merely with the immediate effects of his policy of local self-government in India. To his intimate radical friend, Thomas Hughes, he confided the ultimate results which he anticipated from it, if it succeeded. He wrote: ‘... my view of the work in which I am engaged is that I am laying the foundation upon which may hereafter be built a more complete system of self-government for India which may convert what is now a successful administration by foreigners into a real government of the country by itself. If in one or two generations, nay even if in another century, we can accomplish that undertaking, and can render India self-governing upon just and equal principles, our work here will have been done, and it will matter little whether we remain to lead and guide the people whom we shall then have taught to rule themselves, or whether we withdraw, as guardians who lay down their trust, after having performed, not unsuccessfully, the mighty task which, as I believe, God has given us to do in this land. These are visions doubtless of a distant future, and it may be that they will not be realized, but I have all my life believed that no great work can be accomplished unless the ideal of it which a man sets before him is the highest and noblest within his reach, and I could not labour with any heart even at laying the corner-stone of the fair edifice which rises before my eyes unless I were encouraged by the hope that what is now my dream may become a reality when I have long finished my time on earth, and that perhaps it may be given me, if I am not too unworthy, to look down hereafter on the completion of the task which I have now begun.’

Moderate British opinion, both at home and in India, tended, probably deliberately, to underrate the implications of Ripon's local self-government policy and to acquiesce in it as a matter of expediency. But the more right-wing opinion condemned it as being revolutionary and dangerous. Lord Wolseley warned Baring: 'Take care how you introduce [local] Self-Government into India, if you want it to remain under the English flag. It sounds very well in theory, but the India that we want is an India governed by Englishmen.' Lytton described Ripon's policy as being one of gradually transferring political power in India from European to Native hands' and accused him of trying 'to establish throughout India, as early as possible, a system of representative Native government'.

48 B. 1822; author of Tom Brown's School Days (1857); Christian Socialist; M.P. 1865-74; d. 1896.

49 Ripon to Hughes, 9 January 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/5, no. 6. If this was one of the 'two interesting letters of [Ripon's] about Local Government' which Hughes forwarded to the newly appointed secretary of state for India, Kimberley (see Kimberley to Ripon, 1 February 1883, ibid., B.P. 7/3, no. 5), it may well explain the latter's lack of enthusiasm for Ripon's scheme of local self-government.


51 Quoted in Baring to Ripon, 18 January 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, no. 33.
The local governments in India, with the sole exception of that of the Punjab under Sir Charles Aitchison, were lukewarm, if not obstructive. The British civil servants generally were resentful of their proposed elimination from the local boards and of the creation of independent foci of power, which they feared would be dominated by the hated babus. The secretary of state was apathetic and his council tried its very best to defeat the main objectives of Ripon's scheme.

Educated Indians greeted Ripon's resolution of 18 May 1882 on local self-government with great enthusiasm. But they did so precisely for the same reason for which conservative Britons opposed it, namely that it was the thin end of the wedge which would lead to the more general introduction of representative institutions in India and finally to national self-government. The Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha wrote: 'A state paper, more liberal, life-inspiring, and instinct with true statesmanship, than the Government of India's Resolution of 18th May, can hardly be conceived, and has certainly not been seen for many years in India. It has been repeatedly observed, both officially and otherwise, that England's sole mission in India is to bring about her political regeneration. And one may well doubt if ever since the commencement of British rule in this country up to the date of the promulgation of the Resolution of 18th May, there was anything done by the British Indian Government, more directly calculated to prove practically the sincere character of those oft-repeated protestations.' The Mahratta remarked that Ripon was 'laying the foundation-stone of our remote independent political existence'. In his speeches delivered during his political tour of the Madras presidency in the summer of 1882, G. Subramania Aiyar of the Hindu was at pains to emphasize that Ripon's scheme was intended to lay 'the foundation of the great future Representative Government' in India. The Bengalee was not satisfied with mere local self-government. It wanted Ripon to make a simultaneous move to reform the provincial legislative councils on a representative principle. 'Local Self-government', said the paper, 'is imperfect without Provincial Self-government. Let the Government by all means retain in its own hands the control of imperial concerns.... But provincial concerns, questions of provincial finance especially, might fairly be settled by provincial assemblies, consisting of the representatives of the people .... ' The more educated Indians waxed eloquent about Ripon's


53 B. 1832; entered Indian civil service 1856; foreign secretary 1868-78; chief commissioner of Burma 1878-80; lieutenant-governor of Punjab 1882-7; member of viceroy's council 1887-8; president of public service commission 1887-8; d. 1896.


55 Mahratta, 28 May 1882.

56 B. 1855; began career as teacher but later editor of Hindu 1878-98; d. 1916.

57 Athenaeum and Daily News, 29 August 1882.
local self-government scheme and its immense potentialities for the future, the more the prejudice of conservative Britons against the scheme and its author grew.

With the publication of Ripon's resolution of 18 May 1882 may be dated the beginning of that series of events which led directly to the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885. One of its chief and immediate results was to encourage Allan Octavian Hume to take an active part in Indian politics. Hume had inherited his father's radicalism. Before going out to India as a civil servant in 1849, at the age of twenty, he had shown a keen interest in European revolutionary associations. His own motto while in India, however, was: freedom and progress through peace, order and brotherly love. As assistant magistrate and deputy collector of Etawah district, in the North-Western Provinces, Hume distinguished himself during the revolt of 1857 and was later awarded the C.B. Like most of his countrymen who had lived through it, the revolt was a traumatic experience for Hume. Throughout his later life he was haunted by the precariousness of British rule and the fear of another, more terrible, revolt in India. He had seen, he recalled fifteen years afterwards, 'the whole grand apparatus of an highly civilized Government shrivel up in a single month over a vast country, far larger and more populous than Great Britain, like some pompous emblazoned scroll cast into a furnace'. But his experience during the revolt did not embitter him in any way towards India and her people, probably because his Indian friends had stood by him in his time of danger and distress and helped him in escaping death at the hands of the rebels.

Hume's early life in India was apparently not very different from that of most of his fellow-civilians. He was a keen hunter, botanist and ornithologist. He was interested in promoting education and agricultural improvements. No subject was too high or too low to interest him: Sanskrit literature and Hindu philosophy; tribal customs and languages; cotton cultivation and colonization; lock hospitals and narcotics. But, unlike most Britons in India, Hume did not regard India as a 'land of exile' and he genuinely loved her people, both educated and uneducated. He had the quality of making friends with Indians, old or young, rich or poor. He was not boasting when he wrote to Northbrook in 1872: I have lived much among Natives, and know more of their language, habits of thought, and feelings, than most of officials. ... '63 Hume wielded a facile pen and regularly wrote for the press on all sorts of subjects. In 1861, while he was still at Etawah, he started a paper, called the People's Friend and published in English, Hindi and Urdu, to promote the political and social education of the

59 Hume to Ripon, II January 1884, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, no. 13c.

60 Ibid

61 The author of this book was born at Anantram, the village where Hume had an encounter with the rebels in 1857. An account of Hume's conduct during the rebellion is available in Etawah: A Gazetteer (1911), pp. 148 ff. For an estimate of Hume by Canning, see Canning to Wood, 22 April 1861, Wood Papers, MSS. Eur. F. 78/55/8.
masses. A collection of his known articles, letters to the press and pamphlets would make several handsome volumes.

In late 1870 Mayo selected Hume, who was then commissioner of inland customs, to officiate as secretary in the home department of the government of India for E. C. Bayley, who was going to England on leave. The selection was described by a section of the press as an 'insult' and a 'snub' to the Bengal civilians. It apparently aroused the jealousy and resentment of men like Ashley Eden, who felt that their claims to the office had been disregarded by the viceroy in favour of an N.W.P. civilian: Hume's tenure as home secretary was very brief, but it enabled him to know at first hand how serious and widespread was the unrest then prevailing in India, and it probably deepened his fears regarding the instability and insecurity of British rule in the country. In May 1871 Mayo appointed Hume to be secretary of the newly created department of revenue, agriculture and commerce, nicknamed 'the et cetera department'. Hume's abilities were undoubted and acknowledged even by his enemies. He was intelligent, earnest, industrious, experienced and a good organizer. But, like many men of talent, he was slightly eccentric and egotistical. He had probably been too long, and too good, a district officer to succeed as a secretary, despite his dexterity in writing minutes. Hume was essentially a nonconformist. He was always brimming with new ideas and schemes. He was outspoken and ever ready to offer unsolicited advice. He delighted in controversy. 'What good thing ever yet was worked out without diversity of opinion,' he wrote in 1870. He could not suffer fools gladly and was tactless in his dealings with colleagues and superiors. He admitted to 'a certain inadaptability of my character to the official struggle for existence' and to having more 'ill-wishers' than any other man in the civil service. His enemies called him a liar, though they never produced any concrete evidence to substantiate their charge.

Hume was anxious to organize a genuine and efficient department of agriculture and he had some very sensible ideas for improving agriculture in India. But all his plans and schemes were frustrated by financial stringency and the apathy and hostility of his official colleagues. The assassination of Mayo in February 1872 was a great blow to Hume, for in him he lost not only a patron but also a viceroy who shared his passion for agricultural improvement in India. The eight years which Hume spent as secretary to the department of revenue, agriculture and commerce provided him with an excellent opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with the problems and the plight of the Indian peasantry.

64 See, for example, Englishman, 2, 5, 9 December 1870, Hindoo Patriot, 5 December 1870, and Pioneer, 2, 1 December 1870.

65 Pioneer, 4 October 1870.

66 Hume to Lytton, 8 February 1878, Lytton Papers, MSS. Eur. E. 218/519/7, no. 59.
These were the years which witnessed some of the most serious and widespread agrarian disturbances in India, notably in Bengal, Maharashtra and Madras. Little surprise, therefore, that Hume, with his deep sympathy, sensitivity and historical knowledge, became more than ever convinced that, unless remedial steps were taken, the accumulating mass of suffering and discontent in India was likely, sooner or later, to blow up into some terrible catastrophe.

While he was at the department of revenue, agriculture and commerce, Hume had repeated brushes with some of his colleagues and superiors. At last his opponents—John Strachey, Richard Strachey, Ashley Eden and Rivers Thompson—combined and persuaded the viceroy, Lytton, 'to suppress Mr. Hume'. Lytton was at first quite friendly to Hume, but later turned against him partly under the influence of Hume's enemies and partly because of Hume's opposition to his policies. In February 1878 Lytton appointed Rivers Thompson, a 'harmless, though perfectly useless' man, to the vacancy on his council, which he had earlier promised Hume. In August-September 1878 he tried unsuccessfully to send Hume away on a mission to Siam. Finally, in June 1879, he abolished the department of revenue, agriculture and commerce mainly in order to get rid of its 'very troublesome Secretary'. Hume was demoted and sent back to the North-Western Provinces as a member of the board of revenue. He went on furlough soon afterwards and retired from the service in January 1882. Instead of returning to Britain he stayed on at Simla, where he had purchased a large house called 'Rothney Castle'.

It may well be that Hume himself was largely to blame for his disgrace in 1879 and that he was all that his enemies, none of whom, incidentally, was a paragon of virtue himself, accused him of being—arrogant, cantankerous, crotchety, petulant, unbearable, untruthful and generally lacking in official decorum. But it would be wrong to ascribe his disgrace entirely to his own personal

67 See, for example, A. Arbuthnot (member of viceroy's council) to Lytton, 21 May 1879, ibid., MSS. Eur. E. 218/519/11, no. 58; and H. Maine to Dufferin, 2 June 1886, Dufferin Papers, reel 525, no. 114.

68 Later published in his pamphlet Agricultural Reform in India (1879).

69 B, 1823; joined East India Company's service 1842; lieutenant-governor of North-Western Provinces 1874-6; member of viceroy's council 1876-80; member of secretary of state's council 1885-95; d. 1907.

70B. 1817; elder brother of John Strachey; joined East India Company's service 1836; secretary to public works department 1862-5; member of secretary of state's council 1875, 1879-89; member of viceroy's council 1878-9; d. 1908.

71 B. 1829; joined East India Company's service 1850; secretary to Bengal government 1869-75; chief commissioner of Burma 1875-8; member of viceroy's council 1878-82; lieutenant-governor of Bengal 1882-7; d. 1890.

failings. Hume was as much sinned against as sinning. A closer examination, than is possible here, of the facts relating to Hume's demotion in 1879 would reveal that he was a victim of those personal animosities, professional jealousies, political antipathies and shifting factional alignments which went on behind the virtuous facade of the British civil service in India.

Hume's demotion in 1879 had undoubtedly something to do with his later behaviour as a political agitator. For one thing, if cut short his official career and set him free to devote his time and energies to the cause of Indian nationalism. But it must be remembered that his radicalism, his sympathetic interest in India and her people, his dissatisfaction with British policies in India and his obsession with the probability of another bloody revolt in India long predated that melancholy event. In 1872, for example, he had frankly told the viceroy, Northbrook, that the British had forfeited the affection and confidence of the Indian people and were governing and legislating solely by virtue of their bayonets and artillery. 'A studied and invariable disregard, if not actually contempt for the opinions and feelings of our subjects,' he had written, 'is at the present day the leading characteristic of our Government in every branch of the administration.'

Hume regarded the recent assassinations in India, 'some 15 in number', as the natural outcome of general discontent, and not merely as the isolated acts of fanatics, if you grow a crop of poppies, you will always find some few towering gigantic above their neighbours; if you grow a crop of discontent, you will grow at the same time some few rebel leaders, and where rebellion is impossible, assassins.' He had entreated Northbrook to try 'to regain the confidence and (so far as such can be given to foreign rulers) the affection of our subjects' and re-establish 'that comparatively stable hold upon India (at best it must be confessed a somewhat uncertain tenure) that we once had' by infusing into the British administration a greater regard for the opinions and wishes of its subjects, by a more judicious economy of revenue so as to lighten, or, at any rate, prevent the further enhancement of the daily growing burden of taxation, and by the introduction of a substantial Indian element into the government of the country. 'The end may not be yet;' Hume had said, 'it is possible under God's guidance, whose instruments we are, that, as though by a miracle, the evil days will be tided over, and the people weaned from their anger with us, and as education spreads, taught somewhat to appreciate our measures, before their opportunity arrives. But the danger is nevertheless real and great. "Who can tell what the morrow may bring forth", is a wisdom that need not be preached to any thinking public man who has lived through
the past quarter of a century, but you are driving a coach, that however grand it looks, is utterly top-heavy, that the slightest jolt, a single stone under a single wheel will probably upset.... At present, though I cannot point to a single proximate danger,—though all men cry peace, peace, and all seems outwardly so settled and tranquil,—I am strongly impressed with the conviction that the fate of the Empire is trembling in the balance, and that, at any moment, some tiny, scarcely noticed cloud, not bigger than a man's hand, dim in the distant horizon, may grow with inconceivable rapidity

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and spread over the length and breadth of the land a storm raining down anarchy and devastation.'77

It was not so much his humiliation in 1879 as the developments of the next few years which determined Hume's active involvement in the Indian national movement. Soon after his demotion he came under the influence of Theosophy. His essentially meditative and religious temperament, reinforced by his failure to have a son,78 his chronic ill health,79 his advancing age and the frustrations of his official life, probably predisposed him to this strange and esoteric creed. To this was added his admiration for and friendship with its remarkable exponents, Helena P. Blavatsky80 and Henry S. Olcott, who had recently arrived in India. But what really appealed to Hume in Theosophy was its eclecticism and emphasis on universal brotherhood. As he remarked at a public meeting held in Allahabad on the occasion of the visit of Blavatsky and Olcott to that city in December 1879, the 'one primary and fundamental object' of the Theosophical Society was 'the institution of a sort of brotherhood in which, sinking all distinctions of race and nationality, caste and creed, all good and earnest men, all who love science, all who love truth, all who love their fellowmen, may meet as brethren, and labour hand in hand in the cause of enlightenment and progress'. The Theosophists, he said, 'may have other aims and objects in which we may not so entirely identify ourselves, but in this their desire to break down all artificial barriers between the various sections of mankind and unite all good and true men and women in one band, labouring for the good of their fellows, our whole hearts must go with them'.81

Hume's interest in Theosophy, which survived his estrangement from Blavatsky and Olcott a few years later, noticeably deepened his love for India and Indians. It inspired him, without diminishing his love for Britain in any way, to work with greater zeal for 'the good of Aryavarta'82—'this patient land, ... with her teeming millions, so strong to suffer, so weak to plead their own cause, so high in glorious memories, so low this day in capricious fortune's scale, ... [where] all races, creeds and castes are ... sundered by mutual dislikes and distrusts, and ... [where] in a chronic subacute form, a sort of civil war is smouldering'.83 It endeared him to Indians and enabled him to secure their trust and confidence as few other Britons ever did. It also brought him into close

77 Hume to Northbrook, 1 August 1872, Northbrook Papers, MSS. Eur. C. 144/13.
78 I never had a son; this though I have carefully hid it for my dear old wife's sake, has been a great grief to me, and has altered the whole course of my life....' Hume to Dufferin, 28 October 1886, Dufferin Papers, reel 530, no. 585a.

79..... I myself suffered for so many long years....' Hume's letter on vegetarianism to the editor, Pioneer, 4 October 1882.

80B. in Russia 1831; became American citizen 1873; founded, with Colonel Olcott, Theosophical Society at New York 1875; d. 1891.

81 Pioneer, 16 December 1879.

82 Hume to Ripon, 25 December 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, no. 215a.

82 See Hume's speech at the foundation-stone-laying ceremony of the Ripon Hospital at Simla, 20 October 1882, in Indian Mirror, 27 October 1882.

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contact with many leading Indians in all parts of the country.

The victory of the Liberals and the resignation of Lytton as viceroy of India in 1880 could not but have been pleasing to Hume on both personal and political grounds. It is not known how and when Hume first came into contact with Ripon, though, as a resident of Simla, Hume was well placed for an early encounter with the latter. By temperament and training the two men were very different from each other, but they had three things in common: a staunch faith in Gladstonian liberalism, a strong spiritual quest and an ardent desire for the welfare of India. Soon after the publication of Ripon's resolution of 18 May 1882 on local self-government, Hume received a letter from his friend S. K. Ghose of the Amrita Bazar Patrika, 'who, though rather turbulent as an Editor, is one of the dearest, best, and purest of men', saying that though he was 'trying to take leave of the world', Ripon's scheme had given him 'great pleasure' and even tempted him to work for it. Hume forwarded Ghose's letter to Ripon and added: 'Like him I have virtually left the world; but like him I would willingly work awhile in so good a cause, one that I have advocated all my life,84 and to which for eleven years I gave practical effect in Etawah. I do not suppose you would ever want me; but I merely write to say that if later you should find difficulties arise in giving practical effect to the scheme of self-government, and you should think that my services could in any way be utilized to further the cause, you can command them—of course gratuitous service. I will not join in any work except what I believe to be directly for the good of my fellows, and I will not, of course, take anything, directly or indirectly, for doing that which it is simply my duty to do.'85

Why did Hume become interested in Ripon's local self-government scheme? The answer to this question is provided, at least in part, by Hume himself. Writing to Ripon about the scheme on 30 December 1882, Hume said: 'For years past India has been becoming more or less saturated with discontent, with dissatisfaction if not positive disloyalty, (though if you saw' many of the letters I receive, not written to me but to others, who send them on to me, you would hardly admit this
reservation). Day by day the saturation was, and is, increasing, partly owing to the gradual change in the character of our Government, partly to the gradual change in the relations between district officers and their people, partly to the growth of education, and partly to other causes too numerous to mention. Sooner or later as things were going, a catastrophe was inevitable. Your policy, if successful, affords a certainty of protection against this. It is not only what you put forward, (though how far beyond that you see I cannot guess), that is at stake, it is the lives of hundreds of thousands, it is order, peace, happiness versus anarchy, bloodshed, ravaged cities and burning villages. There is not on the earth at this moment a single question I believe on which hang weightier

84 For proof of this, see Hume's note on 'Local Rates-Bengal', 19 January 1871, pp. 9-10, Mayo Papers, Add. 7490/14.

85 Hume to Ripon, 28 May 1882, and enclosure, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, no. 349.

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or more terrible issues in the future. It is worth doing anything to secure success... '86

It was not long before Ripon sought the help of Hume, of whose influence with educated Indians he must have already become convinced through his careful study of the Indian press and closer personal acquaintance with him. By the autumn of 1882 Ripon had begun to realize that his local self-government policy, which had encouraged Indians to expect quick and far-reaching results, stood little chance of being speedily or fully implemented because of the opposition of most British officials in India and members of the India council in London. He, therefore, asked Hume to tell Indians what he himself could not tell them, namely that he was encountering opposition from his own countrymen in India and at home and that they should not, by giving way to impatience or cynicism, add to his difficulties.

In the first week of November 1882 Hume wrote a long letter to the Pioneer, then edited by his Theosophist friend A.P. Sinnett87 and 'unquestionably the most widely circulated journal in India', in which he told Indians what Ripon had asked him to tell them.88 The letter was 'addressed almost exclusively to the native community' and the hope was expressed that other newspapers would give it wider publicity by reproducing it. Hume exhorted Indians to realize the difficulties of Ripon's position and not to show impatience with him or cast doubts on his intentions. The governor-general of India, he pointed out, was no longer the autocrat he used to be before the revolt of 1857. 'Gulliver, bound by the Lilliputians, is now the fittest symbol of a Viceroy: every department, every subordinate Government has a cord upon him somewhere; the hydra-headed India Office has wound its cables round him in snaky folds, till he stands an official Laocoon, and one single resolute Member of Council at home suffices to frustrate all his best considered plans, even when these are backed by the concurrence of every high official in India.' It was simply childish on the part of Indians, Hume added, to express, or even feel, impatience in a vast matter like self-government, because the seed, as yet barely sown, had not yielded the great tree they yearned for, bearing flowers and fruit. Even were all powers, here and at home, favourable to Ripon's noble scheme for raising their political status, he could hardly do more than sow the seed. 'But, as a matter of fact, all the powers are not on our side; ... a large
proportion of those in power here are far from cordially endorsing Lord Ripon's truly statesmanlike views on this great question. Theoretically, they would mostly concede the point; but they would, by every possible plea, of prematurity, of desiring to see a gradual growth, &c, evade an immediate practical initiation of the system. At home it is the same.

86 Hume to Ripon, 30 December 1882, ibid., no. 403.

87 B. 1840; editor of Hong Kong Daily Press 1865-8 and of Pioneer 1872-83; devoted much lime to Theosophy; d. 1921.

88 ‘In the Pioneer of the 4th is a letter of mine...in this I have told my native friends as nearly as possible, I think, what you told me to tell them.’ Hume to Ripon, 6 November 1882, Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. 43616, to. 342.

or worse. The majority of the Council certainly look with no friendly eye upon this resolute new departure; new, not indeed so far as words and professions go, but new in the determination to give bona fide practical effect to these.' Hume went on to emphasize that Ripon could 'not press on impatiently in face of the widespread opposition that exists, here and at home, or the angry feelings thus generated, though perhaps impotent for the moment would ensure a recoil under the succeeding administration that would sweep away all traces of his labour.... He is most anxious to do for us, in all ways, all that India's noblest sons, all that her truest friends can hope for or desire; but he is an experienced statesman; he realizes the conditions, and he wants to make whatever little advance he can achieve permanent.... Others will reap the fruit and glory of his unselfish labours, but India, if true to herself, will never forget who, mid "this winter of our discontent", sowed the good seed.' Hume told Indians that if, instead of finding fault with the slowness with which they seemed to advance, they were to strive unitedly and zealously to second Ripon's beneficent designs, it might well be that the movement might acquire a rapidly growing momentum, and that, even before he left them, the viceroy might see some early fruits of his benevolent labours. Ripon had really done his part, the rest lay with themselves. 'If throughout the country, during this coming year,' Hume suggested, 'any considerable fraction, even of the educated and wealthy classes, will show, in practice, a sincere interest in local self-government; if they will, disregarding the trouble and the interruption to their own business and pleasure, work steadily and intelligently at public affairs; organizing elections so as to secure the best men, everywhere, for the work, regardless of their own personal advancement; or if, when elected, they will zealously, wisely, and uprightly discharge the duties falling to their lot without fear or favour; if they will put before them day and night the fact that their country will be on its trial, and that their success, or failure, will be pro tanto the honour or disgrace of India, if, in a word, they will show that they really are men, good and true, and not mere precocious children, incapable of sustained effort and noble aims, another year will not elapse without further important developments in the direction of self-government, nor another decade without a bloodless social revolution for which many true hearts have long yearned, but which none, until quite recently, have ever dared to look for as a practical possibility.' Hume concluded his letter by saying: 'My friends, the game is in our own hands; the ball is at your feet, and the question is,
"What will you do with it?" Alas! even those who love you best, who are yours, whether you sink or swim, await the result of the ordeal with anxiety and uncertainty. 89

This extraordinary letter, to which the Indian press throughout the country gave the desired publicity, prompted educated Indians to take a more active interest in Ripon's local self-government scheme than they had hitherto done. It also served to increase enormously their regard for Hume by letting them know that he was an ally and confidant of Ripon.

89 Pioneer, 4 November 1882.

The problem of ascertaining what the public wants and what it will not stand is often difficult for any government. It is more so for a foreign government. Both as a liberal statesman and as viceroy of India, Ripon attached great importance to the growth of public opinion in the country as an aid and corrective to government. Addressing the convocation of Calcutta university on 11 March 1882, he remarked that before he came to India he had often heard it said in Britain that there was nothing like real and effective public opinion in the country, and that the want of it was one of the special difficulties which the government of India had to encounter. But few things had struck him more during the short time that he had been there than the various proofs which he had seen of the existence of a substantial public opinion, which was evidently growing and strengthening from day to day. There did not yet exist in India, he said, 'that general, widespread, constraining public opinion which is to be found in European countries, and which, when its voice is clearly heard, is the irresistible and unresisted master of Governments and Parliaments'. Public opinion in India was 'still to a great extent split up into sections' and represented 'very often only the views and interests of classes or of coteries', while the great mass of the people were still without direct means of making their voices heard. It had 'not yet arrived at that condition of solidity and depth which would make it the powerful instrument for warning and enlightening the administration which it is in England and other Western countries'. But with all these drawbacks and shortcomings, the viceroy added, the power of general public opinion in India, 'which is of course in the main native opinion', was 'obviously extending and advancing with a sure and steady step' and no prudent government or wise statesman would despise or disregard it. Ripon also referred to 'the great difficulty which often existed on the part of Europeans on the one side and Natives on the other in understanding each other's point of view', arising 'not, certainly, from want of intelligence, but from entire difference of habits of thought', and he expressed the hope that 'the spread of solid education' would make Indian public opinion 'more intelligent, more wide, more just, and more united, and therefore more powerful and effective'. 90

Ripon was not indulging in pious platitudes or playing to the gallery. He meant what he was saying. In late December 1882 Hume forwarded to Ripon a letter which he had received from an Indian pleader complaining that district officers were opposed to the extension of local self-government and expressing a fear that Ripon's successor might try to put the clock back. 91 In reply to this Ripon wrote privately to Hume on 4 January 1883: 'The letter of your correspondent. .. is not very encouraging, because it displays a want of courage which forebodes failure. If we have official opinion to a great extent against us, we have the spirit of the time, in
which we live, with us, and it will tell heavily and unceasingly on our side. It has been my aim, not in this matter of self-government alone, but in a variety of ways to strengthen the influence of public opinion in


91 Hume to Ripon, 30 December 1882, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, no. 403.

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this country, and it will be the fault of the natives of India themselves, if, when I go away, they allow that influence to be thrust back into the position which it occupied a few years ago. In the extension of the power of public opinion lies the true safeguard of our work; and, as it seems to me certain that it must extend, I shall be content, if I am able to lay a firm foundation, to leave the growth and development of the institutions which I am founding and of those yet wider ones which must spring from them hereafter, to the action of those forces, political and social which are sure, as I believe, to increase in volume and intensity with "the process of the suns".92 Ripon's advice was not, as we shall see later, lost upon Hume and his Indian coadjutors.

What were the various ways in which Ripon had been trying to strengthen Indian public opinion and how far had he been a success? In January 1882 he had, with the active encouragement of the home government, repealed Lytton's infamous Vernacular Press Act. The repeal had not only gratified educated Indians, it had also convinced them of the value of constitutional agitation, for seldom before in history had the British government in India reversed its earlier decision in such a short time, evidently in deference to their clamour.93 In September 1882 Ripon had issued a circular enjoining upon local governments the need for greater publicity, especially through the medium of the vernaculars, in matters of legislation.94 Though foiled in his design of introducing an elected Indian element into the legislative councils, Ripon had in December 1882 asked the British Indian Association, the oldest and most influential public body in India, chiefly in view of the fact that the Bengal tenancy legislation was on the tapis, to recommend the name of one of its members for nomination to the supreme legislative council. The Association recommended the name of its able secretary, Kristo Das Pal, in January 1883 and it was readily accepted by Ripon.95 The nomination of Pal, who was a self-made man, and the manner in which it was effected, were welcomed by educated Indians as a recognition by the viceroy of the need for including really representative men in the legislative councils and served to encourage them in their demand for the reorganization of the legislative councils on an elective basis.96 Almost at the same time C. P. Ilbert,97 the law member in Ripon's council, who shared the viceroy's liberal ideas, invited the Indian press to co-operate actively with the government in the work of legislation—on the one hand, by securing a full discussion of government measures, and, on the other, by giving expression to the popular sentiment

92Ripon to Hume, 4 January 1883, ibid., no. 3.

93See, for example, the speech of S.N. Banerjea at a public meeting in Calcutta, 18 February 1882, to thank Ripon for the repeal of the Act, in Indian Mirror, 24 February 1882.
and bringing it prominently to the notice of the legislators.98

Educated Indians had been discussing ways and means of making their opinion more united and effective long before Ripon arrived in India in June 1880. Ripon's utterances and actions as viceroy of India, however, imparted a fresh and powerful impetus to their discussion. On 27 May 1882 S. N. Banerjea put forward in his paper, the Bengalee, the idea of holding an annual 'national congress'. After referring to the role of public opinion in determining the policies of governments in civilized countries and to the various modes of forming and educating that opinion current in Britain, particularly 'the annual congresses of the different social and scientific societies', of one of which, namely that of the Social Science Association, he claimed to have 'some experience', Banerjea went on to say: 'Why should we not organize a national or at any rate a provincial congress—a meeting of delegates from different parts of the country deputed by the several public bodies to represent their views. Hitherto our public bodies have as a rule acted without that concert and co-operation among themselves which alone can invest our public movements with a truly representative character. There has been too much of isolation and too little of concert in our public movements. It is necessary to remedy this evil. The task is not one that need be beyond the powers of any of our public bodies. It is surely possible to arrange a congress of delegates from the different Associations in Bengal, who might meet once a year, discuss various public questions and settle, if possible, the programme of work which these political bodies might undertake. The concentrated thought of the nation would thus be employed in the development of great schemes of social and political reform. The Brahmo Somaj can gather together, on the occasion of the celebration of its anniversary, members from the most distant parts of the country for purposes of social and spiritual communion.99 Are we to understand that there is so little political life among us that the idea of such a congress for political purposes must remain an idea, incapable of realization in the present circumstances of the country?' Banerjea emphasized the various ways in which British rule had been strengthening the ties of unity and removing the prejudices of ages in India, and remarked: 'The time indeed has truly come when a great national congress, meeting once every year, may cement still further the bonds of unity among the Indian races, and prepare the way for concerted action in reference to political matters among the different political bodies scattered throughout the country.' Banerjee also disclosed that the Indian Association, of which he himself was the life and soul, had 'resolved to organize a congress of this nature', which was 'to be held some time next year', and ex-

The reference was to the annual festival which the Brahma Samaj had been organizing from 1868 on at Calcutta and which brought together Brahmans from all parts of India. For descriptions of the festival, see Indian Daily News, 25 January 1868, Bombay Guardian, 12 February 1870, and Indian Statesman, 29 January 1874. For the implied political importance of the festival, see Indian Mirror, quoted in Pioneer, 28 January 1875.

pressed the hope 'that in this good and noble work the Association will receive the sympathetic co-operation of our educated countrymen in all parts of the country'.

Banerjea's idea of an annual 'national congress', which was by means new, came almost simultaneously with the publication of Ripon's momentous resolution on local self-government, and, probably for this reason, it failed to attract sufficient immediate attention in India. Significantly enough, Banerjea himself, contrary to his usual practice, did not revert to it in the Bengalee for more than a year. In the meantime several highly significant developments had taken place.

Soon after the publication of his famous letter on local self-government in the Pioneer of 4 November 1882, Hume wrote to his friend and fellow-Theosysth Narendranath Sen, editor of the Indian Mirror, suggesting the desirability of establishing a 'federation of the native press'. He regretted the apathy of the Indian press in dealing persistently and prominently with 'questions of supreme national importance', which had created a feeling among the authorities, both in India and in Britain, that Indians themselves did not really seek all that they were represented to do. He expressed his view that, while many questions must always remain subjects of disagreement amongst the conductors of the Indian press, there were at least some topics 'so truly national that joint action in them would be possible and, if possible, this would be a source of great strength'. The conductors of the Indian press were, Hume added, 'the natural leaders of the people' and if they to a man always persistently pressed their legitimate claims upon the Government, those could not long be withheld'. One such question, in his view, was that of the larger employment of Indians in the services. Hume emphasized the extreme importance for Indians of taking full advantage of Ripon's benevolent viceroyalty, saying: 'Never have we had, perhaps we shall never have again, a Viceroy so nearly in earnest to do all he can for the people of India.' He even offered to devote his own time, energies and money for the promotion of the project of a 'federation of the native press'.

Thus encouraged by Hume, Sen overcame his initial lack of enthusiasm in the matter, due, as he put it, to the want of unanimity among members of the Indian press, and boldly broached the idea of a 'federation of the native press' in his paper on 28 November 1882, ascribing its origin to 'a European gentleman who has held very nearly the highest offices in this country, and who has proved himself, during his whole official career, a warm and consistent friend of the people'. The idea was at once taken up by other Indian papers, notably the Indian Spectator of Bombay, edited by B.M. Malabari, which wrote in a rather triumphant vein: 'The time has come for a...
federation of the Native Press; and the man too has come—in the presence of native publicists working as

100 Bengalee, 27 May 1882.

101 Indian Mirror, 28 November 1882; also Sea's speech at Bombay, 28 December 1882, published in ibid, 17 June 1883.

102 B. 1853; journalist and social reformer; d. 1912.

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one man.103 While on a visit to Bombay in December 1882 in connexion with the annual convention of the Theosophical Society, Sen discussed the idea with the editors of the local Indian press. The actual scheme of federation which Sen put forward while in Bombay was essentially the same as had been tried unsuccessfully in 1877-8. It visualized the establishment of local committees of editors in most large towns of India, meeting periodically to discuss and decide upon the course of action to be followed by all editors on the important questions of the day affecting Indian interests. The local committees were to put themselves in communication with a central committee based in Calcutta, which was also to hold annual meetings to which delegates were to come from the different local committees.104

Sen's scheme of a 'federation of the native press' contemplated the establishment of a sort of caucus 'to pass the right words at the right times'.105 Its basic fallacy was exposed by Grattan Geary,106 the Irish editor of the Bombay Gazette, who was otherwise not unsympathetic to Indian aspirations. A 'caucus', he said, might be a useful instrument for the purposes of electioneering and party discipline, but 'whoever supposes that the opinions of the press will have the same weight whether journals reflect the sentiments and feelings of the general public, or merely give utterance to the cut-and-dried formula of a handful of wire-pullers, wholly misunderstands the conditions which give influence to the press of any country. ... The absence of spontaneity would be fatal.'107

The idea of a 'federation of the native press' acquired added importance at the time because of a recent remark of Ilbert. On 15 December 1882, while proposing certain amendments to the rules of business of the supreme legislative council in pursuance of the decision of the government of India to give greater publicity to legislation, to which reference has already been made, Ilbert described the press in India as the 'best source of information' available to the authorities, and added that, with all its imperfections, 'it was almost the only voice that spoke to them from outside the charmed circle of officialism, and therefore it was a voice which the Government could not afford, and certainly did not desire, to disregard'. He also disclosed that 'attempts were being made to watch more closely than heretofore the comments in the Press, both English and Vernacular'.108

Among the many achievements of Ripon's viceroyalty must be included the fact that it brought to the fore the few genuinely liberal Anglo-Indians and forged a lasting bond of union between
them on the one hand and between them and the leading Indian patriots on the other. One such Anglo-Indian was William

103 Indian Spectator, 3 December 1882.

104 Ibid., 10, 17 December 1882; Indian Minor, 17 June 1883.

105 Indian Spectator, 17 December 1882.

106 Arrived in India 1873; earlier editor of Times of India; took prominent part in Bombay municipal affairs; d. 1900.

107 Bombay Gazette, 16 December 1882.


Wedderburn, then serving as a sessions judge at Poona, whose name is imperishably associated with that of Hume in the foundation of the Indian National Congress. Wedderburn did not arrive in India until after the revolt of 1857 had been quelled, but his elder brother, John Wedderburn,109 was killed in that revolt. This tragic event and his own personal experience later of the Deccan riots in the 1870s appear to have made a profound impression on his mind and, like Hume, strengthened his resolve to do all he could to prevent another violent upheaval in India. Kind, gentle and unusually friendly to Indians, Wedderburn was the most popular British official of his time in western India. He was keenly interested in promoting education, in improving the lot of the peasantry and in reforming the judicial system in India. He was on intimate terms with many leading Indians in the Bombay presidency, particularly with M. G. Ranade and Dadabhai Naoroji. He lacked Hume's charismatic personality, versatility and wide knowledge of men and things throughout India, but he was a more sedate and steady radical than his more illustrious fellow-Scotsman. Hume paid a handsome tribute to his friend and also underlined the essential difference between their characters when he wrote to Dufferin in 1885: 'He [Wedderburn] is about 15 years my junior in years, and about as much my senior in mind, for though I am an old one I still remain a boy at heart. Now as Mr. Weller remarked "If there be an angel in top boots, it is Mr. Pickwick", so I say that if there be an angel in broad-toed high- lows and rather dingy and ill-made lawn tennis flannels, it is old Wedderburn; and if you long for, or hope for, any divine light to illuminate somewhat the dreary and obscure path every Viceroy has to tread, you cannot do better than get hold of this angel now and again.'110

Ilbert's remark in the imperial legislative council on 15 December 1882 suggested to Wedderburn a scheme for increasing the influence and usefulness of the Indian press which was very different from and far more practicable than that proposed by Sen. He elaborated it in a letter to the Bombay Gazette on 2 January 1883. What was wanted, he said, was 'a central English magazine which, by means of extracts and summaries, should collect in an accessible form the pith and substance of what appears in all the leading native papers. Such a magazine might be issued once a month or once a fortnight in Bombay. Without having any views or
policy of its own, it should faithfully reproduce the views and policy of the existing journals throughout India; gathering, so to say, together and focussing the scattered rays of thought and feeling, but being careful neither to colour nor distort them.' It would, he argued, be immensely helpful not only to the government, but also to those in Britain who desired 'to do justice to India' but were handicapped for want of a reliable guide to Indian opinion. He also suggested that the magazine should be called the 'Voice of India'.

Wedderburn's suggestion was at once taken up by Malabari and Dadabhai

109 B. 1825; joined East India Company's service 1844; collector and magistrate of Hissar; killed, with his wife and child, 1857.

110 Hume to Dufferin, 12 July 1885, Dufferin Papers, reel 502, no. 31.

111 Bombay Gazette, 4 January 1883.

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Naoroji and, before leaving for Britain on a year's furlough on 19 January 1883, he had the satisfaction of seeing that arrangements were already completed for the publication of the magazine which he had proposed.112 The first number of the monthly Voice of India was published from Bombay in the first week of February 1883. It was modelled partly on the official weekly reports on Indian newspapers in the various provinces and partly on the contemporary British journal called Public Opinion, and contained extracts, or English translations of extracts, from several newspapers of India, arranged under different headings. It also carried an able introductory article, which was understood to have been 'written ... in a great part by Mr. Wordsworth',113 principal of the Elphinstone College, fully explaining the raison d'etre of the magazine.

Eclectic, humanist, liberal and bearer of a great name, Professor William Wordsworth had already won the admiration and attachment of Indians by his invariable advocacy of their rights and privileges. 'Few Englishmen', wrote the Times of India, in January 1883, 'have ever made a deeper impression on the native mind. For two-and-twenty years the most promising of our educated native youth have passed under his care, and his disciples are now to be found in all parts of the presidency, and in all the leading professions.'114 His introductory article in the first issue of the Voice of India provides us not only with yet another instance of his well-known sympathy with the cause of Indians, but also with an enlightened, non-official Anglo-Indian's assessment of the contemporary political situation in India. He began his article by referring to Lytton's Vernacular Press Act and remarked that 'its sole effect was to enhance the importance of the Press in the thoughts of the general public; and to inspire writers and editors with greater confidence and a new sense of power'. Its repeal by Ripon had been hailed by educated Indians not so much in a spirit of triumph as that of gratitude, which showed that the elements of a cordial understanding between the government and the people existed in India and were capable of 'indefinite expansion'. Alluding to Ripon's viceroyalty, he said: 'A sanguine spirit of reviving life seems to have breathed upon the country. The confidence of the people in their rulers has been immensely strengthened. Hopefulness and energy have succeeded to apathy and despair.
There are few sovereigns in the world who enjoy in a larger measure the affectionate regard of their subjects than Lord Ripon now enjoys the affectionate regard of the people of India, or who have so successfully associated with their policy the best energies which the country affords.' Wordsworth expressed his conviction that the press would occupy a still more important place in the new India to which Ripon was guiding them and, in the absence of representative institutions, its representative role would be more apparent and carry greater weight with statesmen. 'For we are now on the threshold of a time in which public opinion will be a real force in Indian political life.' The diffusion of English education in India had, in his view, been

112 Ibid., 19 January 1881.

113 Ibid., February 1883.

114 Time of India, 8 February 1883.

attended with momentous consequences, which had long been visible to discerning eyes and which would now challenge the attention of the most thoughtless. 'It is creating a moral unity, which may be compared, without any extreme inconsequence, to the moral unity which the diffusion of Christianity created in the Roman Empire. It is drawing races and creeds together, once profoundly separated, and filling them with common aspirations and sympathies. It has already created a very definite public opinion which moves freely in one and the same intellectual atmosphere, if with unequal energies, in every province of India.' These moral changes in India were, according to Wordsworth, really the most vital elements with which the statesmanship of the future would have to reckon, and they must modify very distinctly the existing relations of Britons and Indians, of the government and the people. It became, therefore, a matter of the highest importance to strengthen betimes the moral and intellectual understanding between the two, though, unfortunately, it was not easy to do so, for the points of contact were few and the sphere of common purpose and activity was very restricted. If, however, the government was to be saved from being 'doomed to sterility and decay' and the country was 'to be preserved in the near future from revolutionary agitations, that understanding must be established and sustained'. The first condition of that understanding was, he believed, a clearer apprehension and a more liberal interpretation by members of the dominant race of the ideas and aims which were increasingly coming to the front in modern India. 'The belief, he wrote 'that internal tranquillity, or material prosperity, or administrative success, will make up for the loss of other things which energetic minds value, is one which has a firm hold on the merely official mind, and sometimes offers an impenetrable barrier to the influx of new light.' By offering in short compass the opinions of the Indian press throughout the country on all public questions, the Voice of India might help weaken the vitality of these illusions and strengthen the elements of union. It was being launched to promote two main objects, namely 'an increased knowledge among Englishmen of native opinion, of the ideas which are really coming to the front in that portion of the native public which thinks and wills; and an increased confidence among natives in the power of public opinion and the possibility of a genuine national development under the protecting aegis of British sovereignty'. 115
The publication of the Voice of India in February 1883 was an event of more than ordinary significance. It was proof of the growing desire on the part of educated Indians to organize and consolidate their opinion and to strengthen the hand of Ripon in carrying out his liberal policies. The very speed with which the magazine was brought out was suggestive of a new mood of earnestness and practicality among reformers in India. The fact that the magazine was published from Bombay was a portent of the future. As successive issues of the Voice of India were published, it became apparent more than ever before that on many outstanding questions there already existed a substantial degree of unanimity amongst educated Indians throughout the country.

By a strange irony of history, the first week of February 1883 in which the Voice of India was published also witnessed the introduction in the imperial legislative council of Ilbert's famous bill to remove judicial disqualifications based on race distinctions. But before going on to discuss the so-called Ilbert Bill and the storm which broke over it, we must take note of certain significant developments which were already under way. Early in January 1883 the Bombay branch of the East India Association initiated a movement to demand the extension of Ripon's term as viceroy of India. It is not known precisely at whose instance this movement was started or whether it had the concurrence of Ripon himself. But there can be little doubt that it was inspired by a sense of gratitude to Ripon on the part of educated Indians and their feeling that the expression of such gratitude would strengthen the hand of the viceroy both in India and in Britain. During the subsequent months numerous memorials from various parts of India were dispatched to the authorities in Britain, praising Ripon and praying that he be allowed sufficient time to carry out his beneficent policies, particularly that relating to local self-government. The memorials in themselves were probably of little consequence, but the unanimity of sentiment which characterized them and the extensive efforts which were required to get them up were indicative of the increasing spread and solidarity of public spirit in India. They provided a foretaste of the far more impressive demonstrations which were to mark Ripon's departure from India in the winter of 1884.

The second significant development began much earlier in Britain and involved certain Irish nationalists, particularly Frank Hugh O'Donnell. Probably no other country in the world has exercised greater influence on the course of Indian nationalism, both as an example and as a warning, than Ireland. Educated Indians became interested in Ireland early in the nineteenth century. The sufferings of Ireland and her heroic struggle against heavy odds to preserve her religion, culture and nationality struck a responsive chord in the hearts of Indian patriots. The latter also recalled with admiration and gratitude Edmund Burke's role in the impeachment of Warren Hastings and Daniel O'Connell's espousal of the cause of India. They disliked Irish extremism, but were inclined to blame it more on the British than on the Irish. They regarded O'Connell's Catholic Association not only as a model of political organization, but also as a shining example of the success of constitutional agitation. Conscious of the similarities between Ireland and their own country, they
116 See Inch Prakash, 22 January 1883.

117 For example, in October 1822 Rammohan Roy had written an article, 'Ireland, the Causes of Its Distress and Discontents', in which he had dwelt on the evils of absentee landlordism and the injustice of maintaining Protestant clergymen out of the revenues wrung from Irish Catholics. See S. D. Collet, The Life and Letters of Raja Rammolum Roy (1900), pp. 64-5.

118 See, for example, Palit (ed.), op. cit., p. 89, and Bengalee, 18 June 1881.

avidly followed developments in the Emerald Isle. They were greatly excited by the emergence of the Irish home rule movement and the formation of the Irish parliamentary party in the 1870s. Indian visitors to or residents in the United Kingdom, with their patriotic feelings generally reinforced by their stay abroad,119 were readily influenced by Irish nationalists and occasionally sought their friendship.

Irish nationalists did not have the same interest in India as Indian nationalists had in Ireland. The former were too preoccupied with their own affairs to spare much thought for India and generally contented themselves with an occasional expression of sympathy with those who were similarly struggling to be free of the British yoke. They did not think India could teach them anything. India was also too alien to interest them and too far away to be of any help to them. Moreover, they were mixed up with the British ruling class in various ways and were themselves often ardent imperialists. But from the mid-1870s on circumstances favoured an alliance between Indian and Irish nationalists. Indian nationalists were just then in search of friends in Britain, particularly such as could help them at Westminster. The East India Association in London had ceased to serve their purpose. They virtually had no spokesmen for them in Parliament except the blind Fawcett and even he was becoming ineffective. They, therefore, naturally looked upon the Irish nationalist M.P.s as potential allies. The Irish nationalist M.P.s, on their part, had recently embarked upon a policy of systematic obstruction of business in the House of Commons and found Indian issues very handy.

Frank Hugh O'Donnell was probably the first Irish M.P. to perceive the advantages of co-operation between Indian and Irish nationalists. Eloquent and imaginative, though rather unstable and vainglorious,120 he had a personal as well as a political interest in India. His younger brother, Charles James O'Donnell,121 was a member of the Indian civil service. A man of advanced political views, C. J. O'Donnell was posted in Bengal during the terrible famine of 1873-4 in parts of that presidency. It was probably on the basis of the information supplied to him by his younger brother that F. H. O'Donnell delivered his maiden speech in the House of Commons on 21 April 1874 on the subject of 'drought in Benga'122 Later, in 1876, C. J. O'Donnell published anonymously a pamphlet criticizing Richard Temple's famine relief operations, particularly in Bihar, and demanding a commission of inquiry. 123 Temple, who was then lieutenant-governor of Bengal, found out who the author of the pamphlet was
I do not hesitate to assert that if there is anything calculated to inspire a Hindu with an ardent love for his country, it is a residence in Europe....' M. M. Ghose, in a letter to the editor, Hindoo Patriot, 17 May 1869.


B. 1850; entered Indian civil service 1870; retired as commissioner 1900; M.P. 1906-10; d. 1934.


and punished him by transferring him to a notoriously unhealthy district in Bengal. F. H. O'Donnell also came to bear a grudge against the India Office, because he believed that the latter, under Salisbury, had 'determined to exclude the Irishmen from the Indian civil service by the simple but discreditable expedient of confining the choice of examiners at the competitive examinations to professors and tutors from Oxford and Cambridge'. F. H. O'Donnell's close friendship with Gyanendramohan Tagore, a patriotic and wealthy Bengali residing in London, enabled him not only to appreciate Indian political aspirations better, but also to establish contacts with Indian visitors to the United Kingdom and with the British Indian Association in Calcutta.

In the spring of 1875 O'Donnell and Tagore, prompted probably by the contemporary Baroda crisis, established in London an association, called 'the Constitutional Society of India'. The avowed objects of the Society were 'to protect and promote the moral and material interests of India, to unite classes and races, to maintain and conserve legitimate traditions, to develop habits of co-operation, self-reliance and self-control, to collect and supply accurate information on the numerous Indian questions that are too often imperfectly understood by the Imperial Parliament, and in every legal way to secure for the national and municipal claims of the Indian people and feudatories, a basis of guaranteed right and settled precedent calculated to conciliate the indispensable requirements of India with the general policy of the Empire at large'. The society was to have its headquarters at Westminster and branch offices and agencies in the chief towns of India. Its initial 'administrative council' consisted of A. M. Sullivan, J. Ronayne, J. O'Connor Power, G. M. Tagore, Lawrence Beal, F. H. O'Donnell and J. C. Meenakshya.

Neither O'Donnell nor Tagore had adequate knowledge of the realities of political life in India and their Constitutional Society of India was still-born. But O'Donnell retained his interest in India. In the late 'seventies and early 'eighties be, along with some other Irish nationalist M.P.s, made himself increasingly prominent by his frequent interventions on behalf of India in Parliament. In an extremely appreciative and well-informed article on the Irish parliamentary
party, the Hindoo Patriot wrote in December 1877: 'We feel a national interest in the prospects of the Irish Party. Frank, generous and


126 For information about the Constitutional Society of India, see Indian Mirror, quoted in Native Opinion, 20 June 1875.

127 B. 1830; Irish author, journalist and politician; M.P. 1874-81; d. 1884.

128 B. 1822; Irish M.P. for County Cork; d. 1876.

129 M.P. for County Mayo.

130 Barrister.

131 A Kannada studying for the bar in London; also active in the (London) Indian Society; later practised at Bangalore.


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tender-hearted, the Irish may lend a sympathizing heart to the dumb millions of India. The people of India are unrepresented in Parliament; the great Conservative and Liberal Parties take up Indian questions only by fits and starts. Deeply beholden as we are to them for their disinterested and philanthropic efforts, we must confess that their spasmodic efforts have no enduring effect. Then it is some solitary members who take an interest in Indian affairs. They have no following in such matters. Their brethren in party do not, it seems, like to act in unison on Indian questions. The result is drifting and shifting. If the Irish Party as a Party make India one of their battle-cries, there will be some hope. They now number 65 members, and if they muster in force on an Indian debate, it means a house of 130 members, and if a house of 130 decide an Indian question intelligently and honestly, we must bow to its decisions. May we venture to express a hope that the Irish Party will include India in their programme of Parliamentary campaign?'133

The editor of the Hindoo Patriot, K. D. Pal, put himself in communication with O'Donnell and became his 'close adviser and confidant'.134 In March 1878 Pal and other prominent members of the managing committee of the British Indian Association wrote a letter to O'Donnell saying, among other things, how 'deeply grateful' they were to him for 'the lively interest' which he took in Indian affairs and how the party with which he was connected might 'do much in furtherance of the Indian cause' if it would have the goodness to accord its sympathy and support to the people of India, who were 'wholly unrepresented in Parliament'.135 According to O'Donnell,
'Indian leaders' offered the Irish parliamentary party 'the political and pecuniary support of a great Indian movement, on the condition that Ireland should elect some representatives of India to speak for India in the House of Commons, and that India in return was to endorse the Irish demand for self-government. The precise point to which the negotiation was narrowed down was that four natives of India, to be selected by Indians themselves, men of university attainments and considerable power of oratory, should be elected for Irish constituencies, to be Irish Home Rulers on all Irish questions, and to be members for India, and to be backed by the Irish party, on Indian affairs.' \cite{136} But neither from Isaac Butt \cite{137} nor from Charles Stewart Parnell, the two leaders of the Irish home rule party, did O'Donnell obtain sufficient support to enable him to proceed with the negotiations. Butt 'warmly approved the idea', but was afraid of exacerbating English conservative opinion; Parnell 'simply could not understand how the proposal could excite interest in Ireland'. \cite{138} O'Donnell had, therefore,

\begin{itemize}
  \item 133\textit{Hindoo Patriot}, 17 December 1877.
  \item 134F H. O'Donnell, op cit., vol. ii, p. 431.
  \item 135\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 429-30.
  \item 136 \textit{Ibid.}, p. 428.
  \item 137 B. 1813; founded Home Rule Association 1870; d. 1879.
  \item 328
\end{itemize}

to tell his 'distinguished correspondents in India that, for the moment, the project was impracticable'. \cite{139}

Towards the end of 1882 O'Donnell, who was becoming increasingly estranged from most of his colleagues in the Irish parliamentary party, particularly Parnell, returned to his 'old post of Professor of Organization to men and nations who, for one reason or another, had a quarrel with the British Constitution'. \cite{140} But O'Donnell was, as he himself admitted, 'an Imperialist as well as a Nationalist'. \cite{141} His methods were strictly 'legal and constitutional' and he was anxious to 'avoid the slightest appearance of menace to the great administration established by England in India'. \cite{142} In a letter to 'an Indian gentleman now residing in London', who was probably his old friend G. M. Tagore, O'Donnell sketched an elaborate scheme of an 'Indian Constitutional Reform Association' in London similar to that which he had attempted to organize in 1875, with a central committee in England and branches in the chief towns of India, primarily in order to keep friendly M.P.s regularly and fully informed on Indian questions. The letter, which was obviously meant for publication, appeared in the Indian Mirror on 14 January 1883 and attracted a great deal of attention throughout India.

Realizing the practical difficulties of organizing a new Indian association in London and fearing that such an association might arouse the suspicion of Anglo-Indians and make them 'dream of a
formidable band of Indians sailing from London or Liverpool in a specially chartered vessel for the conquest of Hindustan',143 O'Donnell decided to make use of an already existing association in London, called the 'Indian Society'144 and consisting mainly of Indian students. He also secured the support of the dynamic Raja Rampal Singh of Kalakankar,145 who was then residing in London and dabbling in British politics. At a meeting of the Indian Society at the Inns of Court Hotel, Holborn, on 12 January 1883, which was presided over by Rampal Singh and attended by about 50-60 persons, including Justin McCarthy,146 O'Donnell unfolded

139Ibid The project appears to have been revived in the early 1880s by Dadabhai Naoroji through fMichael Davitt (1846-1906), the Irish revolutionary and labour agitator, but with no better result. See Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland (1904), p. 447.

140F. H. O'Doonell, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 431. F. H. O'Donnell's renewed interest in Indian affairs might have been due also to the fact that his brother had again got into trouble with the Indian authorities because of his pamphleteering.

141Ibid., p. 425.

142Ibid., pp. 427,432.

143See O'Donnell's speech at the inauguration of the 'Indian Constitutional Association' 12 January 1883, in Indian Mirror, 3 March 1883.

144The (London) Indian Society was organized in 1872. Its object was 'to bring into closer union the Indians residing in England, and to furnish an opportunity for the interchange of thought and feeling on all matters connected with India'. See Native Opinion, 24 August 1873; also Journal of the National Indian Association, September 1873, p.427; Bengalee, 1 August 1874, 10 October 1896.

145B. 1848; d. 1909.

146 B. 1830; Irish politician and man of letters; d. 1912.

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his scheme of an 'Indian Intelligence Committee' in London. He referred to his experience in regard to Ireland and remarked: 'The work, if conducted reasonably, will be only the beginning of a mighty movement. The Indian Intelligence Committee will gradually draw to itself the leading thoughts of India, and form a federation of the Indian nation by helping the different sections of the Indian people to rally round the banner of emancipation.' As an Irishman, he said, he knew 'what Englishmen had done in Ireland to destroy community of feeling, and he was encouraged to make this appeal from what he knew of his national grievances'. But he 'did not for one moment desire to make the Indian question an Irish question'. 'Your question', he assured his Indian audience, 'would be above all party politics, your cause will be taken, up by your friends in Parliament for the sake of national freedom, and for the sake of that which is good in itself. It will be our end eavour to bring as many English members as possible, honest, manly,
statesmanlike Englishmen, whom we shall put to the front.'147 Justin McCarthy praised O'Donnell for his zealous interest in India and supported his scheme. Though he emphasized that the Irish M.P.s possessed a special advantage in regard to India and that 'one of the reasons of their coming in sympathy with India' was that 'in India they found the same misunderstanding and same misgovernment prevail as in Ireland', he, too, insisted that they 'would help to form an independent nucleus in the House of Commons'.148

Thus encouraged by O'Donnell and McCarthy, the Indian Society formed, a couple of weeks later, a 'National Representative Committee', consisting of ten of its members, representing the various parts of India, with Rampal Singh as president and Dr. R. Sen149 as secretary, for the avowed purpose of ascertaining the grievances of the Indian people and bringing them to the knowledge of friendly M.P.s and the British public in general.150 A rather high-sounding manifesto was issued in February 1883, emphasizing the 'peculiar advantages' of having 'a political organization by the natives of India in the land of their rulers' and calling upon 'all who inhabit the Indian soil from the Indus to the Brahmaputra, and from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin' to unanimously and heartily combine in furthering the objects of the Committee.151 On 22 February 1883 the members of the National Representative Committee created quite a sensation by going in a deputation to the House of Commons to lobby M.P.s.152 Having secured assurances of support from about half a dozen

147 Indian Mirror, 3 March 1883.

148 Ibid.

149 A Bengali studying medicine in London.

150 Indian Mirror, 3 March 1883.

151 ibid., 17 March 1883.

152 'He [F. H. O'Donnell] once brought some scores of dusky students of all races and creeds of Hindustan to the House of Commons, to render their solemn allegiance to Mr. Parnell—to the wonder of the policemen and the quidnuncs of the Lobby.' W. O'Brien, op. cit., p. 247. See also Allen's Indian Mail, 28 February 1883, and 'London Letter', 23 February 1883, in Pioneer, 16 March 1883.

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Irish and British M.P.s, the Committee issued a prospectus outlining an ambitious programme of work to be undertaken and enjoining upon public men in India the need for establishing a network of district and provincial associations in order, among other things, to provide the London Committee with adequate funds and information.153 The National Representative Committee was formally inaugurated, with due patriotic enthusiasm and ritual, at Tagore's house in Collingham Gardens, Kensington, in the spring of 1883.154 It even established an office at 17 Parliament Street, Westminster.155 In the autumn of 1883 Rampal Singh started publishing from London a monthly paper in English, Hindi and Urdu, called the Hindustan.156
The idea of an organization in Britain to promote the cause of India had always had a great fascination for the Indian mind. The National Representative Committee, therefore, received much publicity and favourable comment in the Indian press at the outset. But as the fact became known—it was rubbed in by the Anglo-Indian press—that the Committee was no more than a group of young Indian students presided over by an erratic Raja and manipulated by an Irish M.P. of no good repute, the confidence of the Indian public in it was undermined. If there were Irish nationalists who were reluctant to ally themselves with Indian nationalists for fear of further compromising their own cause in the eyes of the British, there were also some Indian nationalists who were equally reluctant, particularly during Ripon's viceroyalty, to ally themselves with Irish nationalists for precisely the same reason. As the Indian Spectator wrote apropos of the National Representative Committee on 29 April 1883: 'There is one thing ... we dread more than any other, and that is the strong probability of this committee playing into the hands of the Irish Party. Such a step at this juncture would be simply disastrous.... Now, however useful and desirable may be the political support of Mr. O'Donnell and his friends, personally, and however powerful and sincere their advocacy of Indian interests, we must say that at the present juncture nothing would be more injurious to India than to consult her interests and entrust the advocacy of her grievances to the Irish malcontents in the House of Commons.'

Thanks chiefly to the pecuniary support of Rampal Singh and the Raja of Bhinga, the National Representative Committee continued to exist for about a year, but it failed to do anything useful for India. The establishment in April 1883 of a rival and more influentially supported British India Committee in London took even the little wind the National Representative Committee had out of its sails. In January 1884 the National Representative Committee issued a pathetic but fruitless appeal 'to the people of India' in which it spoke of its 'precarious condition for want of funds, and the absence of any decided indication of extensive support from you', and added that unless 'substantial aid' was forthcoming within the next six months it would be compelled to dissolve itself. This appeal probably represented the swan-song of the Committee.

153 Indian Minor, 7 April 1883.


155 Hindustan, quoted in Indian Minor, 26 January 1884.

156 Indian Mirror, 2 October 1883.

157 Indian Spectator, 29 April 1883.

158 Hindustan, quoted in Indian Mirror, 26 January 1884. The Raja of Bhinga (1852-1913) later made himself notorious by opposing the Indian National Congress.

159 See below, p.331.

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The National Representative Committee embodied no new idea and its practical achievement was nil. O'Donnell's claim that his brain-child later became the Indian National Congress is too ludicrous to deserve more than a passing mention. All that can be said of the National Representative Committee is that, coming as it did at a time of great political excitement in India, it received widespread attention and to some extent stimulated the current discussion about the possibility of establishing a pan-Indian political organization. It was like yet another pebble thrown into an already agitated pond.

In March 1883 certain radicals in Britain, most of whom were interested in or had experience of India, initiated a movement to organize support for Ripon in Parliament and outside. They were alarmed at the growing opposition, both in Britain and in India, to Ripon's measures, particularly the recently introduced Criminal Jurisdiction Bill, and possibly also at the marked tendency of Indians to look to the Irish nationalist M.P.s for sympathy and succour. On 12 April 1883, three days after the important debate on India in the Lords in which Salisbury and Lytton vehemently denounced Ripon's policies, a 'British India Committee' was organized in London, with Sir Wilfrid Lawson as chairman, for the purpose, in the first instance, of supporting the 'wise and progressive' measures introduced by Ripon's government in India and generally of advancing the interests of the natives of India. The Committee was joined by a large number of liberals and radicals, mostly M.P.s, including Bright. It held a few public meetings and issued circulars and pamphlets to stem the tide of the anti-Ripon agitation in Britain. The National Representative Committee of the Indian Society, which was already in the field, must have looked upon the establishment of the British India Committee as an attempt to oust it. While, therefore, it expressed its readiness to co-operate with the British India Committee whenever possible, it decided 'to lead a separate existence from that body' on the ostensible plea that the latter might not continue to display the same attention to Indian interests as now when its present members were, in course of time, replaced by others. There can, however, be little doubt that the formation of the British India Committee was a severe blow to the prospects of the National Representative Committee, particularly because it deprived the latter body of much of its existing and potential support.

160 Indian Mirror, 21-3 February 1884.


162 B. 1829; M. P.; advanced liberal politician and temperance advocate; d. 1906.

163 Pall Mall Gazette, 13 April 1883; Indian Mirror, 5 May 1883.

164 Indian Mirror, 21 February 1884.

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In September 1883 it was resolved to reorganize the British India Committee on a permanent and wider basis, under the name of The Indian Reform Association, in order 'to co-operate with the people of India in promoting their political progress and material interests, and to inform the British public regarding the condition of India'. A provisional executive committee was formed
with Dr. G. B. Clark165 as chairman, Evans Bell,166 J. Seymour Keay167 and Hodgson Pratt as vice-chairmen, George Foggo168 and S. R. Geddes169 as honorary secretaries, and A. K. Sethna170 as corresponding secretary for India.171 A prospectus was issued which spoke of the inadequacy of the prevailing system of 'paternal despotism' in India, especially in view of the growth of education and new political aspirations in that country, of the increasing conflict of interests between powerful sections of the governing race and their Indian 'rivals and competitors', and of the need to create 'an enlightened and organized English public opinion ... as a national tribunal' for considering the great Indian questions which would inevitably arise in the future and to which the people of India might appeal with confidence. The British India Committee, 'consisting of more than 26 members of the House of Commons', was, the prospectus said, to continue functioning as the parliamentary wing of the Association. The provisional executive committee set up a regular office at 38 Parliament Street, London. It also empowered Seymour Keay, who was going out to India on his personal business, to raise funds for and organize branches of the proposed Association in that country.172 Keay arrived in India in October 1883 and stayed there until May next year. But his antecedents were not such as to inspire Indian public men with much confidence and his exertions on behalf of the Association bore little fruit.173 The Indian Reform Association was, however, duly inaugurated in London on 5 March 1884.174

165 B. 1846; physician and politician; visited India 1867; M. P. 1885-1900; d. 1930.

166 B. 1825; entered East India Company's military service in Madras 1841; assistant commissioner at Nagpur 1855-60, when lost appointment for insubordination to chief commissioner in advocating claims of local ruling family; writer on Indian affairs; d. 1887.

167 B. 1839; went to India to manage branches of Bank of Bengal 1862; opened banking business and cotton mills at Hyderabad; sympathized with Indian nationalists; M. P. 1889-95; d. 1909.

168 Businessman; member of Bombay legislative council 1865-8.

169 Businessman?

170 A Parsi from Bombay studying for the bar.

171 According to the Tory Allen's Indian Mail, 8 October 1883, the 'members and adherents' of the projected Indian Reform Association consisted of 'a few fanatical humanity-mongers, a great many extremely violent Radicals of the anti-landlord school, some well-meaning and promising young Indian students, and the Raja Rampal Singh'.

172 Indian Mirror, 9 December 1883.

173 At the instruction of Ripon, Hume advised Indian leaders not to encourage Keay. See Ripon to Hume 9 October 1883, Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. 43616, fos. 47-8; Hume to Ripon, 22 November 1883, ibid., B. P. 7/6, no. 164a; and Malabari to Naoroji, 17 October 1883, Naoroji Papers.
The Indian Reform Association represented yet another attempt to bring 'the friends of India' in Britain together on a common platform, but it was no more successful than the previous ones. Of its few known activities, the following deserve mention. On 3 April 1884 an influential deputation of the Association waited upon the secretary of state, Kimberley, to urge him to restore the maximum age for competing at the Indian civil service examination to 21.175 Ripon had recently made a similar recommendation to Kimberley and the deputation was obviously organized to reinforce the viceroy's recommendation, but the hard-headed secretary of state refused to relent. The Association actively promoted the candidature of L. M. Ghose for election to Parliament in 1885. It also rendered some assistance to the three Indian 'delegates' who visited Britain in the autumn of 1885. On 7 October 1884 a deputation of the Association met Dufferin, the viceroy-designate of India, and urged upon him the desirability of raising the maximum age for appearing at the Indian civil service examination and of passing the Bengal tenancy legislation.176 On 10 February 1885 the Association presented an address to Ripon welcoming him on his return to Britain and congratulating him on the policy pursued by him in India.177 With the backing of the Association, John Slagg178 made two unsuccessful attempts to table a motion in the House of Commons for the appointment of a parliamentary committee to inquire into the government of India. Slagg secured the support of Lord Randolph Churchill179 for his motion,180 but, surprisingly enough, it was opposed by John Morley in a speech before the Liberal conference at Cambridge on 30 September 1885.181 Morley's opposition to the idea of a parliamentary inquiry into the government of India, and more especially the arguments employed by him,182 not only damaged his reputation with Indians, but also destroyed the latter's hope and confidence in the radical section of the Liberal party in Britain.

Lacking a clearly defined programme of action or any active support either in Britain or in India, and enfeebled almost from the outset by personal and factional disputes,183 the Indian Reform Association was killed by the British general elections of 1885-6. Its failure to achieve anything worthwhile even as long as it lasted had some obvious lessons for Indian nationalists and these were hammered home by their radical British friend, R. D. Osborn. In

175 The Times, 4 April 1884.

174 Indian Mirror, 31 October 1884.

177 ibid., 7 March 1885.

178 B. 1841; merchant and politician; president of Manchester Chamber of Commerce; M.P. 1880-5, 1887-9; d. 1889.

179 B. 1849; M.P. 1874-94; secretary of state for India 1885-6; d. 1894.

181 Pioneer, 27 October 1885.

182 One of the arguments used by Morley against the proposed inquiry was that it would provoke 'all the mass of excitable barbarism that was lying ready to leap upon us, in ambush in India'. See ibid.

183 Some inkling of these is provided by a London correspondent of the Hindu, quoted in Indian Mirror, 12 December 1884.

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one of his regular dispatches from London, dated 14 March 1884, to the Calcutta Statesman, he explained that he had withdrawn his name from the executive committee of the Indian Reform Association, because he was convinced that it would 'degenerate into a boneless, purposeless, useless, and semi-defunct imposture like the East India Association'. And he warned S.N. Banerjea and his associates in Bengal, who were planning to send a delegation to Britain in order to agitate Indian questions in that country, to 'have nothing to do with what is called "influential support" in London. "Influential support" means the co-operation of a number of gentlemen who are either Members of Parliament or retired Anglo-Indians with large pensions, and the prefix "Sir" added to their names. Support of this kind is purchased at the cost of all aggressiveness and definite purpose in the Association which is encumbered with it. They would join an agency for the reform of the government of India, not for the purpose of aiding, but of impeding, choking, suffocating, and altogether suppressing every effort in that direction.' The Indian delegation when it arrived in this country should not, he said, 'haunt the lobbies of the House of Commons' or 'go in for the seductive hospitality of the National Liberal Club', but, instead, appeal to British 'Radicalism' and to the British 'nation', to whom the future of the empire belonged. And 'above all things', he insisted, 'it should pitch its claims high. It should claim, at once, for the people of India, the rights of perfect citizenship, representative government, control over the finances, and equality with Englishmen in public employ. The apparent height of such demands will attract the greater attention to them....'

Writing again a week later, 21 March 1884, Osborn took as his text the melancholy fact that John Slagg had been unable to move a resolution in the Commons for a parliamentary inquiry into the government of India because the House was counted out, and he reminded Indians of 'the great difficulty—the dead weight of indolence, ignorance and apathy—against which Indian reformers in this country have to fight a hopeless battle'. Despite the somewhat imposing spectacle which the House of Commons presented to an imaginative mind viewing it from afar, he remarked, nine-tenths of its members were 'duffers', who rarely troubled themselves about politics, domestic or foreign, and whose two chief objects were 'to keep their seats' and 'to make the most of their special position in the way of dining at good houses, and in getting access to the best society'. They were, therefore, afraid to do anything which might displease their constituents or party chiefs. Osborn maintained that all governments were 'the natural and implacable enemies of justice and of free inquiry'. In his view it was 'of vital importance that the educated and the energetic among the people of India should keep this steadily in mind. They have less than nothing to hope for from the Government or the India Office, or from Parliament taken as a whole. The weight of all these bodies will be dead against them. It is to the
people of England, in the broadest sense of the term, that they must make their appeal. Nothing for the good of India can be done by any one here in England until the people of India take the field in person.' Osborn went on to indicate more precisely the course of action which Indian nationalists might follow. 'What, it seems to me, should be done', he wrote, 'is like this. A representative and influential committee should be formed, say in Calcutta, which should draw up a definite programme of political reform, stating precisely and definitely the changes in the existing constitution of the Government which they desire. This programme should then be circulated to all the chief centres of political thought throughout India, and a sort of national vote taken upon it. In this way it would not, it seems to me, be difficult to obtain, in a short time, a scheme of political reform which had been accepted by the educated portion of the community throughout the whole of British India. It might be divided into two heads—reforms applicable to the whole of India, and reforms applicable to particular presidencies.' According to Osborn, 'the great advantage of the authoritative adoption of such a programme would be that it would enable Indian reformers in this country to co-operate directly with the people of India. They would not, as now, be compelled to stumble and grope about like men in the dark. Their attention would be directed to certain specified objects, and they would know to whom to apply for information. It would not be open to anti-reformers to pretend that there was no desire among the people of India for this or that particular change; that agitation was distasteful to their well-constituted minds; that all they wanted was to be allowed to worship the British bureaucracy in peace—with many other the like legends and fairy tales which they are in the habit of spreading abroad. At present, the state of affairs is this. There is no question of reform in India which awakens any general interest in this country, except those in which the lion's share of the advantage will be appropriated by Englishmen. Therefore it is that questions of railway extension always find a ready hearing, because whatever good India may derive from these, it is clear that Lancashire must derive a great deal more. For they have new markets opened up for their cotton and their piece-goods, without being called upon to pay one shilling of the costs. But questions which affect only the rights and privileges of natives—questions connected with the administration of justice, the distribution of public employments, the taxation and expenditure—cannot get a hearing at all, because it is directly the interest of no Englishman to listen to them. These questions constitute the battle which the people of India must fight out for themselves. They will find valuable and willing allies in this country, but the brunt of the battle will have to be borne by themselves. And the only way in which they can buy victory is by unanimity, perseverance, organization, and system.'

185 In his private letters to friends in India, Osborn harped on the same theme.

186 See, for example, Bengalee, 26 January, 5 April 1884; and Osborn to P. M. Menta, 18 April 1884, Mehta Papers.

187 Ibid., 11 April 1884.
He was by no means opposed to the idea of agitation on behalf of India in Britain. But he was convinced that it was futile to form an 'Indian party' in Britain, whether in Parliament or outside, composed of heterogeneous elements and without the backing of a well-articulated 'National party' in India itself. In his dispatch, dated 21 August 1885, to the Statesman, Osborn wrote: 'So far as my experience goes, I have found that this organizing an Indian party in Parliament, is like trying to make ropes out of sand. There is no difficulty in inducing a goodly roll of members to subscribe their names as belonging to an "Indian Party", but that having been done, no method has yet been discovered for holding the party together. There is nothing for it to do, except from time to time to ask questions of the Secretary of State for India, and a party cannot live upon questions alone, more especially when nothing is elicited by these questions, except the lies and prevarications elaborated for that special purpose, in that great manufactory of falsehood—the London India Office. ... An Indian Parliamentary party can only then become an efficient agency for the reform of Indian abuses, when it speaks and acts as the accredited representative of a National party in India itself. It is my profound conviction of this, which has induced me more than once to urge upon reformers in India the need to agree among themselves upon some definite programme of political reform. Were this once effected, an Indian party in the House of Commons would henceforth be furnished with a distinct and substantial ratio essendi ... until a National party is organized in India, which can state with authority what are the wishes and wants of the people, there is no appeal from the ipse dixit of Indian officialism. It can say precisely whatever it likes, because there is no non-official body in existence which can speak with a tithe part of its authority.... The leaders of the people in India must agree among themselves on what they want, before their friends in England can obtain it for them.'

The advice of a disinterested and sincere friend like Osborn could not fail to command a respectful hearing in India. But Osborn was, in fact, preaching to the converted. The need for organizing a 'National party' had been apparent to reflective Indians for a long time and the events in India since early 1883 had not only heavily underscored it, but also substantially aided in its fulfilment.

The most momentous measure of Ripon's viceroyalty in India was the so-called Ilbert Bill. It was neither a mine 'suddenly sprung ... on the European community' in India, nor did it deal with a question which came up 'in the most simple, ordinary, and prosaic course of Indian administration'. Indians, particularly those in Bengal, had for long been loudly complaining that the exemption of Europeans in the mofussil from the jurisdiction of local criminal courts encouraged them to behave like petty tyrants and commit crimes with virtual impunity. And the immediate cause of the bill was a representation to the Bengal government by

187 Statesman and Friend of India, 11 September 1885. See also Osborn's dispatch, dated 28 November 1885, in ibid., 22 December 1885.

188 The Times, 5 February 1883. Dispatch from the paper's Calcutta correspondent.

189 Northbrook, in a speech at Hull, 30 July 1884, reported in Indian Mirror, 24 August 1884.

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an Indian covenanted civilian, B. L. Gupta, early in 1882, when the Indian Criminal Procedure Code was undergoing a thorough revision, backed by strong private and public appeals to the viceroy, who had already established his reputation as a just, liberal and righteous ruler, for the removal of an anomaly, based clearly on race distinction, according to which an Indian member of the covenanted civil service could try European offenders in the presidency towns but not in the mofussil.

The introduction of the Ilbert Bill, seeking to empower Indian civilians of the rank of a district magistrate or a sessions judge to try European offenders in the mofussil as well as in the presidency towns, on 2 February 1883 was the signal for a 'white mutiny in India. The 'white mutiny' should have been foreseen, for whenever an attempt had been made in the past by the government to do away with the special privileges enjoyed by Europeans in India in the administration of justice, 'the British Lion, a vulgar brute, .. had wagged his tail and roared'.

Only seven years before Hobhouse had observed: 'As regards the principal subject on which the English and Native newspapers differ in form, there is no difference in spirit,—I mean the subject of class preferences. The English papers do not frequently attack the Government about it, because their own class is dominant. But let there be any attempt to treat classes with more even-handed justice than has been customary, and see what happens. Why, outcries and menaces, compared to which the complaints of the Native newspapers are gentle murmurs. In the Meares case, I forget whether it was one of the newspapers or one of the speakers at a public meeting in Calcutta who threatened that the European community would be in a state of rebellion if that plain act of justice was maintained. Whoever was guilty of that piece of folly, the language of the English newspapers was outrageously violent against the Jessore Magistrate, Mr. Justice Phear, and Sir Richard Couch, and threatened the Government with all sorts of disasters if it supported the sentence. In the Fuller case we are

190 Presidency magistrate, Calcutta; b. 1849; entered Indian civil service 1871; retired as judge of Calcutta high court 1907; in Baroda state service 1909-14; d. 1916.


192 See, for example, Bengalee, 11 February, 4 March 1882, and Hindoo Patriot, 20, 27 February, 6 March 1882.

193 Abstract of the Proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India... 1883, pp.35-44.

194 Minute by D. F. Carmichael, member of Madras governor's council, 15 May 1882, reproduced in C. 3512, p. 11.

195 In 1874 Gerald Meares, manager of a plantation in Jessore district, was sentenced to two months' imprisonment by a European magistrate for assaulting his Indian peon. The sentence was upheld by the Calcutta high court. See R. G. Sanyal, The Record of Criminal Cases, as between Europeans and Natives for the Last Hundred Years (1896), pp. 61-4.
now experiencing a manifestation of the same spirit, though in a milder form. According to English newspapers, our action is lawless, tyrannical, and foolish, and can only be accounted for by the union of gross ignorance with sinister motives. I believe that if we go further back into our history, e.g., to the Black Act, we shall find that the violence and folly of the Anglo-Indian Press upon any proposal to treat the European and Asiatic communities more nearly on an equality used to be greater than they are now.'\textsuperscript{196}

Ripon was neither ignorant of Anglo-Indian agitations in the past nor entirely unaware of the risk of provoking another in the future.\textsuperscript{197} He, therefore, proceeded very cautiously and slowly. In March 1882 J.M.Tagore had wanted to move an amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure Bill, then under discussion in the supreme legislative council, seeking to do away with the restrictions imposed on the powers of Indian magistrates in regard to European offenders in the mofussil, but he was dissuaded from doing so by Ripon, on the advice of his executive council, on the ground that it related to an extremely difficult and delicate question which the government of India needed more time to consider fully and in consultation with the home and local governments.\textsuperscript{198} Ripon took up the matter on the clear and strong recommendation of the Bengal government, under Ashley Eden, who had nothing sentimental or liberal about him.\textsuperscript{199} All local governments in India, excepting that of Coorg, and the secretary of state and his council in London approved of the proposed reform in principle. The bill which Ilbert introduced in the supreme legislative council on 2 February 1883 was extremely cautious and limited in scope. It did not go even as far as the government of India's abortive measures of 1849 and 1857 had proposed to do. Indians and European British were not to be equal in the eyes of the law. The latter would still retain their privileges of appeal and Habeas Corpus. Indian judges who could sentence their fellow countrymen to death would still have limited powers when trying European British subjects. The Ilbert Bill merely proposed a partial deprivation of the privileges of European British subjects.

\textsuperscript{196} C. 2040, pp. 39-40. At almost the same time Lytton wrote privately to John Morley: 'Our greatest danger in India is from the whites, who with far less justification for it, have all the arrogance of Jamaica Planters, or American Southerners, and, claiming absolute liberty to outrage in every way the feelings of a vast alien population, resent the slightest control on the part either of the Government at home, or the Government in India.' Lytton to Morley, 24 September 1876, Lytton Papers, MSS. Eur. E. 218/522/15.


\textsuperscript{198} Ibid. Also W. Stokes to Ripon, 8 February 1882, and Ripon to W. Stokes, 8 February 1882, Ripon Papers, B. P. 7/6, nos. 89, 74.. 

\textsuperscript{199} At the request of the then law member, Whitley Stokes, who was anxious to get the bill passed speedily as he was nearing his retirement, Eden had in February 1882 delayed forwarding Gupta's note to the viceroy and dissuaded Tagore from pressing his amendment on the assurance
that it would be taken up subsequently. See Eden to Ripon, 1 June 1883, Ripon Papers, B. P. 7/5, no. 63b, and Eden to G.H.P. Evans, 6 April 1883, enclosure in Ripon to Kimberley, 21 September 1883, ibid., B. P. 7/3, no. 67.

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And it was not advocating an unprecedented step. It was not depriving them of a privilege they had always enjoyed in India.200 Its immediate practical effect would have been to confer jurisdiction over European British subjects in the mofussil upon only two Indian members of the covenanted civil service—S. N. Tagore and R. C. Dutt201—and the number who would have risen to that position during the next few years might not have exceeded four or five.

The pride and prejudice of belonging to the dominant race, the contempt for Indians and 'white niggers', the unwillingness to part with a privilege they had long enjoyed and cherished, the threat to their wayward life in the mofussil, the fear that they might not get a fair trial at the hands of Indian magistrates, and the hostility to officials—all these might probably have sufficed to give rise to a violent agitation against the Ilbert Bill on the part of non-official Anglo-Indians, but what really swelled and sustained that agitation was the widespread feeling of disgust and discontent among Britons, both in India and at home, at Ripon's liberal and pro-Indian policies. It was this latter feeling which stirred and united non-official Anglo-Indians all over the country and secured for their agitation against the government of India the sympathy of the vast majority of British officials in India and of people at home.

In introducing a bill which was apparently so innocuous, which sought to remove a clearly unjustifiable anomaly, and which had the approval of the most eminent authorities in India and Britain, Ilbert and his colleagues in the government of India might well have thought that even if it caused 'the British Lion' to wag his tail and roar again, it would not rouse him to attack and overpower his keeper. But they failed to reckon with two things: first, the fact that as far as race privileges were concerned 'Englishmen in India were like the Bourbons and had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing since the days when they threatened to drown Macaulay in the Hooghly'202; and second, the intense and ever-increasing hostility of most Anglo-Indians to Ripon's policy of 'breathless benevolence'203 in India. The second proved to be a more decisive factor than the first in the Anglo-Indian explosion of 1883.

Most contemporary observers, whether critics or supporters of the Ilbert Bill, were agreed on this point. The Englishman wrote on 17 February 1883: '..the main ground of the alarm which Mr. Ilbert's Bill has caused...is to be found in the tendency of the times as exemplified in the Bill, much more than within the four corners of the Bill itself.... Every European not absolutely wanting in political foresight will feel that the present measure is but the thin end of the wedge, and that its insertion will but serve as the signal for bringing fresh


201 B. 1848; entered Indian civil service 1871; president of Indian National Congress 1899; in Baroda state service from 1904 until his death in 1909.
power to bear on the hammer destined ultimately to drive it home.'204 In a letter to The Times, 1 March 1883, J. Fitzjames Stephen205 remarked: '...much of the language lately held as to local government, education, and some other subjects has filled me, as to my knowledge it has filled others who are interested in India, with apprehension, and I do not in the least wonder that the Europeans in India see in the proposed change about criminal procedure a symptom, all the more formidable because in itself it is slight and utterly needless, of a determination to try to govern India upon principles inconsistent with the foundations on which British power rests.'206 The Calcutta correspondent of The Times cabled home on 4 March 1883: 'The immediate disturbing cause is the proposed amendment of the Criminal Procedure.... But behind this lies the deep-seated conviction that the Government, in its anxiety to do justice to the natives, is careless as to how much injustice it may do to the other races.'207 On 23 March 1883 James Gibbs communicated to Ripon the view of the bishop of Calcutta 'that the feeling, which has broken out lately so forcibly here, is not really caused by the Bill, but ... is the result of the measures taken during the past few years', and he himself added: 'The Bill was only the cat's paw for the chestnuts that had been burning on the stove for a long time... .'208 Writing in the October 1883 issue of the Nineteenth Century, Evelyn Baring remarked: 'The outcry against this Bill must, indeed, be regarded as the explosion at last of long pent-up discontent. The Criminal Jurisdiction Bill was the spark which fired the mine. Local Self-Government and some other acts of Lord Ripon's administration precipitated the explosion, as also did the fact that the Liberal party is in power in England. Anglo-Indian society is, generally speaking, Conservative.'209

A recent eminent historian of Ripon's viceroyalty is of the same view. By 1883, says S. Gopal, 'Ripon was intensely disliked by every section of the Anglo-Indian community.... Tension was mounting so steadily that an open conflict seemed inevitable. The situation was alive; it only awaited an occasion to which it could respond. What was needed was a casus belli powerful enough to knit together the various elements of Anglo-Indian opposition.'210 This, he thinks, was provided by the Ilbert Bill. It was not only the climax, symbol and proof of what most Anglo-Indians had come to believe was Ripon's policy, namely to 'put the native on the gadi', 211 it also raised a highly emotional issue which could, and ultimately did, unite in a common bond of sympathy all sections of the Anglo-Indian population who, for one reason or another, were dissatisfied with Ripon—opponents of the Liberal government at home, critics

202 Ripon to Kimberley, 24/26 February 1883, Ripon Papers, B. P. 7/3 no. 13.

203 Pioneer, 7 March 1883.

204 Englishman, 17 February 1883.

205 B. 1829; jurist; law member of viceroy's council 1869-72; judge of high court in England 1879-91 ;d. 1894.

206 The Times, 1 March 1883.

207 Ibid., 5 March 1883.
of the reversal of the 'forward policy' and of the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act, barristers and judges sore about the reduction in the salaries of the judges and the appointment of an Indian, R. C. Mitter, as chief justice, capitalists annoyed at official encouragement of indigenous manufactures, planters alarmed at the 'socialistic' tendencies of the proposed tenancy legislation in Bengal, Anglicans suspicious of the Roman Catholic viceroy's alleged designs to disestablish their church in India, Eurasians and 'poor whites' enraged at the 'Roorkee Resolution', and civilians disturbed at the implications of local self-government and the increase of Indians in the civil service.

The tocsin was sounded by the Calcutta correspondent of The Times, a barrister named J. C. Macgregor, who, on 4 February 1883, cabled home a highly tendentious dispatch on the Ilbert Bill. The Times published the dispatch on 5 February and also commented on it editorially. After criticizing the bill, as well as some other 'questionable' measures of Ripon's government, The Times editorial said: 'If Lord Ripon is resolved to clear Indian administration of every anomaly he can discover in it, the best thing he can do will be to pack up his trunks and come home at once. He is himself the greatest of anomalies, the head and front of the offence he is seeking to remove. English rule over India is an anomaly in itself, not in this or that point of detail, but in every point. We must accept it for what it is, or we must give it up altogether and leave India to the full enjoyment of the natural rights of man.'

By 6 February, while leading Anglo-Indian newspapers were still engaged in scanning the bill and the reasons advanced for its introduction by Ilbert, their London correspondents had furnished them with the substance of The Times editorial and also the views of 'the most experienced Anglo-Indians here [who] wholly condemn Mr. Ilbert's proposed reform of the Criminal Code, feeling distrust of Lord Ripon's various endeavours to please the native at any cost'. Thus encouraged by the news from home, Anglo-Indian newspapers proceeded to declare war on the bill and its authors.

A small group of Anglo-Indians in Calcutta, consisting of certain members

212 B. 1840; judge of Calcutta high court 1874-90; twice acted as chief justice; d. 1899.

213 On 10 June 1881 the government of India in the department of finance and commerce had adopted a resolution (no. 953) which said: 'Every effort should be made to supply the wants of Government by the purchase in the local market of articles of bona fide local manufactures.' Gazette of India, 11 June 1881, pp. 226-7.
According to the instructions of the secretary of state, the government of India adopted a resolution on 11 November 1882 (public works department, no. 1516-28G) which lowered the qualification for admission to the Thomason Civil Engineering College at Roorkee and declared only 'students of [pure] Asiatic descent' to be eligible in future for guaranteed appointments in the public works department. Supplement to Gazette of India, 18 November 1882, pp. 1694-6.

Receiver of Calcutta high court; also employed at the time as assistant secretary to Bengal government in legislative department.

The Times, 5 February 1883.

Pioneer, 7 February 1883; also Englishman, 1 February 1883; Times of India, 7 February 1883.

of the local bar, press and chamber of commerce, took the lead in organizing the movement against the Ilbert Bill. It put itself in communication with Anglo-Indian centres up and down the country and in Britain. It prevailed upon Ripon to postpone, against his better judgement, a discussion on the bill in the legislative council from 23 February to 9 March. By this clever move it gained sufficient time to organize a widespread agitation against the bill by misrepresenting its objects and likely effects and deprived Ripon of an early opportunity of controverting its misrepresentations. An angry and crowded meeting of Europeans and Eurasians was held in Calcutta on 28 February, at which speakers vied with one another in denouncing the bill and in abusing Indians to their hearts' content and the evident delight of their audience. The Calcutta correspondent of The Times hastened to inform 'top people' at home: 'No such excitement has been witnessed among the Europeans since the time of the

Similar protest meetings were later held in several other towns all over the country. Local committees were formed to raise money and memorialize the authorities in India and Britain against the bill. On 29 March the committee appointed by the Calcutta meeting of 28 February to conduct and co-ordinate the agitation against the bill flowered into the European and Anglo-Indian Defence Association 'to watch over and protect the interests and promote the welfare of the following classes of persons in India, namely, — Europeans of whatever nationality, Anglo-Indians, European British subjects not falling within either of these denominations, Americans, Armenians, Eurasians and others associated with Europeans by a community of sympathies and interests'. The prospectus of the Association alluded to the 'rapid increase in the numbers and importance of the European community' in India in recent years and emphasized the urgent need to counter 'the extraordinary development amongst the natives of associations having a political object' and 'the tendency of much recent legislation and administrative action to disregard the interests of the European community'.

For the next nine months the European and Anglo-Indian Defence Association carried on a ceaseless and virulent campaign against the Ilbert Bill. There was a spate of memorials and petitions. Anglo-Indian papers throughout the country, with very few exceptions, kept up their offensive. Some of them even discussed the possibility of a 'separation of India from England'
and a 'declaration of an Anglo-Indian republic'. In the summer of 1883 agents of the European and Anglo-Indian Defence Association travelled to Britain in order to mobilize support for their cause. To retired Anglo-Indians at home,

218 See Ripon to Ilbert, 18 February 1883, R.pon Papers B P 7/6 no 70 219 For the proceedings of the meeting, see Englishman, 1 March 1883. 220 The Times, 1 March 1883.

221 Englishman, 31 March 1883.

222 Ibid.

223 Sec, for example, Englishman. 3 May, 16 October 1883; and Pioneer. 13 October 1883.

leading 'a languid, lazy, somnolent life', the Ilbert Bill presented, as the World pointed out, 'one of those opportunities of fussy display which is their periodical delight'. 224 The Tories found in it a good stick with which to belabour the Liberal government. The leading Tory journals, such as The Times, the St. James's Gazette, the Saturday Review and the Quarterly Review, were extremely bitter in their attacks on Ripon and his policy. The bill was discussed in the House of Lords on 9 April and in the House of Commons on 22-3 August, though no vote was taken.225 Ripon believed that a regular debate on the Ilbert Bill in the House of Commons followed by a clear vote in its favour would strengthen his hand in India. It would have a sobering effect on Anglo-Indians and help in keeping his wavering colleagues straight.226 But on this point the home government refused to oblige him.227

On his return to Calcutta on 1 December 1883, after an absence of more than eight months, Ripon found that there had 'been no let-up in the Anglo-Indian fury in Bengal. In fact, indications were not wanting that the hostility of local Anglo-Indians to him personally had increased. The European and Anglo-Indian Defence Association was planning to stage another monster demonstration in Calcutta before the legislative council resumed discussion on the Ilbert Bill and, though Ripon was not aware of it, some of its wilder members were even conspiring to kidnap the viceroy and deport him to Britain.228 The extraordinary vehemence of Anglo-Indian opposition had already produced significant results. It had made Ripon and his colleagues in the government of India realize that they had committed 'a great mistake' in under-estimating 'the extent and bitterness of race feeling' among Anglo-Indians and look about for some decent way out of the difficult situation which had been created. It had forced local governments in India to have second thoughts about the wisdom of proceeding with the bill. It had encouraged the vast majority of Anglo-Indian civilians to favour openly a withdrawal or substantial modification of the proposed measure. It had embarrassed the home government and led it to desire a speedy settlement of the vexed question. The threat of a renewed Anglo-Indian demonstration in Calcutta, with its attendant risk of a riot and collision with Indians, and the probability of continued Anglo-Indian opposition to the operation of the bill when passed, made most members

224 Quoted in Pioneer, 3 September 1883.
of the viceroy's executive council develop cold feet and advocate a policy of appeasement of, if not capitulation to, the agitators. In such circumstances, Ripon, who was himself inclined to regard the bill as an irrelevance to his main work in India and eager for 'peace with honour', could do no better than accept the compromise formula worked out in late December 1883 by Sir Auckland Colvin, on behalf of the government of India, and G. H. P. Evans, on behalf of the European and Anglo-Indian Defence Association, which at least preserved the essential principle of the bill. Ripon was not lacking in courage; he was simply helpless and very conscious of his great responsibility as viceroy of India.

The Ilbert Bill, like Ripon's local self-government policy, raised the wider and more fundamental issue of the nature and purpose of British rule in India. Conservative Britons were extremely dogmatic and outspoken on this subject. The St. James's Gazette dittoed the remark of The Times, 5 February 1883, regarding the anomalous character of British rule over India and added: 'If it is fully admitted, as it must be by every one who is not afraid to recognize plain facts, that India can be governed by Englishmen only as a conquered country, that the good of the country as understood by its conquerors and not the wishes of its inhabitants must be the object of government, and that the very first condition of anything like stable government in India is the unflinching maintenance of English rule, it will follow that the privileges of the English who are resident there, and in particular their position in relation to the criminal law, are not anomalies at all, but are the incidents to their general position and natural consequences of the fundamental principles of the whole system.' The Daily Telegraph remarked: 'On the day when we surrender the rights and privileges of superior strength and ethnical rank in India we invite our own expulsion.' The Saturday Review wrote: 'England gained India by the strong hand; she holds India by the strong hand; and the majority of the English people have not shown the slightest intention of giving it up until some hand stronger than theirs turns them out. Englishmen are desirous of doing to India all the good that they can, but of doing that good as masters, not as guardians, still less as managing partners, least of all as stewards or substitutes ready to give up their position when it suits the rightful owner to take it. Anything therefore which derogates from
this position of mastery, which implies that the Englishman is not the superior of the Hindoo, that he is only his good

229 B. 1838; entered Indian civil service 1858; comptroller-general in Egypt 1880-2; financial adviser to the Khedive 1882-3; finance member in viceroy's council 1883-7; lieutenant-governor of North-Western Provinces 1887-92; d. 1908.

230 B. 1840; barrister of Calcutta high court; member of Indian legislative council 1877-99; d. 1902.

231 The compromise formula allowed an accused European British subject the right to claim a jury, at least half of whom were to be Europeans, when tried before either a European or an Indian sessions judge or district magistrate.

232 St. James's Gazette, 7 February 1883.

233 Daily Telegraph, 7 February 1883.

friend and agent, is inconsistent with the principles of British tenure of India.'234 In a letter to the The Times, J.F. Stephen said: '... it is impossible to imagine any policy more fearfully dangerous and more certain, in case of failure, to lead to results to which the Mutiny would be child's play than the policy of shifting the foundations on which the British Government of India rests. It is essentially an absolute Government, founded, not on consent, but on conquest. It does not represent the native principles of life or of government, and it can never do so until it represents heathenism and barbarism. It represents a belligerent civilization, and no anomaly can be so striking or so dangerous as its administration by men who, being at the head of a Government founded upon conquest, implying at every point the superiority of the conquering race, of their ideas, their institutions, their opinions, and their principles, and having no justification for its existence except that superiority, shrink from the open, uncompromising, straightforward assertion of it, seek to apologize for their own position, and refuse, from whatever cause, to uphold and support it.'235

On the wider and more fundamental issue of the nature and purpose of British rule in India raised by the Ilbert Bill, most British liberals in 1883 were far less dogmatic and outspoken than their conservative contemporaries or even their own mentors of the past. Men like Kimberley, Northbrook and Hartington defended the bill on grounds of administrative convenience, precedent, expediency and innocuousness. But, whether it was from lack of faith and courage, or from considerations of party politics at home and the effect likely to be produced in India, they avoided countering conservative doctrines and ideals with their own. Referring to the debate on India in the Lords on 9 April 1883, Hobhouse remarked: 'There seemed to me to be lacking on the Government side that bold assertion of the duty and necessity of governing India entirely in the interest of the Indians which has been made in former debates on the same topic.'236 'When I read ... the just and wise principles laid down in 1833 by Mr. Charles Grant, Macaulay, and
others,' wrote Ripon, 'I am ashamed of the timid and half-hearted manner in which so many Liberals of the present day speak on this subject.'237

There were, however, a few British liberals who did not fail to take the conservative bull by the horns. Ripon was filled with pain and shame at the behaviour of his fellow-countrymen who opposed the Ilbert Bill. He detected in their arguments 'the true ring of the old feeling of American slave-holders'.238 In numerous letters to his friends at home, he emphasized what was the real issue at stake in the controversy over the Ilbert Bill. According to him, it was simply this: 'are the words of the English Government for a long series of years,

234 Saturday Review, 3 March 1883.

235 The Times, 1 March 1883; see also Stephen, 'The Foundations of the Government of India', Nineteenth Century, October 1883, pp. 541-68.

236 Hobhouse to Ripon, 23 May 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/5, no. 57k.

237 Ripon to Hobhouse, 10 August 1883, ibid., no. 94.

238 Ripon to W. E. Forster, 26 March 1883, ibid, no. 36.

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the Queen's Proclamation, the reiterated declarations of Parliament, the despatches of successive Secretaries of State, to be regarded as realities to be acted upon and made good, or were they only meant to be pretty phrases intended as salves for the national conscience? I have treated them, and as long as I am here I shall continue to treat them, as solemn promises which we are bound to fulfil. To Fitzjames Stephen and his compeers such a policy is alike unintelligible and hateful; they believe in nothing but force; I believe force to be a necessary instrument of government; but the weakest of all the instruments which any ruler can employ, and one which, if he leans exclusively on it, will break under him at last and pierce his hand. There is no possibility of reconciling two such opposite theories of government as that which breathes in Stephen's letter and that to which the best thoughts and efforts of my life have been given. The battle between them must be fought out to the end; of the ultimate result I have no shadow of doubt, but it is impossible to say through what phases the contest may pass, or what may be the fate of individual combatants.'239 Again, in a letter to James Stansfeld,240 Ripon wrote: 'The true issue at stake in this controversy is not the Criminal Procedure Bill, which is of comparatively little importance, but the fundamental principles upon which the Government of India is to be conducted. Are we to follow the policy of those who have emancipated the Press, who have promoted the spread of education, and who have desired to see natives employed more and more largely in the administration of their own country and in the management of their own local affairs, or are we, abandoning the principles of Bentinck and Metcalfe and Canning and Lawrence, to regard our Indian subjects simply as "subject races" to be kept down and exploited (excuse the barbarism) for the benefit of a small number of English officials and English settlers? No question more clearly touching the honour of England and the character of
her rule could be raised, and there can be no doubt how you and I are bound, on the principles
which we have always professed, to answer it.241

In an article in the Contemporary Review of June 1883, Hobhouse wrote: 'The question raised ...
by the non-official English community [in India] and their abettors in England, is between two
methods of governing India. What goal shall we aim at? What ideal shall we set before our eyes?
"Our own supremacy", says one set of thinkers. "The welfare of the Indians", says another. This
difference of view underlies controversies, not only as to the employment of Natives, but as to
their education, as to the freedom of their press, and occasionally as to the treatment of
neighbouring States.' He pointed out 'that from the time when our position as Rulers of India
became thoroughly realized to the minds of Indian statesman, they have had the two theories of
government well in view; that men of great eminence have insisted on the nobler and more

generous principle of government for the welfare of the Indians; that the English Parliament has
always recognized that principle as its guide; that important steps have been taken in pursuance
of it; and that the wisdom of those steps has hitherto been justified by experience.' And he went
on to add: 'I am fully aware that an opponent will reply that of course he desires the welfare of
the Indians, but that their welfare depends on the maintenance of our supremacy. That, however,
is only another mode of stating the essential difference between the two schools of statesmen.
Those who put our supremacy in the foreground would not admit that it is for the welfare of the
Indians to attain such mental and political stature as would enable them to manage their own
affairs. Moreover, the statesmen of what I call the more generous school have their retort even on
the lower ground. Their contention is that nothing will bring our rule to a brief and disastrous end
so certainly as persistence in excluding the Natives from mental and political growth; and that
nothing is so likely to secure for our rule a long duration—and when the inevitable change
comes, an euthanasia—as a hearty endeavour to give them the best training we can.'242

At a public meeting held in London on 23 July 1883, under the auspices of the British India
Committee, in order to support Ripon's policy in India, Sir Wilfrid Lawson remarked that the
question which they were fighting out was, 'Is India to be governed on the principles of justice
and good government, or is India to be held by the sword?' India was won, he said, 'partly by
force and partly by fraud', but the only hope of its being held by Britons 'to the credit of
themselves and the happiness of the natives, was by the pursuit of a liberal and enlightened
policy.' He defined liberalism as being nothing more than acting on the maxim, 'Do unto others
as you would that others do unto you'. He took the Indian correspondent of The Times to
task for finding fault with a speech of S. N. Banerjea at a recent meeting in Calcutta in which the
latter had said that the ultimate goal of Indian aspirations was to achieve self-government and

parliamentary institutions.243 'What a position it was that when an intelligent Indian gentleman said that he looked forward to the time when his country should enjoy those free institutions and that system of parliamentary government of which England was so proud, the writer in a great English newspaper could denounce that man as uttering a most atrocious and dreadful doctrine.... He believed that that meeting to which the Times' correspondent referred was an indication of nothing bad, but rather was a bright spot in the political history of India. He did not believe in a sham Liberalism which desired that at home we should be independent and should carry reform bills and all that sort of thing, and which sent out soldiers and fleets to crush the wretched people of Egypt—to destroy their self-government in order that we might rob them more effectually. Let them not be Liberals of that sort. Let


243 See The Times, 23 July 1883.

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them be Liberals altogether—Liberals in England, Liberals in Egypt and Liberals in India.... Not many great, not many mighty, not many rich, not many noble supported the policy of Lord Ripon, but he never knew of good things that the great and the rich and the mighty and the noble did support.244 Speaking at the same meeting in London, Hodgson Pratt was reported to have said: 'The great doctrine of all our best Indian administrators had been gradually to prepare the people of India for self-government, and he trusted that the people of England would lift their voices in favour of equal rights, social and political, between the people of India and themselves.'245 At a meeting of working men held in Hammersmith on 23 September 1883, Dr. G. B. Clark remarked that the opposition to the Ilbert Bill was based on the same kind of prejudice which made the people of the West End of London deny social equality with themselves to the working men. Those who advanced the argument that the passing of the Ilbert Bill would harm British interests in India were, he said, 'thieves and brigands'. He wanted to see self-government in India. And he asserted that if the British could not govern India by the will and with the consent of the people of that country, they ought to clear out.246 The dispute over the Ilbert Bill was primarily between Britons, but it had little significant effect on the future course of British policy in India except, of course, to re-emphasize the old truth that the British government in India could not go against the feelings, or rule without the support, of the vast majority of Anglo-Indians. Its effect on the future course of Indian nationalism was far more significant. Speaking in the House of Commons on 23 August 1883, George Campbell advanced an ingenious argument in favour of not withdrawing the Ilbert Bill. He said that it would be 'an enormous evil' to yield to the European agitation against the bill 'on account of the example it would give the Natives of the advantage and power of agitation'. 'The educated Natives were', he added, 'very apt to follow the example which was set them in this matter. They familiarized themselves with our manners and with our literature, and hon. Members heard already of Native agitation being got up on the lines of our European agitations. Like the Irish, they might soon become ungovernable....'247 The same point was made in a cartoon in Punch, representing Ripon as a mahout driving an elephant (India), while a group of Anglo-Indians threatened him and molested him from the howdah, and having the caption: 'THE ANGLO-INDIAN MUTINY
(A BAD EXAMPLE TO THE ELEPHANT!). Other contemporary and latter-day writers on the subject have tended to take the same view and it has come to be generally believed that the success of the Anglo-Indian agitation against the Ilbert Bill was an object-lesson to Indians in the power of organized agitation

244 Time of India, 14 August 1883.

245 Ibid.

246 Bengalee, 27 October 1883.


248 Punch, 15 December 1883.

for political purposes, and that their reply to it was the foundation two years later of the Indian National Congress. In the main, this belief is right, but it is too simple-minded. In order to be able to ascertain precisely the ways in which the 'Anglo-Indian mutiny' of 1883 served as 'a bad example to the elephant', it is necessary to examine closely the reactions of Indians to the Ilbert Bill and to the Anglo-Indian agitation against it.

The introduction of the Ilbert Bill on 2 February 1883 was welcomed by the Indian press throughout the country, and particularly in Bengal, as an attempt, however partial and belated, to remove 'a disgraceful blot'249 on the Indian statute book and as affording another instance of Ripon's nobility and sense of justice. The Hindoo Patriot, whose editor obviously knew what had passed between Ripon and J. M. Tagore early in 1882, coupled its welcome of the bill with the disclosure that the viceroy had redeemed his 'promise' of a year ago.250 On the whole, the tone of the Indian press was one of gratitude rather than of exultation. Hume was substantially right when he wrote later that at the outset Indians appreciated the bill and were grateful for it, but did not attach any special importance to it, and that it was the violent outcry of non-official Anglo-Indians against it which made them regard it as a test case.251 The shameless exhibition of racial arrogance and bad manners on the part of Anglo-Indians which followed the introduction of the Ilbert Bill, especially at the notorious meeting held in Calcutta on 28 February 1883, shocked even Indians who had had long and painful experience of it, and they reacted to it swiftly and in no uncertain manner. Firmly and unanimously did the Indian press condemn the abusive tone of the speeches made at the Calcutta meeting. 'It is really encouraging', commented the Indian Mirror on 6 March 1883, 'to notice this consensus of opinion and unity of action among our countrymen.' 252

In organizing a strong and widespread agitation against the government in 1883, non-official Anglo-Indians were doing something which they had done time and time again in the past. Nor was there anything particularly "novel in the technique and style of their agitation against the Ilbert Bill. Only their attempt to establish a permanent political organization in order to protect and promote their interests, which took the form of the European and Anglo-Indian Defence
Association, might be regarded as being, to some extent, novel. But in this respect they were merely, and admittedly, imitating Indians, instead of setting any great example to them. The distinguishing features of the non-official Anglo-Indian agitation in 1883, when compared with similar agitations in the past, were: first, that it was directed as much against the Liberal government at home as against the government of India; secondly,

249 Indian Mirror, 8 February 1883. 250 Hindoo Patriot, 12 February 1883.


252 Indian Mirror, 6 March 1883.

253 See above, p. 342,

that it secured the sympathy and support of the vast majority of official Anglo-Indians; and thirdly, that it antagonized every section of the Indian population.

The efficiency and the unanimity which non-official Anglo-Indians displayed in their agitation against the Ilbert Bill undoubtedly impressed Indians. The Indian Mirror, for example, remarked on 10 March 1883: 'Look at the combination on all sides among our European fellow-subjects on this question—it would seem as if they were thinking with one mind, speaking with one tongue, and acting as one man. If we wish to be strong, we should try our utmost effort to bring about the same strong union of feelings and interest among the Native races.'254 The Tribune of Lahore referred on 24 March 1883 to the large sum of money raised by Anglo-Indian agitators to further their cause 'within such a short time' and added: 'This shows unity of action—a commodity which we greatly lack.... Yes, these agitators have set us an example in this respect which we would do well to remember and follow.'255

The Indian press deliberately exaggerated the significance of the Anglo-Indian example in order to sustain and strengthen the sentiment of unity which had already been created amongst Indians, not least by the violent and sweeping denunciation of the Indian people by Anglo-Indians. A wave of bitter resentment against their Anglo-Indian traducers had swept over the Indian community throughout the country, which did far more to unite Indians of all classes and regions than the example of the Anglo-Indian agitation against the Ilbert Bill. It is significant that in the very same leading article in which the Indian Mirror exhorted its readers to learn the lesson of unity from their Anglo-Indian adversaries, it also remarked: 'We are being abused on all sides in the foulest language. We should appreciate the degradation of our position, gather up our energies and cast off those failings of character which tend to hamper our efforts to become a nation instead of the congeries of races we are now.' And it went on to add: 'It is gratifying, however, to observe that this union, which formerly was entirely absent from among us, is slowly but surely, and we hope firmly, drawing all classes of people together from all parts of the Empire. While our European fellow-subjects are denouncing the government for the contemplated invasion of their rights, fancied or real, our countrymen from every Presidency and Province are denouncing the agitation and the spirit in which it is being carried on.'256 'As
soon as I heard the Bengalis abused, I left [the meeting]. There is no difference between Bengalis and Parsis. All are Indians.' So wrote the solitary Parsi visitor to Calcutta who had gone to the great European and Anglo-Indian meeting of 28 February 1883 in that city just 'to see the fun'. Both his gesture and his comment were symbolic of the reaction which had been produced among Indians by the vituperation

254 Indian Mirror, 10 March 1883.

255 Tribune, 24 March 1883.

256 Indian Mirror, 10 March 1883.

257 Indian Spectator, 11 March 1883; also letter of Dadabhoy Nusserwanji Kairawalla to the editor, Indian Mirror, 11 March 1883.

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and obloquy to which they had been subjected by Anglo-Indian agitators against the Ilbert Bill.

Long before the final outcome of the Anglo-Indian agitation against the Ilbert Bill was known, thoughtful Indians had begun to draw their own lessons from that agitation. The April 1883 issue of the Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, for example, carried an extremely well-written article on the subject. It pointed out how the Anglo-Indian agitation had 'dispelled many a fondly cherished illusion about the final end and the basis of alien domination, and exposed in the words of Lord Salisbury the utter hollowness of the sentimental jargon with which, on ordinary occasions, political hypocrisy seeks to delude the credulous victims of its exactions'. 'They that came to curse', it asserted, 'have, however, left us a legacy of involuntary blessings, which will not fail to draw closer the ties that bind together the great divisions of the Empire, and stimulate a healthier growth of the united Indian people in the ways of self-contained reliance and independence of character.' The article described how the opponents of the Ilbert Bill had 'shrunk from no assertion in their work of self-exaltation, and the disparagement of the people of India': they had dismissed the alleged equality before the law and the sacredness of national pledges as figments of soft-brained sentimentality; they had laid down the distinctive superiority of race as an axiomatic and incontrovertible fact; they had declared that British power in India rested solely on the unsheathed sword and that the people of India were unfit to be treated on any higher footing than that of children and slaves; they had pronounced the most talented of Indians unworthy to try the veriest loafer of white skin; they had impeached the Indian national character for veracity; they had questioned the purity of the women of India; and they had characterized the submissive loyalty of the Indian people as unnatural and a degrading badge of their lower type of humanity. 'The outraged nation', said the article, 'magnanimously resolved not to follow the dastardly example set to them, and strong in the justice of their cause, their leaders have, in constitutional gatherings held in all our great towns, raised the voice of calm and determined protest, and appealed from Phillip drunk to Phillip sober. These protests sound as the death-knell of the past iron age of slavish toadyism, and ring in the new year of awakened independence, which will spurn to be patted on the back by mock patrons, whose breath is fouled with the seven devils of their own old scriptures.'

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The article then proceeded to 'direct general attention to the inner springs and real significance of this recent agitation'. The first great lesson of the political turmoil of the past few months which we wish our people to lay to heart," it said, 'is that they should never cherish any more the fond day-dream that the Anglo-Indian community will ever make common cause with them in their struggle for higher power and privileges.' An overwhelming majority of

258 The Agitation in regard to the Native Magistrates Jurisdiction Bill', Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, April 1883, pp. 23-41.

259 Ibid., pp. 23-5,

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Anglo-Indians would always occupy the position of conservatives in India, whatever might be their political partisanship at home. Official and non-official Anglo-Indians were as a body bound by the very reason of their privileged position to resist all attempts to level up the Indian population and with them the time would never come when freedom and equality might safely be conceded to the latter. 'Any misunderstanding on this fundamental condition of our political life', it averred, 'can never fail to be attended with disaster and disappointment.' And it added: 'The educated minority of the native population, with their free Press, and their Associations unconsciously sympathized with by the mass of their countrymen, represent the soul of Indian Liberalism, and their strength lies in the justice of their claim. Arrayed against them are the mighty forces of the official hierarchy, supported by the non-official phalanx of their countrymen here, and the great reserve of power and prejudice stored in the large vested interests of their own mother country. These are the liberal and conservative forces at work in India, and between them there cannot be any genuine and permanent alliance. They must stand apart as opposite camps, between whom in the struggle for power there may be temporary truce, but no real community of thought and action.' Indians could never hope for or deserve success if they foolishly relied upon the personal magnanimity of those who ruled India. Every single measure of political emancipation in India had been the outcome, not of the willing co-operation of the Anglo-Indian oligarchy, but of national resistance, or of the higher imperial sense of the British people, due chiefly to the growth of the liberal and radical sentiments among them. Of course it would not do to count too much upon the strength of the self-denying restraints of these sentiments, but it would be folly to ignore them altogether. 'In both countries, the liberal sentiment as regards India will always be in the minority, and arrayed against it are the strongest forces of the world, all that constitutes the strength of brute force, vested interests, national pride, and religious bigotry. The struggle must be long and laborious, but the discipline is necessary and invaluable, and the length of time over which it is spread will be the source of its strength.'260

Another great lesson of the Anglo-Indian agitation against the Ilbert Bill, according to the article in the Quarterly Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, was 'that to talk of the urgent necessity of keeping India out of the whirlpool of party strife in England is but a snare and delusive mockery'. Anglo-Indian agitators had not hesitated to seek the support of the Tories at home for their cause. In fact, no question which was not taken up as a party cry could stir up and rivet public attention in Britain in a way to enforce a practical remedy. As the final arbitrament in Indian affairs rested with the British Parliament, Indians must move friendly M.P.s like Bright,
Fawcett and O'Donnell to put forth their strength and raise every large Indian question to the
status of a place on the party platform. It is true', said the article, 'the Liberal Government has
not always been liberal in its treatment of Indian questions, and we have at times obtained a fair
hearing for our wants from the Conservative party, but these exceptional occurrences should not
be allowed to blind us to the permanent conditions of our relations with England. For better or
for worse, our fortunes are wedded to the alliance with the liberal and radical minority of
Englishmen, who feel that the Empire is a trust, and not a free pasture ground of privilege and
monopoly.'261

The article also contained a few words of advice and warning for British statesmen. 'The aegis of
British protection', it said, 'is an acknowledged necessity [for India], and none feel its need with
greater emphasis than the leaders of native thought. But it is not as the representative of brute
force, but of the order and genius of equal law, that we bow down to this supreme necessity. The
argument of force, if it is resorted to as a justification for denying concessions in time,
necessarily weakens itself for want of sanction. It cannot, therefore, be in the true interests of the
Empire that the British rulers of the country should be allowed to isolate themselves in this
fashion. The iron hand must be concealed under the soft glove, and the sword sheathed in the
scabbard of wise policy.... There can be no question that a nation of 250 millions can never be
permanently held down by sheer force, and sooner or later in God's Providence, and under the
encouragement of British example and discipline, the people of this country must rise to the
status of a self-governed community, and learn to control their own affairs in subordinate
alliance with England. The transfer of power is inevitable, and the duty of statesmen is to
graduate it in a way to make the transfer natural and easy, so as to keep up the continuance of
national growth.'262

The role of Indians in the controversy over the Ubert Bill was, however, not merely that of
observant outsiders. What began as a duel between non-official Anglo-Indians and Ripon's
government soon developed into a regular triangular fight which involved Indians as well. The
Indian press throughout the country made it clearly known that educated Indians valued the
principle underlying the bill and would bitterly resent its abandonment. In Calcutta, where the
Anglo-Indian storm raged most fiercely, the younger Bengalis were sorely tempted to pay non-
official Anglo-Indians back in their own coin, but they were dissuaded from doing so by their
elders. Ripon himself advised local Indian leaders to observe restraint and moderation, and
particularly to avoid holding 'counter-meetings' in Calcutta. He was anxious that Indians should
not do anything which might add fuel to the Anglo-Indian fire.263

From his mountain retreat Hume watched the progress of the 'Anglo-Indian mutiny'. The 'hermit
of Simla'264 knew his fellow-countrymen in India and he

260 Ibid., pp. 25-6.

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261 Ibid., pp. 26-7.
had had personal experience of two similar 'mutinies', in 1849 and again in 1857. It must have been obvious to his trained and discerning eye that Indians, particularly those in Bengal, needed to organize themselves not only in self-defence, but also in order to be able to strengthen the hand of the viceroy, who was the principal target of the Anglo-Indian fury. On the morrow of the notorious Anglo-Indian meeting at Calcutta, Hume wrote a letter, addressed to the 'Graduates of the Calcutta University', in which he made an impassioned appeal to their sense of patriotism and public spirit and advised them to organize themselves into a compact and disciplined body with the object of promoting the mental, moral, social and political regeneration of their country. 'Constituting, as you do,' said Hume in his letter of 1 March 1883, 'a large body of the most highly educated Indians, you should, in the natural order of things, constitute also the most important source of all mental, moral, social, and political progress in India. Whether in the individual or the nation, all vital progress must spring from within, and it is to you, her most cultured and enlightened minds, her most favoured sons, that your country must look for the initiative. In vain may aliens, like myself, love India and her children, as well as the most loving of these; in vain may they, for her and their good, give time and trouble, money and thought; in vain may they struggle and sacrifice; they may assist with advice and suggestions; they may place their experience, abilities, and knowledge at the disposal of the workers, but they lack the essential of nationality, and the real work must be done by the people of the country themselves.' Individuals, however capable and well-meaning, were powerless singly. What was needed was union, organization and well-defined lines of action; and to secure these an association was required, formed and equipped with unusual care. Hume proposed that a commencement might be made with a body of fifty 'founders'. The details of the organization would have to be settled by the members themselves. But he made suggestions as to the personnel, discipline and working methods of the proposed association, laying special emphasis on its constitution being democratic and its members being free from personal ambitions. He went on to say: '...you are the salt of the land. And if amongst even you, the elite, fifty men cannot be found with sufficient power of self-sacrifice, sufficient love for and pride in their country, sufficient genuine and unselfish heartfelt patriotism to take the initiative, and if needs be, devote the rest of their lives to the Cause—then there is no hope for India. Her sons must and will remain humble and helpless instruments in the hands of foreign rulers, for "they would be free, themselves must strike the blow". And if even the leaders of thought are all either such poor creatures, or so selfishly wedded to personal concerns, that they dare not or will not strike a blow for their country's sake, then justly and rightly are they kept down and trampled on, for they deserve nothing better. Every nation secures precisely

265 It is probably not without significance that Hume's cousin, James Hume, with whom he stayed on his first arrival in Calcutta in 1849, incurred the wrath of Anglo-Indians for openly siding with Indians during the controversy over the 'Black Act' in 1849-50,
as good a government as it merits. If you, the picked men, the most highly educated of the
nation, cannot, scorning personal ease and selfish objects, make a resolute struggle to secure
greater freedom for yourselves and your country, a more impartial administration, a larger share
in the management of your own affairs, then we your friends are wrong, and our adversaries
right; then are Lord Ripon's noble aspirations for your good fruitless and visionary; then, at
present, at any rate, all hopes of progress are at an end, and India truly neither lacks nor deserves
any better government than she now enjoys. Only, if this be so, let us hear no more fractious,
peevish complaints that you are kept in leading strings, and treated like children, for you will
have proved yourselves such. Men know how to act.'266

In proposing the formation of a national association in India in his letter of 1 March 1883, Hume
had judged well the mood of the, Indian people, but not the hour. The year of the Anglo-Indian
mutiny was an ideal time for talking about the necessity of establishing a national association in
India, as Indians themselves were increasingly doing, but not for actually establishing one. For
had such an association been actually established in 1883, or for that matter at any other time
during the remainder of Ripon's viceroyalty, it would have gravely embarrassed the viceroy,
whose opponents would have at once denounced it as the direct and most reprehensible outcome
of his liberal policy. Hume had obviously written his letter without consulting the viceroy, who
was then in Calcutta. But he must have told him about it soon after the latter's arrival in Simla in
the third week of March 1883, and it is not improbable that the viceroy himself advised Hume to
wait for a more propitious time for launching his association. This may help to explain why the
realization of 'the old man's hope' was delayed until after Dufferin had replaced Ripon as viceroy
of India.

The contemporary press contains no allusion of any kind to Hume's letter of 1 March 1883. From
this it is reasonable to infer that the letter was treated as a confidential document and circulated
privately amongst the small circle of Hume's trusted friends only. We have also, unfortunately,
no means of knowing precisely the response which the letter evoked from those who were
acquainted with its contents. But two significant developments in Calcutta in March-April 1883
appear to have been, at least partly, inspired by it. The first was a joint memorial submitted to the
viceroy on 8 March 1883, thanking him for the Ilbert Bill, by six leading associations of
Calcutta. But he must have told him about it soon after the latter's arrival in Simla in
the third week of March 1883, and it is not improbable that the viceroy himself advised Hume to
wait for a more propitious time for launching his association. This may help to explain why the
realization of 'the old man's hope' was delayed until after Dufferin had replaced Ripon as viceroy
of India.

The second, and far
more significant, development was the formation in Calcutta in April 1883, in a very unobtrusive
manner, of a body called 'the United Indian Committee', 'for the purpose of concerting and taking
measures in this country and in Great


267 Indian Mirror, 9 March 1883. The associations concerned were: the British Indian
Association, the East Bengal Association, the Indian Association, the Mahomedan Literary
Society, the National Mahommedan Association, and the Vakils' Association.
Britain to apprise the people of Great Britain of the views and sentiments of Her Majesty's Indian-born subjects in regard to all matters of administration and legislation relating to India, with special reference to the Bill now before the Imperial Legislative Council of India for the amendment of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The prime mover and president of the Committee was W.C. Bonnerjee, a close friend of Hume who was later to preside over the first session of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay in December 1885. The United Indian Committee carried on its activities as unobtrusively as it had been formed and, until the disclosure made by the Bangabasi on 17 November 1883, the general public remained unaware of its existence and of the fact that it was really responsible for sending L.M. Ghose to Britain in May 1883 in order to counter the propaganda of the agents of the European and Anglo-Indian Defence Association in that country. In March next year the Committee blossomed into the Indian Union.

During the spring and summer of 1883 public meetings in support of the Ilbert Bill were held in many towns of India, of which the most significant was the one held in Bombay on 28 April. Ripon was so impressed by the proceedings of the Bombay meeting that he sent a report of them to his friends and colleagues in Britain for their perusal. 'Read it carefully', he wrote to Thomas Hughes, 'and contrast it with the [Anglo-Indian] meeting in the Calcutta Town Hall; and when you have got over the first feeling of shame at the comparison between our own countrymen and the Indians, ask yourself whether there could be a greater proof, not of the justice or of the wisdom, but of the absolute necessity of such a policy as that which I am pursuing. Here are men moderate in speech, restrained in temper, powerful in argument, capable of conducting a public meeting which will bear comparison with the best meetings at home; is it possible for any Government to keep such men for ever in leading strings under the "autocratic system" which Lytton admires so greatly, and with their necks bowed beneath the yoke of Branson and Pitt-Kennedy; and if it were possible, would it be righteous? We have made these men, Tyabjee, Mehta, Telang, what they are; it is we who have educated them in the Colleges and Universities which we have established; it is we who have inspired them with English ideas of freedom and of order; and are we to debar them from every outlet for the political aspirations which we have thus created, and for the public spirit which they have learnt from us; are we to declare such men as these unfit to try a single European or Eurasian under the strictest safeguards and the closest supervision? To the secretary of state, Kimberley, Ripon wrote: 'Nothing could be more moderate and courteous than the language of the speakers [at the Bombay meeting], affording in this respect a most marked contrast to the violence of Mr. Branson & Co. at Calcutta. But it is not merely on this

268 Bangabasi, quoted in Englishman, 15 December 1883; Indian Minor, 16 December 1883.

269 See below, p. 394.

270 For the proceedings of the meeting, see Times of India. 30 April 1883.

271 Ripon to Hughes, 7 May 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/5, no. 59.
account that I commend these speeches to your attention. It is because of the proof which they afford of the ability of the leading men among the natives, of their powers of argument, and of the means which they possess of influencing their countrymen for good or for evil. These are not men whom we can, if we would, treat as children who are not fit to be entrusted with the management even of their own local affairs, and who require, as Lytton asserts, to be directed at every step by our executive officers. To my mind it is the height of folly to forget, in our administration of India, that the best educated among the natives are men of this stamp, and that such men are increasing in number every day; growing in strength and influence by their own acts, by the education which we have given them, and by the intercourse with England, which is the result of our rule.... [They] are not likely to accept with contentment the position of members of "subject races" to be trampled upon at the sweet will of "conquering" Bransons and their admirers of the Calcutta Town Hall. I do not say that these men love us; it is not probable that they do so; but I do believe that they recognize that our rule is the best thing for India in her present state, and that, if they find that rule consistent with the satisfaction of their legitimate aspirations, we shall have them for our friends. But if, on the contrary, they should become convinced that, in spite of repeated declarations and very liberal phrases, it is our real intention to keep them in leading strings under the "autocratic system", of which Lytton is so enamoured, with no outlet for their natural ambition, or for the exercise of faculties which have been developed and trained in the Colleges which we have ourselves established, is it possible to doubt that they would use the powers, which they displayed so remarkably in the late meeting, to excite in the minds of the masses of their countrymen the discontent which they themselves would inevitably feel? ... unless we provide without delay some wider opening than at present exists for the employment in public positions and on public duties of the more educated natives, we shall find before many years are over that we have only been training up men to become our bitter and skilful enemies.' Ripon knew that Kimberley was at heart a conservative and that he was alarmed by his policy in India. He was, therefore, at pains to reassure him that, far from being dangerous or radical, his policy was 'the only safe thing' and the 'most truly conservative', for it aimed at supplying Indians 'with the means of practical political training', which would temper the political thoughts and aspirations given to them by education in the same manner as real work tempered a wild political theorist.272

The initial reaction of most Indians, particularly in Bengal, to the compromise over the Ilbert Bill was one of bitter disappointment and disillusionment. They felt that they had been let down by a weak viceroy. 'Peace with Dishonor', cried out the Hindoo Patriot.273 The Reis and Ray yet wrote: 'Verily it is a deed without a parallel—a shame without a name! . . . Was the reed so frail on which we leaned? ... the charm is dissolved, and we could almost exclaim, Frailty thy name is Ripon!'274 The prevailing mood of Indians, remarked the Amrita Bazar Patrika, 'is one of blank despair and deep sorrow. There is no gnashing of teeth and imprecation of curses, but mourning...
and weeping all over the land. The people lay their hands on their hearts, and feel as if they have been stabbed by their own father.’275 But it was not long before the more sedate and thoughtful Indians, notably those in Bombay, realized that in being hypercritical of the 'concordat' and Ripon their countrymen were only playing into the hands of Anglo-Indian malcontents and doing no good to themselves. They, therefore, urged their countrymen to think more of the future than of the past, to restrain their feelings, and to say and do nothing which might further impair the authority of the viceroy who was, after all, their best friend.276 Within a matter of weeks, if not days, the tone of the majority of the Indian press changed. Instead of weeping and mourning over the 'concordat' and censuring Ripon, it now began to talk of the undesirability of keeping the issue alive, of the 'beneficial results' of the recent Anglo-Indian agitation to the cause of Indian political progress, of the urgent need for greater national unity, organization and self-reliance, and of the immense debt of gratitude which Indians owed to a viceroy who had laboured so hard and risked so much for their sake. The conduct of the Indian leaders was highly appreciated by Ripon. He wrote to Hume on 23 February 1884: 'I shall always feel the strongest gratitude to the leaders of the Native community for the forbearance and confidence which they have displayed towards me on this occasion; but I am not vain enough to suppose that they have been actuated solely by feelings of personal attachment to me, and I see in the judicious course which they have pursued under very trying circumstances a proof of the political wisdom which fills me with great hopes for the future of India. The men who have guided Native opinion during the last two months have shown themselves to be politicians, as we understand the word in England, and if they only continue to act upon the same lines they will in a few years establish an influence at home, which no efforts on the Anglo-Indian party, official or non-official, will be able to control.’277

The 'judicious' and 'politician'-like conduct of the Indian leaders in regard to the 'concordat' was due partly to the exertions and advice of Hume, who had, ever since the autumn of 1882, been serving as a liaison between the viceroy and Indians. Throughout the period of the controversy over the Ilbert Bill, Hume 'worked like a slave' to organize Indian support for Ripon. It was he who master-minded the petitions for the extension of Ripon's term as viceroy,

274 Reis and Rayyet, 29 December 1883.

275 Amrita Bazar Patrika, 27 December 1883.

276 See, for example, M.M. Ghose to Mandlik, 25 December 1883, Mandlik to Mehta, 24, 29 December 1883, Malabari to Mehta 5 January 1884, Mehta Papers; Malabari to Naoroji, 26 December 1883, Naoroji Papers; and Telang to Ilbert, 24, 25, December 1883, 3 January 1884, Ilbert Papers, MSS. Eur. D. 594/18.

277 Ripon to Hume, 23 February 1884, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, no. 58.

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tranquillized the Indian press, reconciled the Indian leaders to any modifications which Ripon found necessary in his policy, and prompted the counter-demonstrations of goodwill for Ripon by Indians to rebut those in a contrary sense by Anglo-Indians.278 Hume had vigorously
opposed the 'concordat' and predicted hostile Indian reaction to it when in mid-December 1883 Ripon had privately sought his advice in the matter.279 Once, however, the 'concordat' was made and Ripon had explained to him the circumstances which had forced him to accept it, Hume not only reconciled himself to it, but also saw to it that Indians did the same.280 During the weeks immediately following the 'concordat', he wrote 'unceasingly' to his Indian friends throughout the country, soothing their bruised feelings, telling them how the viceroy had accepted the 'concordat' in 'the interests of the country' and 'with a sore heart', and exhorting them to behave prudently and not to lose their faith in Ripon.281

The Ilbert Bill crisis enabled Hume to establish himself at the head of a network of contacts extending throughout India. This was probably its most significant outcome. Already late 1883 and early 1884 Hume had begun to talk of 'the inner circle' and 'our party'.282 The network was consolidated during the months which followed and it played a prominent role in organizing the impressive farewell demonstrations in honour of Ripon. In 1885 Hume gave it the name of 'the Indian National Union'. It was the Indian National Union which convened the first Indian National Congress which met at Bombay in December 1885.

In August 1883 George Campbell described S. N. Banerjea as 'the most prominent man [in India] at the present time'.283 Banerjea had given evidence of his oratorical powers and patriotic feelings long before he was dismissed from the Indian civil service.284 His nation claimed him as soon as he was rejected by 'the heaven-born service'. Probably no other man did more to popularize the gospel of liberal nationalism in India in the last quarter of the nineteenth century than Banerjea. As a journalist, orator, teacher, municipal councillor, and political agitator, he had already made his mark in Indian public life when, in May 1883, the Calcutta high court invested him with the halo of martyrdom by sending him to prison for contempt of court.


281 Hume to Ripon, 14 January 1884, ibid., no. 16a; also Hume to Ripon, 11 January 1884, ibid., no. 13c.

282 Hume to Ripon, 22 November 1883, 4 March 1884, ibid., nos. 164a, 87a.


284 See speeches of S. N. Banerjea on various occasions reported in Madras Times, 6 November 1869, Friend of India, 31 August 1871, and Pioneer, 2 October 1871.
On 2 April 1883 Banerjea's paper, the Bengalee, carried a leaderette which referred to the fact that a 'young and raw' judge of the Calcutta high court, named J. F. Norris,285 had been behaving in a manner unbecoming of his position and denounced him particularly for his latest indecorum in having an idol of Shaligram (a Hindu deity) brought into the court room for identification. A month later Banerjea was charged with contempt of court and the case came up for hearing on 5 May before a full bench of the high court. On the advice of his counsel, W. C. Bonnerjee, the accused apologized and withdrew the reflections he had made on the conduct of the judge, but the court sentenced him to two months' imprisonment. Banerjea was the idol of young Indians and Norris had made himself extremely unpopular with all sections of the Indian community by his many other indiscretions in the past.286 Moreover, the feelings provoked by the Ilbert Bill were running high at the time. On the day of Banerjea's trial the court room and its environments swarmed with his numerous admirers and sympathizers. After the sentence was announced a section of the vast crowd, consisting mainly of students, gave vent to its anger by smashing the windows of the court room and pelting the police with stones. The Indian part of the city went into mourning and observed hartal.287

The news of Banerjea's imprisonment created a profound impression not only in Calcutta, but throughout India. There were demonstrations of sympathy for him of various kinds in all parts of the country, which were joined by people of all ages, classes and creeds. Probably never before in the history of India had the fate of a single individual been the object of such concern to so many throughout the land. The event bore striking testimony to the growth of a feeling of pan-Indian nationalism, to which Banerjea himself had contributed in no small degree. While some Anglo-Indians deliberately misrepresented the nature and significance of the demonstrations in favour of Banerjea in order to discredit Ripon, others were genuinely alarmed by them. The editor of the Englishman, J. W. Furrell, saw in them 'strong reasons for believing that we are on the eve of a crisis which will try the power of the British Government in a way in which it has not been tried since the Mutiny of 1857, if then, and which calls for prompt measures of precaution on the part of the authorities, civil and military'. He attached the 'most ominous significance' to the fact that the demonstrations had been joined 'by Sikhs, Mahomedans, and Jains, as well as by Hindus' and remarked: 'It shows the existence of a common motive, political rather than religious, to which all natives, irrespective of creed,

285 B. 1842; judge of Calcutta high court 1882-95; d. 1904.

286 Norris had earlier offended Indians by calling the ex-king of Avadh from the bench a caged animal' and then by telling the students of an Indian school that Indians were 'a set of liars and perjurers'. He had also made himself conspicuous by his opposition to the Ilbert Bill. See Ripon to Kimberley, 21 May 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/3, no. 42.


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are ready to respond.'288 On the day of Banerjea's release from prison, which happened to be the anniversary of American independence, the military authorities at Barrackpore took the
precaution of serving the soldiers with twenty rounds of ammunition each and with strict orders to march upon the railway station at a moment's notice.289

Thanks to the movement which led to the formation of the National Representative Committee in London, the Ilbert Bill crisis and the Banerjea contempt case, the idea of a national organization had already become the staple of discussion in the Indian press in the first half of 1883. Soon after his release from prison Banerjea took up enthusiastically a proposal which had lately become very popular, namely that for raising a 'national fund'. On 17 July 1883 a public meeting was held in Calcutta under the auspices of the Indian Association which was attended by about 10,000 people. The meeting adopted two resolutions. The first of these declared 'that a national fund should be raised with a view to secure the political advancement of the country by means of constitutional agitation in India and England and by other legitimate means; and that the other provinces be invited to join in the movement'. The second resolution requested the managing committee of the Indian Association to take all the steps necessary to give effect to the first resolution.290 Ten days later the managing committee of the Indian Association met and appointed the following as trustees to receive the fund: K.M. Banerji, A.M. Bose, Gurudas Banerji,291 Narendranath Sen, and S.N. Banerjea, secretary. The trustees issued an appeal setting forth the objects for which the fund could be used: 'the wider employment of our countrymen in all departments of the state ... ; the perfecting of the system of Local Self-Government; the gradual introduction of representative institutions in the government of this country; the maintenance of a permanent delegate in England; the better and more truthful representation of our views before the British public through the agency of the Press and public meetings; [and] the rendering of pecuniary help to committees already formed in England ... for the furtherance of Indian interests in that country'.292

With very few exceptions, Indian newspapers throughout the country enthusiastically approved of the project of a national fund. This in itself was a significant fact, as it indicated the existence of a widespread desire for greater unity on the part of the educated classes all over India. But those who approved of the project did not always endorse the manner in which it had been launched. There was a good deal of criticism of the Indian Association for its failure to secure the support of the other political associations in the country

288 Furrell to F.C. Barnes, private secretary to lieutenant-governor of Bengal, 12 May 1883, enclosure in R. Thompson to Ripon, 16 May 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6 no. 290.

289 S. N. Banerjea, op. cit., p. 84; Statesman and Friend of India, 7 July 1883; Ripon to D.M. Stewart, commander-in-chief of India, 11 July 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6 no. 8.

290 Bengalee, 21 July 1883.

291 B. 1844; lawyer: judge of Calcutta high court 1888-1904; first Indian vice-chancellor of Calcutta university 1890-2; d. 1918.

for the project and for its nomination of its own members as trustees of the fund. It was generally felt that a national fund needed a truly national organization to administer it and that the Indian Association was far from being such an organization.

The most downright opposition to the project of a national fund came from K. D. Pal, secretary of the British Indian Association and editor of the Hindoo Patriot. In two leading articles in his paper in August 1883, Pal challenged the very assumptions of those who favoured the project as a move in the direction of combined action. He maintained that, situated as India was, agitation on national lines was both impracticable and undesirable. There was no common basis for common action. The different communities and races in the country did not have the same wants and aspirations to fight for, and, therefore, they could not always act in a united body. Political agitation on local or 'federal' lines alone was practicable in India. Each province should have its local association or associations to agitate local questions and raise local funds for agitating such questions. Whenever questions of common interest arose these provincial associations should communicate with each other and take united action. A national fund would require a national council to manage it. But it was not feasible to get together such a council. 'The country is so vast,' wrote Pal, 'and the interests involved are so varied, that it is hopeless to form a Central Council, which will command general approval, which will meet regularly and carry on active work. Even the Government of India has not been able to constitute the Imperial Legislative Council on a broad imperial basis. It offers Rs. 10,000 travelling allowance to native members from distant parts of the country, and yet it cannot induce really able men, who live at a distance, to leave their own occupations and join the Council ... will it be practicable to assemble really representative men to join the National Council at Calcutta or any other centre, and take part in its proceedings? If this is not practicable, then the National Fund will not be administered by a National Council; it will be only in the hands of a clique or coterie.' Pal warned 'the shrieking and shouting portion' of his community that political agitation in a country ruled by foreigners required the greatest caution and moderation. Nothing should be done to create unrest in the minds of the people or to alienate the sympathy of the rulers. 'A permanent National Fund will be', he argued, 'a source of permanent menace to Government, and we are not strong enough to court the position of a Permanent Opposition to Government. Our political hopes and aspirations depend much upon the grace and goodwill of the Government, whether here or in England, and it is therefore of primary importance that we should so shape our action in matters of political agitation as not to cause embarrassment to Government, but to influence it in a quiet and reasonable way. We have hitherto gone on in this way, and have not proved unsuccessful. Why should we then have recourse to bluster and brag?'

293 Hindoo Patriot, 13, 27 August 1883.

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Pal was speaking for his generation and for his class which neither understood nor sympathized with the new aspirations and methods of the rising body of politically-conscious Indians. His dislike of the project of a national fund might have been increased by the fact that it was sponsored by the Indian Association, which had become a rival of the British Indian Association, of which he was himself secretary. But the rivalry between these two associations was in itself symbolic of the conflict between generations and classes in Bengal. The feeling of dislike and
jealousy which existed between the old Indian of the zamindar class and the new Indian of the professional class, particularly in Calcutta, is best exemplified by a letter which J.M. Tagore wrote to S.C. Bayley on 1 June 1883. Referring to those who had taken a leading part in organizing the recent demonstrations in favour of S. N. Banerjea in Calcutta, Tagore remarked: 'They have neither status nor stake in society, and to attain the one or the other or both, they resort to various kinds of agitations, social, religious, reformatory, and so on. They fancy that in these days of logomachy they will be able to carry everything by brass, and they do not scruple to take advantage of the ignorance and credulity of the people to spread all sorts of stories and rumours in order to obtain their ulterior ends. They are, for the most part, East Bengal men, joined in by some England-returned natives, who also hail from that part of the country. Many of them have seen something and read still more of the doings of the Irish agitators, and with a natural love of emulation and a highly ambitious mind, they would fain try their chance in the socialistic line to eke out, if possible, a living, or create a position for themselves by following in the footsteps of their European exemplars, especially as they know that in their attempt they have nothing to lose and most likely something to gain. They are naturally of a restless disposition, and take delight in hatching mischief, whether it be against Government, individual officer, or private persons of sufficient mark and eminence. When they convene public meetings, they fill them with schoolboys, and then exclaim that they have the public with them. They go to the ryots, pretend to be their friends, sow seeds of dissension between them and the zemindars, and thus set class against class.'

Bayley's comment on Tagore's letter is equally significant. 'It is worth noticing', he wrote, 'how strong the feeling of antagonism and contempt is between the older Hindus of good position, represented by the British Indian Association, and the younger and more noisy party, represented to a greater extent by Suren-dro Nath himself. I am afraid the power of influencing Bengali public opinion is slipping from the hands of the former, in spite of the strong and quasi-official support which Eden gave them at the expense of their rivals.' Ripon himself was fully aware of the growing alienation between generations and classes in India. He regarded it as a natural phenomenon which 'happens in every country' and age, and, while most Britons in India tended to favour the old-fashioned gentry in preference to the rising intelligentsia, his own sympathies lay with the latter.

The Indian Association's drive for a national fund did not yield more than Rs.20,000. But the prolonged and widespread debate in the press to which it gave rise was far more fruitful. Conflicting views were brought to a focus and the educated public was afforded an opportunity to consider and weigh the relative merits of the various proposals put forward for promoting combined political action in India. 'After a careful study of what our contemporaries have said
for the past few weeks', the editor of the Indian Spectator was convinced 'that all sections of the native community of India cannot entirely trust their destinies, and what is more, their moneys, to one local association', and that 'the only workable plan' of combined political action was that representatives of the different associations 'might meet once a year, this year at Calcutta, next at Madras, and so on, and arrange a programme annually, following which they might take combined action when necessary'.

The idea of an annual conference of representatives of the various associations in the country had engaged the attention of the Indian public for a long time. It had recently been revived in connexion with the project of a national fund, notably by the Hindu of Madras, which had written on 2 August 1883:'... the suggestion of the Indian Association to hold an annual conference of representatives from various parts of the country should be carried out. These annual conferences will have the invaluable effect of harmonizing local feelings, diffusing public spirit, and creating and consolidating native public opinion. Backward provinces will be stimulated into activity and those that are advanced will lend the benefit of their experience and knowledge.' Even a man like K.D. Pal was inclined to think that such annual conferences would 'be certainly valuable'. The Indian Association had already, in May 1882, resolved to hold a 'national congress' 'sometime next year' and it is not improbable that its initiative in the matter of a national fund was motivated, at least in part, by the desire to provide itself with the money required for carrying out its resolve. But the Association's initiative in the matter of a national fund had not redounded to its advantage. Not only had it failed to yield much money, it had even encountered opposition and led to the Association's credentials being questioned. Moreover, many pressing issues had claimed the attention

296 Bayley to Primrose, 5 June 1883, ibid.

297 Ripon to Kimberley, 23 July 1883, ibid., B.P. 7/3, no. 56.

298 Indian Spectator, 9 September 1883.

299 Hindu, 2 August 1883.

300 Hindoo Patriot, 13 August 1883.

301 See above, p. 318.

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of the Association during 1883. Nothing was, therefore, heard of its resolve to hold a 'national congress' until December of that year. A big international exhibition was scheduled to open in Calcutta on 4 December 1883 and it was expected that it would be visited by people from different parts of the country. This suggested to the editor of the Bengal Public Opinion the idea that the occasion might be used to hold a 'National Conference' to discuss the burning questions of the day. He publicly urged the Indian Association in November 1883 not to let the opportunity slip by to realize an object which it had 'for a long time been contemplating' and added: 'If invitations could be sent to the representative men of other presidencies to come and join the
Conference, that would, we believe, give them an additional incentive to pay us a visit this season.'303 Other Indian newspapers endorsed the suggestion of the Bengal Public Opinion and at last the leaders of the Indian Association, who were still pursuing the mirage of establishing their own association as the 'national organization' of India, fell in with it. On 15 December 1883 the secretary of the Indian Association, A. M. Bose, issued a circular letter to prominent public men and associations in all parts of the country which said: 'It is proposed to hold a conference sometime during the Christmas week, when it is expected that there will be a large number of visitors from different Provinces and stations in Calcutta, for the discussion of such questions of general importance as may be brought before it. The advantages of such a conference in giving a much-desired opportunity for interchange of views on the many questions which are now agitating the national mind, and for the settlement of a common programme of action in relation thereto, are too obvious to require any mention in this place. The dates provisionally fixed for the conference are the 29th and 30th of December. It is important that it should be as largely attended as possible, so as to secure a full representation of views. I have to ask you, therefore, in furtherance of this important object, to nominate for the conference from your [association/station] as many delegates as you wish, from amongst those who are already in Calcutta, or are likely to be here on the dates above mentioned. The favor of an early reply, giving the names of these gentlemen and their probable address in Calcutta, is requested. The Association will be happy to make arrangements for the accommodation of such of your delegates as may wish it during their stay in town.'304 At midday on 28 December 1883 'about one hundred persons' from various parts of India assembled in the Albert Hall, College Square, Calcutta, for the 'National Conference' convened by the Indian Association. After the singing of 'a national hymn ... by a man with a strong voice, who played also on an instrument of the guitar type', and the election of the veteran educationist Ramtanu Lahiri as chairman, the conference was formally opened by A. M. Bose with a speech of welcome in which he underlined the significance of the occasion and the need for holding similar conferences in the future. The first topic of discussion was the desirability of sending young Indians abroad for industrial education. The question of the civil service was then taken up, but before the discussion on it was concluded the conference was adjourned for the day. On 29 December the conference adopted a resolution demanding that the

302 The Sixth Annual Report of the Indian Association, 1882, issued in the summer of 1883, however, said (p. 5): 'The question of holding a national conference engaged a considerable share of the attention of the Committee during the year under report. There were, however, practical difficulties in the way of so great an experiment; and the conference could not be held. But it is hoped that sometime in the course of the approaching session, the first great conference of Indian delegates will be held. Such an experiment, if successful, would open a new chapter in the history of this country and would be the nucleus of new hopes and aspirations.' Also quoted in Homeward Mail, 7 August 1883.

303 Quoted in Hindu, 21 November 1883.

304 Bengalee, 22 December 1883. A copy of the circular is available in the Mehta Papers.
examination for the covenanted civil service should be held in India as well as in Britain and that
the maximum age for competing at the examination should be raised to twenty-two, and also that
appointments to the statutory civil service should be governed by an intellectual test. The law
and procedure of constructive contempt and the separation of the judicial from the executive
functions also formed the subjects of discussion on the second day. On the third and final day of
its meeting, 30 December, the conference adopted four resolutions: the first emphasized the
value of raising a national fund; the second urged the desirability of establishing 'representative
assemblies' in India 'in the interests of good government and the advancement of the people'; the
third demanded the repeal of the Arms Act; and the fourth expressed 'deep regret' at the recent
'concordat' over the Ilbert Bill.305

The conference was called in a perfunctory manner. It met at an awkward time when the public
mind was org occupied with the Ilbert Bill compromise. Despite the exaggerated claims of its
promoters, it was by no means a very representative or influential gathering. Of those who
attended its sittings, 'quite three parts' were Bengalis,306 mostly members or sympathizers of the
Calcutta Indian Association and its branches in northern India. Almost all the non-Bengalis who
were persuaded to take part in the conference just happened to be in Calcutta at the time for the
exhibition and, though they were persons of consequence, none of them is known to have
distinguished himself in national politics in later years. Even all sections of the Indian
community in Calcutta were not represented at the conference. The most notable absentees were
the leaders of the British Indian Association and the two Muslim organizations in Calcutta. But
the most important thing about the conference Was that it was held. Educated Indians, hailing
from more than forty-five different places in the country and belonging to various classes and
creeds, had met in an open conference for three days and they had discussed and decided upon
many questions.

305 For the proceedings of the conference, see Bengalee, 29 December 1883, 5 January 1884;
Indian Mirror, 29-30 December 1883, 3 January 1884; The Seventh Annual Report of the Indian
and Bagal, History of the Indian Association, pp. 64-6.

306 Blunt, op. cit., p. 118.

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of national interest. This in itself was an event of more than ordinary significance. For this reason
alone, if no other, the 'National Conference' of '1883 deserves to be called 'the precursor of the
Indian National Congress'307 and 'the first session of the Indian Parliament'.308

Before going out as viceroy to India Ripon had obtained from the home government 'the right ...
to dismiss yourself from office after a very short time, provided certain questions should have
been disposed of'.309 The questions which he was required to dispose of in India related
obviously to reversing the policy of his Tory predecessor, which Gladstone regarded as
'dishonouring to England'.310 But 'the great undoing process'311 took Ripon much longer time
than he had expected. Moreover, he became deeply interested in promoting local self-
government and the reform of the land-laws in the country, and he apparently began to relish his
immense and unprecedented popularity with Indians. By the end of 1882 Ripon seems to have
given up the idea of retiring from the viceroyalty long before his five-year term was over. But the
'Anglo-Indian mutiny' of 1883 came as a great shock to him and made him feel that he had
exhausted his usefulness in India. On 14 April 1883 he wrote confidentially to Northbrook that
he would 'very much like to be relieved in March next'. Besides the need for securing a Liberal
successor to himself, the state of his wife's health and his own longing to return home soon, he
said: 'There is also another reason for my going in 1884 which weighs much with me. I do not
think that it is possible that the breach between me and the Anglo-Indians will ever be healed;
everything that I do henceforth will be regarded with suspicion and misrepresented and resisted
by them; things which a new man could do with ease could only be done by me with great and
mischievous friction. During the rest of my time here I must proceed with a degree of caution
which will be harmful to the public interests and injurious to the policy which I have at
heart.'312 Northbrook approved of Ripon's decision to retire from the viceroyalty in March 1884,
but advised him not to announce it 'until you have settled the Criminal Procedure Bill'.313
Ripon, however, appears to have had second thoughts and decided to stay on in India until
almost the end of his term.

What probably weighed most with Ripon in deciding to remain longer at his post in India was his
desire to see the new system of local self-government in operation in all the provinces of India
and to make some fresh recompense to educated Indians for the regard and loyalty which they
continued to display

307 S. Gopal, The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon 1880-1884, p. 165.


309 Gladstone to Ripon, 17 April 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/5, no. 50a.

310 Quoted in S. Gopal, The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon 1880-1884, p. 1.

311 Gladstone to Ripon 13 March 1882, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/5, no. 43.

312 Ripon to Northbrook, 14 April 1883, ibid., no. 45a.

313 Northbrook to Ripon, 10 May 1883, ibid., no. 57e.

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for him even after their disappointment over the Ilbert Bill compromise, and of which he had
such striking proof during his visit to Madras in January-February 1884. Ripon attached the
greatest importance to his local self-government policy, of which the two cardinal principles, in
his view, were the extension of the elective system and the substitution of 'control from without
for control from within'. In May 1883 he had threatened to resign when the secretary of state, in
his dispatch on the local self-government bill for the Central Provinces, tried to challenge these
two principles.314 By his strenuous efforts Ripon was able to overcome the opposition of 'the
old fogies in the Indian Council'315 in Britain and of many high officials in India, and before he
left the country in December 1884 he had assured himself that his scheme of local self-government was, or would soon be, in actual operation almost throughout British India.

Immediately after the Ilbert Bill controversy had been settled, Ripon urged the secretary of state to take up 'at once' the question of the higher age-limit for the covenanted civil service examination, which had been pushed into the background by the excitement of the preceding year.316 Ripon himself favoured the Indian demand for the holding of the examination in India simultaneously with that in England, and in order to meet the objection that this would almost certainly result in a nearly exclusive selection of Bengalis and would be unacceptable to other provinces, he had in 1883 suggested that separate examinations be held in each province for the number of appointments allotted to the province.317 But Ripon knew full well that there was little chance of the home authorities agreeing to simultaneous examinations in England and in India. He, therefore, concentrated on getting the higher age-limit for the open competition in Britain raised. This was a question on which opinion at home was itself divided. Ripon felt 'very strongly about it'.318 The reduction of the higher age-limit to 19 had, as many eminent authorities testified, not resulted in the recruitment of better British candidates for the Indian civil service. It was extremely unfair to Indians, for it had effectually barred their entry into the service. The fear that a return to the higher age-limit which prevailed before 1876 would flood the service with Indians was, in his view, totally unfounded. Moreover, there were, as he told the secretary of state, 'very few subjects upon which the feeling among educated Natives is stronger or more unanimous'.319

Ripon might have as well argued with a lamppost. Kimberley's mind was absolutely closed on the subject. He had no love for the 'educated Baboo' and

314 Ripon to Kimberley, 21 May 1883, ibid., B.P. 7/3, no. 41.

315 Ripon to Hughes, 8 December 1882, ibid., B.P. 7/5, no. 138.

316 Ripon to Kimberley, 20 January 1884, ibid., B.P. 7/3, no. 4.

317 Memorandum by the Viceroy, dated 26th July 1883, urging reconsideration of present limit of age for admission to the Competitive Civil Service and proposed amendment of Rules for admission to the Statutory Civil Service', ibid., B.P. 7/6, no. 25.

318 Ripon to J. K. Cross, under-secretary for India, 3 April 1884, ibid., B.P. 7/3, no. 17.

319 Ripon to Kimberley, 4 April 1884, ibid., no. 18.

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he considered the higher age-limit of 19 to be vital for the maintenance of the 'predominance' and 'efficiency' of the British element in the Indian civil service, which was 'the backbone of the raj.320 But Ripon was 'a very persistent man',321 and he was convinced that the cause which he was espousing was both just and politic. Despite Kimberley's private and public dampers, therefore, Ripon kept up the fight and encouraged Indians to follow suit, not so much in the hope
of converting the secretary of state as of attracting the attention of Parliament. On 4 April 1884 he told Hume that Kimberley had taken an unfavourable view of the question of raising the maximum age at which the civil service examination might be sat. 'I shall continue', Ripon added, 'to do everything in my power to induce him to reconsider the matter, but he and his Council will mind the House of Commons much more than me. If the Natives really care about the question, they must now show it, and strengthen my hands by numerous and influential memorials couched in moderate language ....' Hume at once confidentially communicated Ripon's message, almost verbatim, to Dadabhai Naoroji and B. M. Malabari in Bombay, who as conductors of the Voice of India were in touch with every Indian publicist or public man of any consequence throughout the country, and urged them to see to it that there were 'as many memorials as possible, and one at least from every influential Association', for 'who can say when we may again get a Viceroy who thinks as we do in this matter and is anxious himself to get the required reform pushed through'. On 9 April 1884 Naoroji and Malabari addressed a printed circular, marked 'strictly private', to their trusted co-workers in other parts of India which, among other things, said: 'Lord Ripon will not be able, however anxious, to obtain the change [in the maximum age-limit for the civil service examination] unless the country, as a whole, moves in the matter. We appeal to you, therefore, to lose no time in getting every Association on your side to represent India's wishes to the authorities, each in its own words, temperately, but laying the greatest stress upon the necessity for this reform. Pray make the suggestion to your leading citizens at once. Never was there such pressing need for united action.' In order to lend weight to their appeal, Naoroji and Malabari appended to their circular the text of Hume's 'private and confidential' communication to them on the subject, carefully disguising its authorship. 'We quote overleaf,' said the circular, 'for your private information, the views of an honored English friend, who is in the best position to advise us, and whose advice we have always gratefully acted upon.'

320 Kimberley to Ripon, 4 April, 2 May 1884, ibid., nos. 19, 23.

321 So described by Lord Granville in a letter to Gladstone, 15 August 1884, quoted in S. Gopal, The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon 1880-1884, p. 225.

322 In a letter to Bright, 11 March 1884, Ripon wrote: '. . . I am becoming daily more and more convinced that it is to Parliament alone that we can look to secure that steady and sustained adoption of a truly liberal policy in regard to India.' Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/5, no. 16.

323 Ripon to Hume, 4 April 1884, ibid., B.P. 7/6, no. 120.

324 Indian Daily News, 12 May 1884.

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The editor of the Indian Daily News got hold of a copy of the printed circular issued by Naoroji and Malabari and published it in his paper on 12 May 1884. This gave rise to an animated discussion in the columns of Anglo-Indian newspapers, but, surprisingly enough, none of them could guess that the 'honored English friend' was Hume. There was 'a perfect conspiracy of silence' on the part of the Indian press in the matter. Hume blamed the leakage on 'some
treachery somewhere,' but was 'greatly pleased that though 10,000 people at least know that I am the writer, not a hint of this has yet found its way to the enemy'.326 Though trivia! in itself, the episode throws a flood of light on the role of Hume as the most important link between Ripon and Indians, on the working of the communications system which had grown up among leading Indians in different parts of the country, and on the ignorance of most Anglo-Indians about the facts of Indian political life.

While Indian leaders busied themselves in the summer of 1884 with getting up meetings and memorials demanding a raising of the age-limit for the civil service examination, Ripon and his council carried on a more comprehensive examination of the subject of the recruitment of Indians to the civil service. On 12 September 1884 the government of India sent home a dispatch which recommended, among other things, that the maximum age at which the examination for the covenanted civil service might be sat should be raised to twenty-one, that Arabic and Sanskrit should be on a par with Latin and Greek in the matter of marks in the examination, and that proved merit and intellectual capacity should be as much taken into account as high birth in the selection of Indians for the statutory civil service. The dispatch made little immediate impact on the home government, but it ultimately led to the appointment, in 1886, of a commission to inquire into the whole question of the employment of Indians in all branches of the public service.327

Ripon's persistence in the matter of the reform of the regulations governing the recruitment to the civil service was due not merely to his desire to reward educated Indians for their good conduct during the Ilbert Bill controversy, or even to his conviction that elementary justice and prudence demanded that the British government should employ educated Indians more widely in high positions. He was aware of the fact that, despite their attempt to put on a brave face in regard to it, educated Indians had been deeply shocked and disillusioned by the Ilbert Bill compromise. In March 1884 Hume had, in response to Ripon's query about 'the present state of Native feeling',328 informed him that 'the prevailing feeling throughout the country is one of sadness and dissatis-

325 Ibid., 24 May 1884.

326 Hume to Primrose, [? May 1884], Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. 43616, fos. 117-18.

327 The dispatch is reproduced in Correspondence between the Government of India and the Secretary of State for India, relating to the Age at which Candidates for the Civil Service of India Are Admitted for Competition in England, Parliamentary Papers, 1884-5, vol. I viii, C. 4580, pp. 14-17.

328 Ripon to Hume, 23 February 1884, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, no. 58.

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faction. There is no shade, I believe, of unkindly feeling towards yourself, no tinge yet of disloyalty; but there is a deep-seated growing belief that the existing form of government has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Formulated in words, the prevailing idea is this,
if with such a Viceroy things are to be thus, what hope is there for the future? It was this widespread feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction in India—'like a damp fog lying on the national mind, absolutely quiescent at the moment, but carrying in its murky folds the germs of a dangerous political epidemic'—which Ripon was so anxious to dispel by some bold and generous gesture. Hume had conveyed to Ripon the desire of Indians that the viceroy should 'shadow forth representative institutions as a future probability even more distinctly than you have ever done'. But Ripon was always anxious 'to be better rather than worse than my word'. He also feared that if he committed himself publicly on the subject of representative institutions for India he would be 'recalled by telegraph'. The raising of the higher age-limit for the civil service examination would have been the cheapest concession to make from the British point of view, but it would have appealed strongly to the imagination of educated Indians and gone a long way towards restoring their confidence in British statesmanship. Baulked in his desire to make this concession by the short-sightedness of Kimberley, Ripon let Indian leaders know of his continuing efforts on their behalf and encouraged them to strengthen his hand in a constitutional manner. He thus gave a healthy and purposeful direction to their feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction and sustained their confidence not only in himself, but also, to some extent, in British statesmanship. Already in the summer of 1884 Indian leaders were thinking of repeating the demonstrations which they had made in the preceding year, asking for a renewal of Ripon's term as viceroy. 'for this, if for no other purpose, that we may thus be enabled to express again how entirely unabated our confidence is in Lord Ripon and his Government'.

In the last week of June 1884 Ripon wrote to Kimberley and Gladstone that he would like to be relieved of his post in March next year, or if necessary even earlier, in order, among other things, to ensure that his successor was appointed by the present Liberal government at home. 'It seems to me to be of great importance', he said in his letter to Gladstone, 'that the appointment of the next Viceroy should not fall into the hands of the Tories, and I shall be ready heartily to acquiesce in any arrangement calculated to avoid the occurrence of such an evil. . . . Let me earnestly beg you to give me as successor a man of really liberal opinions. In the present condition of this country, a truly and broadly liberal policy is essential not only to the discharge of our duty as a nation, but to the security of our power as a government. The Jingo spirit, which was checked by Lytton's failures, has been excited again by the Russian occupation of Merv.'

329 Hume to Ripon, 4 March 1884, ibid., no. 87a,

330 Ibid.

331 Ibid.

332 Ripon to Hume, 13 March 1884, ibid., no. 85.


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firm in its saddle and anxious not to let Ripon pass the Bengal tenancy legislation in a hurry, decided that he should retire in December 1884 and chose Dufferin to succeed him.

The announcement early in September 1884 that Ripon would retire from the viceroyalty six months before his five-year term was over caused great grief to most Indians. Never before had they known a British viceroy who was so honest and high-minded and who sympathized so sincerely with their best aspirations, and they naturally wondered whether they would ever get the like of him again. By 'the addition of heart and conscience and conviction to the more ordinary qualities of successful statesmanship', Ripon had made himself 'the idol of the [Indian] people'. They had come to regard him as their true friend. During his viceroyalty they had almost forgotten that they were living under a foreign government. 'The man is righteousness personified—you were happy in calling him Lord Buddha', Malabari had written to Mehta in January 1884. Even during the dark days of their bitter disappointment over the Ilbert Bill compromise, Indians had not failed to remember that Ripon was 'the only Viceroy who has done some real service' to their country. The fact that both they and Ripon had a common enemy in 'the "Bismarckian" kind of Briton' had also served to draw them closer to each other. They knew full well that, despite his good intentions, Ripon had not been able to do very much for them, and some of them were extremely outspoken in their criticism of him. But even those Indians who accused him of lack of courage and of failing to live up to his professions conceded that he was unusually conscientious and that he had suffered much for their sake. The vast majority of thinking Indians, however, were inclined to judge him more by his intentions than by his achievements. They were mature enough to make due allowance for his difficult situation and to realize that constitutional rights were not gained without a prolonged struggle. They were not unduly impatient to arrive at their destination provided they were assured that they were travelling in the right direction. This assurance they had during Ripon's viceroyalty. Though sad at Ripon's decision to retire before the expiry of his term, they were quick to sense that he had acted in the best interests of their country. As the Indu Prakash wrote on 15 September 1884: 'Lord Ripon's early resignation appears to us to be

335 Ripon to Gladstone, 25 June 1884, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/5, no. 55.

336 Kimberley to Gladstone, 23 July 1884, Gladstone Papers, Add. MSS. 44228, fo. 144.

337 J. Stansfeld to Ripon, 8 March 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/5, no. 29.

338 Amrita Bazar Patrika, quoted in Indian Spectator, 14 September 1884.

339 B. M. Malabari to P. M. Mehta, 5 January 1884, Mehta Papers. For Mehta's speech describing Ripon as 'Lord Buddha', see Times of India, 29 August 1883.

340 V. N. Mandlik to P. M. Mehta, 25 December 1883, Mehta Papers.

341 The phrase quoted is Grant Duff's. See Grant Duff to Ripon, 2 April 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, no. 191.
for the good of India. His Excellency has ensured for the country a continuity of the policy which has distinguished him by ensuring the nomination of a Liberal to succeed him as Viceroy. Lord Dufferin may or may not go to the lengths to which Lord Ripon went and administer the Empire without entertaining imperial prejudices, but this much is certain that under him there will be less chance of any studied attempt being made to bring Lord Ripon's measures into discredit than under a Viceroy selected by Lord Salisbury.'342 This remarkably correct appreciation of Ripon's action made thinking Indians feel all the more grateful to him.

Immediately after the news of Ripon's resignation became known in India on 11 September 1884, the Indian press, particularly in Bombay, began canvassing the idea of 'a becoming, grand parting demonstration to the retiring Viceroy'.343 Whether this move was entirely spontaneous or inspired by 'wirepullers' like Hume, it is difficult to say. But there can be little doubt that the Anglo-Indian press unwittingly contributed a great deal to its success. The news of Ripon's resignation came at a time when the Anglo-Indian press had revived the demand for gagging the allegedly seditious Indian press. This made Indians feel that the vandals were already knocking at their gates. They began to look upon the departing viceroy not merely as a mahatma344 but as an embodiment of all those principles and policies which they valued and wanted to be continued in the administration of their country. Moreover, the Anglo-Indian press greeted the announcement of Ripon's impending retirement with a shout of exultation and relief. It eagerly seized upon the occasion to run down the man and his work in India. All this naturally annoyed Indians and encouraged them to give such a send-off to their benefactor as would 'silence the croakings of our opponents'.345

Ripon's last journey in India in November-December 1884 assumed the character of 'a triumphal march, such as India had never witnessed—a long procession, in which ... millions of people sang hosanna to their friend'.346 Cheering crowds and deputations greeted him at every stage of his progress from Simla to Calcutta and from Calcutta to Bombay. He was smothered with flowers, addresses and gifts. Anglo-Indians, with a few honourable exceptions, took no part in these demonstrations and even disparaged them. The Pioneer remarked that the viceroy was 'swimming over the country in floods of flattery'347 and the Calcutta correspondent of The Times described Ripon's last journey as 'the most mischievous act of his viceroyalty'.348

342 Indu Prakash, 15 September 1884.

343 The quotation is from Native Opinion, 14 September 1884.

344 The Indian Mirror, 10 December 1884, reported that a meeting held at Serampore had 'resolved to call His Excellency [Lord Ripon] Mahatma whenever uttering his name'. See also Bombay Punch, 24 March 1883, quoted in Indian Spectator, 1 April 1883.

345 Native Opinion, 14 September 1884.


347 Pioneer, 18 November 1884.
bay staged the most impressive demonstrations in honour of Ripon Calcutta was rather backward in making arrangements for the demonstration, because the British Indian Association withheld its support as a mark of protest against the proposed tenancy legislation. But the enthusiasm of its people more than made up for the abstention of a few wealthy zamindars. When the viceroy's special train arrived at Sealdah in the afternoon of 2 December, the station was literally 'dressed out' in a profusion of foliage and bunting. Ripon was received by a deputation of the local reception committee, headed by the Maharaja of Darbhanga. The entire route from the station to the Esplanade entrance of Government House was gaily decorated. The footpaths on either side were packed and every house-top had its swarming load of people. As Ripon drove along the crowd chanted 'Lord Ripon ki jai', waved banners and showered flowers on him. Women blew conches and scattered khoi, and scores of bands played music. 'Unprecedented' was the word most commonly used by the press to describe the demonstration in Calcutta on 2 December, in which over two lakhs of people, belonging to all sections of the Indian community, had taken part. 'We have been more than 37 years in India,' wrote Robert Knight in the Statesman on 3 December, 'and have seen many great ceremonial events during that time, but never anything like the demonstration of feeling made by the people of this city yesterday.' The spectacle was so moving that it drew tears from the eyes of many patriotic Indians. 'That there is a good deal of national life yet in us, was clearly observable from yesterday's proceedings,' commented the Indian Mirror. The demonstration in Bombay—from 18 to 20 December—was the result of long and careful planning. It was characterized by the utmost unanimity, enthusiasm and magnificence. No less than 154 addresses were presented to Ripon. These came not only from various parts of the western presidency, but also from Mysore and several districts of Madras. Even the priests of the Mumbadevi and Bhuleshwar temples joined in the 'Ripon puja'. Justice John Scott, in a letter to the Times of India of 22 December 1884, testified to the uniqueness and 'intense vitality' of the Bombay demonstration. The editor of the Indian Spectator found in it proof that his countrymen had 'now begun to express the national feeling' and 'could not but feel profoundly thankful that the day at last came for which we had hungered and thirsted so long'.

349 B. 1856; took a leading part in public affairs; member of Bengal legislative council 1880-2 and of Indian legislative council 1883-7; d. 1898.

350 Statesman and Friend of India, 3 December 1884.

351 Indian Mirror, 3 December 1884.

352 Ibid.

353 See The Public Meeting in Honour of Lord Ripon on His Retirement from the Viceroyalty and the Reception in Bombay (1884).
'Never before did a Viceroy leave India', wrote the Calcutta correspondent of The Times, 'with so many demonstrations of regret on the part of the natives and with so little regret on the part of his own countrymen.' But even before Ripon had left the shores of India the more reflective of his own countrymen had begun to realize that the extraordinary 'demonstrations of regret on the part of the natives' were no mere passing manifestation of 'oriental flattery', or the work of a few 'professional agitators', or the outcome of a desire to spite Anglo-Indians. In an article entitled 'If It Be Real—What Does It Mean?' and published in the Pioneer of 12 December 1884, Auckland Colvin maintained that, 'so far from being superficial, the demonstrations now being made throughout the country are significant of a profound change which for many years has been preparing itself, and which the incidents of Lord Ripon's administration, more particularly those connected with the passing of the Criminal Procedure Bill, have brought into the foreground'.

Peace, order, equitable laws and their rigorous application, the growth of commerce, the development of communications, education, freedom of discussion, and increased contact with the west had made their natural impact on a people 'of exceptional intelligence, of singular versatility, quick to perceive and profit by material advantages, orderly, imitative, and sagacious'. A society, securely bound and compressed together during the events of the first half of the century, had 'now entered into the possibility of a corporate life and continuous self-improvement and progress'. 'The dry bones in the open valley, "very dry" as they may have seemed to the eye, were about to be instinct with life.... Like the first flushings of dawn at the immediate advent of an eastern day, a glow of enlightenment, still tremulous and tentative, but growing ever warmer and warmer as the horizon clears before it, is visible throughout the land. 'India had progressed with amazing rapidity and, as John Strachey had remarked, 'the England of Queen Anne was hardly more different from the England of today, than the India of Lord Ellenborough from the India of Lord Ripon'. But, while the Indian mind had been marching on, eager and anxious to expand its own sphere of action, the English mind in India had been 'tempted to stand still, arrested by the contemplation of the fruits of its efforts in former times, and by the symmetry of the shrine, the pride of its own creation, in which it lingers to offer incense to its past successful labours'. Fresh to the scene and deeply interested in understanding and interpreting what was passing, Ripon was quick to perceive that a stage of progress had been reached in the country which was unrecognized by most Anglo-Indians. A policy of self-development, of local self-help, of educational extension, of recognizing and conceding a generous sympathy to the aspirations he saw everywhere about him, seemed to him the legitimate and irresistible outcome of the conditions which he diagnosed. It was because of this fact. Colvin concluded, 'that what others did not or would not recognize Lord Ripon ... admitted and allowed, that the native mind has shown itself so conscious
of his goodwill towards it; and on the occasion of his departure has exhibited the extraordinary enthusiasm which is making even the dullest sleeper turn uneasily on his pillow'.

Justice Scott asserted that it was not Ripon, the man, but Ripon, the representative of a policy, who had evoked the enthusiasm of the Indian people and their recent demonstrations had given a very significant reply to the comfortable Anglo-Indian theory that India was not, never had been, and never would be, one nation. 'India has proved herself capable of organization,' he wrote, 'and antagonistic communities have shown themselves capable of merging their antagonism in a common object when a great and fitting occasion arises.' In an article, significantly headed 'A New India', the London Spectator remarked: 'We hardly understand the Anglo-Indian who does not see that the uprising to do honour to Lord Ripon was at once a spontaneous movement and a momentous event.... That the directing classes of India are feeling a new impulse, and yearn for a more active life; that they fret under the assumption that they are not the equals of any race anywhere; and that they long for consolations to their pride, both political and social, is, in our judgement, almost past question.'

The success of the Ripon demonstrations in November-December 1884, which 'even exceeded all our expectations', and the attempts made by reflective Britons like Colvin and Scott to underscore their 'true meaning' brought untold joy to educated Indians. 'Through native editorial and pamphlet literature there ran a common motif, the note of triumphant vindication.' But the thought that was uppermost in the minds of the more responsible Indian leaders was how best to preserve and strengthen the spirit of unity and the power of organization which had been displayed during the recent demonstrations. It was spelt out most clearly by the Hindu of Madras. The late demonstrations, wrote the paper, were 'not merely the manifestation of our gratitude for the manifold benefits that the late Viceroy's administration has been the cause of; our more prominent object was to prove to the world the existence of a powerful native opinion which is capable of organization and which has acquired a consciousness of its importance and strength. ... How to secure this ground and improve upon it ought to be the problem that should occupy the most serious thought of our enlightened countrymen. We should not allow the effects of our first success in giving united and emphatic expression to public opinion to vanish. Men of light and leading amongst us must sedulously foster the first beginnings of national life and by keeping it sufficiently engaged lead their countrymen to fresh victories. They know that they have materials to work

358 Pioneer, 12 December 1884. Colvin had shown the article to Ripon before publication. See Colvin to Ripon, 4 December 1884, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/6, no. 294.

359 Letter by 'S' to the editor, Times of India, 22 December 1884.

360 Spectator, 10 January 1885.

361 Indian Mirror, 14 December 1884.
with and just as they found it possible to utilize them for a great object on one occasion, they can
do the same in future for other objects of equally great importance to the country.'363 It was this
desire on the part of Indian leaders that the 'engine which set the late Ripon demonstrations
going must not be stopped'364 which 'gave birth to the Indian National Congress a year later.

If is difficult to sum up the contribution of Ripon's viceroyalty to Indian national advancement.
The Native Opinion tried to do it in a leading article on 11 January 1885, which said: 'Of all the
benefits that have resulted to this country from the administration of Lord Ripon the unity of
thought and action, which has been produced or called into existence among the natives of this
country by the various conflicts and agitations that took place, is by far the most important Since
his administration a feeling of nationality has been infused into every corner of the empire and
India is no longer to be viewed as a mere geographical name having no corresponding national
existence.'365 Malabari had already made the same point in verse when he said of the departing
viceroy:

'Thou found'st us first a weak incoherent mass, But leav'st us now one compact nation strong.'366

362 McCully, op. cit., p. 362.

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CHAPTER SEVEN The Birth of the Indian National Congress

BEFORE RELINQUISHING THE viceroyalty Ripon recorded three notes, obviously for the
benefit of his successor. In the first of these notes he emphasized the extreme importance of the
government consulting the leaders of educated India in respect to public matters. He began by
quoting a passage from his own memorandum of December 1882 on the subject of local self-
government in which he had expressed the view that the British administration in India would be
shattered if it failed to adapt itself to the new-born spirit of progress in the country, and added
that though few British officials in India would contest that view, only a very small minority
would be inclined to allow it to exercise any practical influence upon their conduct. And the
cause of this was that British officials in India were as a rule administrators and not politicians.
The better they had administered their own districts or provinces the more profoundly were they convinced of the truth of the saying that that government 'which is best administered is best', and the more thoroughly did they in their hearts despise anyone who ventured to assert that government had higher aims than any which could be brought within the category of good administration', and that until those higher aims were steadily kept in view and attained in a tolerable degree, the best possible administration might only land them in signal political failure. Ripon reiterated his conviction that there was no problem more important, and few perhaps more difficult, than that of providing a field for the legitimate aspirations and ambitions of English-educated Indians, and the means whereby they might be made the friends and supporters of the British raj. The desire gradually to solve this problem was, he insisted, the keynote of much of the policy which he had pursued during his tenure of the office of viceroy. According to Ripon, 'the best men of the [English-educated] class are very good, and the body of them constitute a growing force in the country which it is mere folly to ignore and very dangerous to despise. European officers are not fond of them, because they have opinions of their own and are inclined and able to express them. Non-official Europeans dislike them because they are, as a rule, much better educated than themselves, and have wider thoughts and more cultivated minds than the rough planter of Behar or the unenlightened shopkeeper of Calcutta. But it is to these men that the future belongs, and unless we begin in good time to make them our friends and to win them to our side, we shall find before many years have passed that we have been preparing with ingenious perversity the instruments of our own confusion. I therefore strongly urge that these men should be consulted upon public questions, that their opinions should be listened to and weighed, and that it should be a constant object of solicitude to the Government to meet the just desires and to provide satisfaction for the natural ambitions of those who will become every day more and more the leaders of that public opinion, which, if it be still imperfect and immature, is increasing in strength and influence with each year of growing intercourse between India and Europe.'

In his second note Ripon countered the demand that had recently been made in certain Anglo-Indian circles, both official and non-official, for reviving the Vernacular Press Act. He recorded his opinion 'that any attempt to tescucitate the Vernacular Press Act in any shape would be inconsistent with the established policy of the British Government and a violation of the fundamental principles of our rule in India; that to deal upon one principle with the Vernacular Press and upon another with the Anglo-Indian Press would be grossly unjust and in the highest degree impolitic; and, finally, that there is nothing in the present state of things to afford the slightest ground for alarm, or to justify any action, either legislative, judicial, or executive, against any portion of the Press in India'. Ripon even challenged the popular Anglo-Indian theory that the offences of the Anglo-Indian press did less harm than those of the vernacular press. 'It is my firm conviction', he wrote, 'that more mischief is done by some of the Anglo-Indian newspapers in a week than is done in a year by all the Vernacular journals put together.'

In his third note Ripon asserted that the 'increasing number of Europeans in India constitutes one of the principal difficulties of Indian administration in the present day'. He referred to the principles laid down by the British government in 1833 when it removed the existing restriction
upon the free admission of Europeans into India, namely that 'no European' should enter the
country unless on the condition of being placed under the same laws and tribunals as the
Natives', and that 'no persons should go to India but in connection with the interests of the
Natives, nay in subserviency to the interests of the Natives'. But, said Ripon, the modern Anglo-
Indians took a totally opposite view of the matter. They held that their own interests ought to be
of paramount importance in the eyes of the government and that the people of India ought to be
rendered in all respects subservient to them. The "damned nigger" style of conversation is
general, any show of independence on the part of a Native is considered an offence, the longer
one lives in the country the more does one become convinced that minor assaults upon Natives
are very common and

1 Note by the Governor General, dated 10th September 1884, in favour of Government
consulting respectable Native Gentlemen in respect to public matters', Ripon Papers, B. 7/6, no.
86.

2 Note by the Viceroy, dated 6th October 1884, on the impolicy of reviving the Vernacular Press
Act', ibid., no. 114.

are not condemned by the opinion of "society"; and that even in the case of more grave offences
its sympathy is almost always with the European offender.' These things, Ripon averred,
doubtless were not new, but what rendered them of special importance at the present time was
that the extension of the Anglo-Indian press, the facilities for inter-communication, the
congregation of Europeans at hill stations, and similar other circumstances, all tended to give a
force to the opinion of the Anglo-Indian body which it did not formerly possess, and to cast the
minds of British youth who came out to India into the same uniform mould of Anglo-Indian
fashion. And hence arose 'another evil of really serious magnitude'. The members of the Civil
Service are rapidly losing the position of protectors of the Natives which they used to hold, and
are coming more and more under the influence of the narrow views and race prejudices which
pervade European society and find expression in the European Press. Last year gave us the
spectacle of men high up in the service who, having recorded an opinion in favour of the so-
called "Ilbert Bill" when first consulted about it, turned clean round when the storm of
opposition burst forth in Calcutta and Bengal, and recanted their opinions. There were, I am
happy to say. some men who stood gallantly to their colours, but even of them there was scarcely
one who came forward to denounce the detestable doctrines and unscrupulous proceedings of the
Anglo-Indian party.' The policy of successive British governments in favour of an increased
employment of Indians in the public service was, in Ripon's view, most strongly resented by
Anglo-Indians, 'who had sons and nephews whom they wanted to provide for', and they wanted
its reversal. He went on to recommend 'a policy of watchfulness and resistance' in regard to
Anglo-Indians. 'I would yield nothing to Anglo-Indian demands,' he wrote, 'and I would put
down firmly and steadily every high-handed proceeding on the part of Europeans of any class. It
is of the first importance, from a political point of view, to prove to the Natives that the
Government does not share in the smallest degree the arrogant pretensions of the noisy bullies
who talk at Defence Association meetings and write in the columns of the English-man or the
Indian Daily News, and the safest and most effectual way of doing this to ignore the clamours or
these men and to proclaim and to act upon, on all suitable occasions, the principles which ... were laid down in 1833 by the Government which first threw India open to Europeans without restriction.' But what was more important, Ripon maintained, was the need to make British civil servants in India realize that the protection and advancement of Indians was their first duty.3

Ripon's views on the increased difficulties of governing India due to the rising number of Britons in the country, and to their hostility to the advancement of Indians, were by no means unique. In 1883 Hobhouse had written to Ripon expressing his grave apprehension that a situation might arise in India, similar

3 Note by the Viceroy, dated 16 October 1884, on increased difficulties of governing India due to increase in number of Europeans in India, and to their hostile attitude in consequence of the increased employment of Natives in the public service', ibid., no. 129.

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to that in Ireland, where 'the small English community get the ear of their countrymen to the exclusion of the enormous mass of the real owners of the country'. The best chance of averting such a catastrophe, Hobhouse had indicated, was 'that the educated Natives may form a sufficiently compact and intelligent body to exercise political pressure, and to make their views heard, and to advocate reasonable principles of Government. Only so shall we get that constant vigilance and effort which is necessary to counteract the constant pressure on the part of the dominant class.'4

There is no definite evidence available to suggest that before his departure from India Ripon encouraged Hume to organize educated Indians into a compact body in order to counteract the baneful influence of Anglo-Indians. In view, however, of Ripon's constant endeavours throughout his viceroyalty 'to strengthen the influence of public opinion in this country',5 his strong antipathy to 'the Anglo-Indian party', and his extremely friendly relations with Hume, the possibility of such an encouragement cannot entirely be ruled out. But whether or not Ripon was the real inspirer of the Indian National Congress, there can be little doubt that both in its origin and objectives, it bore unmistakably the impress of his ideas and of the events of his viceroyalty.

While Ripon was preparing to leave India in late 1884, Hume was busy maturing his plans for consolidating the network of contacts he had built up during the past few years and transforming it into the nucleus of a national party'. This is confirmed by the following extract from a letter which Hume wrote to the secretary of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, S. H. Chiplonkar, on 16 November 1884: 'I am very sorry to learn that you did not get any letter embodying my ideas about "linking in". They were the result of a good deal of thought and though I have talked the matter over with a good many men I wrote to you first as the leading Sabha in India. I have not now the time to write the whole thing out again but this is of less consequence because I hope to talk the whole matter over with you next month. I may tell you in strict confidence that Lord Ripon has made a point of my coming down to meet him at Bombay. Tho' he knows Lord Dufferin well and tho' the latter's letters to him since his appointment seem to promise well for the National Cause yet we cannot feel any surety as to the line he is likely to pursue until Lord Ripon has thoroughly discussed the situation with him. This he will do at Calcutta and he will
then communicate the results to me at Bombay. ... I propose to make a little private tour—having made the personal acquaintance of all the earnest men in Bombay and having discussed the situation with them—I propose to come on to Poona and do the same to you. Then go on to Madras, Calcutta, Patna (perhaps Dacca), Benares, Allahabad, Agra, Delhi, Amritsar and Lahore—possibly also Lucknow and some other places. I want to make a practical effort towards that "linking in" which has now become a matter of vital importance to us.6

Early in December 1884 Hume arrived in Bombay, apparently to bid farewell to Ripon, and stayed there for about three months. During his stay in Bombay Hume discussed with the leaders of the western presidency the programme of political action to be adopted by educated India. It was no coincidence that Hume chose first to take the leaders of the western presidency into his confidence. The latter had during the last couple of years shown a political maturity which had impressed friendly British observers. While leaving India in August 1883 Baring had openly remarked that he had learnt to regard the public opinion of Bombay 'as expressive of perhaps the best type of political thought in India'.7 In his private correspondence with colleagues at home, Ripon repeatedly expressed the view that the 'intelligent Natives of the Bombay Presidency are the best men in India'.8 He was full of praise for Bombay leaders such as V. N. Mandlik, P. Mr Mehta, K. T. Telang, B Tyabji and J. U. Yajrik9 and he recognized in the Poona Sarvajamk Sabha 'an influential body guided by intelligent men'.10 Whether or not Hume was influenced by the views of Baring and Ripon, there are indications that from the end of 1883 onwards he had begun to rely more upon the Indian leaders of Bombay than upon those of Calcutta in order to mobilize support for Ripon's policies. Probably he had himself come to realize what the Indian Spectator had pointed out in September 3 that Bombay had three advantages over Calcutta: its public life was less bedevilled by factionalism; its leaders had broader views on national matters; and its Anglo-Indians were, generally speaking, better behaved.12 He must have been impressed, as so many others were, by the leading role that Bombay had played in persuading the country not to embarrass the viceroy over the Ilbert Bill compromise and in organizing the farewell demonstrations in honour of Ripon. It seems that Hume travelled to Bombay in December 1884 with the definite object of making it the centre of the political movement which he proposed to launch in India.

The subjects which Hume discussed with Indian leaders while in Bombay were: the holding of an annual conference of representative men from all parts of India; the organization of a central 'national association' to direct political activity throughout the country; the preparation of a charter of Indian demands

6 Hume to Chiponkar, 16 November 1884, Chiponkar Papers.
to be presented to Parliament; the establishment of a 'telegraphic agency' to dispatch news to the British press giving India's point of view and countering the misrepresentations of Anglo-Indians, particularly those of the Calcutta correspondent of The Times; and the formation of an 'Indian party' in Parliament. Most of these subjects had acquired prominence during the viceroyalty of Ripon and were; currently being debated in the Indian press. Hume must have had numerous private meetings with Indian leaders during his prolonged stay in Bombay, but we have information only about one such meeting whose proceedings were leaked to the press. It was held at the bungalow of Wordsworth in Breach Candy on 19 January 1885 and was attended, among others, by Hume, Wedderburn, Dadabhai Naoroji, M. G. Ranade, N. Fardunji, R.M. Sayani13 D. E. Wacha,14 Malabari, Mehta and Telang. The meeting appointed a 'central committee', consisting of Mehta, Naoroji, Telang and Tyabji, for collecting and transmitting information telegraphically to one of the London dailies. Other towns of India were to be associated with the project and asked to contribute towards its cost, which was estimated to be 'about Rs. 12,000 a year'. The meeting also resolved to start a National Indian Association' in order to carry on a systematic agitation for the removal of Indian grievances.15 Bombay's rather sudden rise to prominence in national politics in the early 1880s was due chiefly to the leadership provided by the famous 'legal trio', Mehta, Telang and Tyabji. Being men of great talents and representing the three main communities of the town, these so-called 'brothers in law' imparted a new dynamism to the public life of Bombay. But Bombay did not yet have a political association 'worthy of its greatness'. The old Bombay Association had long since been dead and even the local branch of the East India Association existed in name only. The educated men of Bombay had long felt ashamed of the fact that their town had no well-organized political association like those of Calcutta and Poona. This feeling of shame had been heightened by the growth of political associations in all parts of the country in recent years, notably by the organization of the Prajñāhitavardhak Sabha at Surat (1882), the Sind Sabha at Karachi (1883) and the Mahajana Sabha at Madras (1884). When during the vice-royalty of Ripon the public men of Bombay
needed to memorialize the government on important subjects such as local self-government, the Ilbert Bill and the raising of the maximum age for the covenanted civil service examination, they had used the cover of the local branch of the East India Association. This, however, was generally recognized to be an inadequate and temporary arrangement. Ever since 1882 the local press had been discussing the desirability of

13 B. 1847; attorney of Bombay high court; member of Bombay legislative council 1888-90 and of Indian legislative council 1896-8; president of Indian National Congress 1896; d. 1902.

14 B. 1844; businessman, journalist and politician; joint general secretary of Indian National Congress 1895-1907; general secretary of Congress 1908-13; president of Congress 1901; d. 1936.

15 For the proceedings of the meeting, see Times of India, 20 January 1885. On the leakage, see Indian Spectator, 25 January 1885, and Malabari to Dadabhai Naoroji, 26 January 1885, Naoroji Papers.

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reviving the Bombay Association. But Mehta, Telang and Tyabji appear to have been anxious to establish a new association. Probably they desired to make a clean sweep of the past and to have an organization which they could themselves run as they liked.

Aided perhaps by the presence of Hume in town, Mehta, Telang and Tyabji had by January 1885 assured themselves of adequate pecuniary and popular support for a new political association in Bombay. It was launched at a public meeting held in the hall of the Framji Cowasji Institute on 31 January. Its avowed object was 'the promotion and advocacy of the public interests of this country'. Speakers at the public meeting and informed commentators in the press were at pains to emphasize that the new organization was to be 'a truly national' and 'the leading political Association of India'.16 Though, for reasons which can only be surmised, it eventually came to be called the Bombay Presidency Association, and not, as originally proposed, the 'National Indian Association', there can be little doubt that it was meant to be something more than a mere local or provincial body.

Early in February 1885 the Indu Prakash of Bombay carried two articles dealing with the growth of new political life in Bombay and Poona. In these articles, the author, who was given the pseudonym 'A Political Rishi', pointed out how recent events had magnified the importance of Bombay and made it occupy the position which Calcutta had held until five years ago as the leader of political India. But, he warned, the leadership which Bombay had so suddenly acquired might prove temporary. Though there were many circumstances in Bombay's favour, he said, the day might come when Poona might put it into the shade. 'Mind you, "the race is neither to the swift nor to the strong". Like the tortoise in the story, the capital of the Deccan is quietly but steadily moving on. It is perhaps progressing slowly; but the progress of the last decade is remarkable, and so much has been accomplished during that period that I should not be surprised to see Poona one of these days taking the highest rank in political activity and dictating terms to the rest of India much in the same way that Bombay has been doing of late.' Bombay's greatest
weakness, according to the 'Political Rishi', was that it disliked the drudgery and routine of quiet and steady political work. It did not move unless some big question was on the tapis. When it moved, it put forth all its energy. But once the humdrum of ordinary life was again on it, it retired into obscurity. Strangers who appreciated its political activity from afar would be surprised at its life in a period of calm. If a visitor desired to meet the leading men of Bombay he could not find them at any one place. He would have to move from one end of the city to another and to pursue each leading man in his house or office. Only when the political wind was blowing high did 'the scattered leaders' meet. 'Political work, like all other work,' remarked the 'Political Rishi', 'done by fits and starts cannot always be fruitful. Rather, give me the plodding and active politician.'

16 Times of India, 2 February 1885,

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of Poona, who is always at his post, working "unhasting and unresting", no matter how slight the occasion, and, like the proverbial Scotch, showing "how the impossible is possible", in preference to the public man of Bombay who cannot work except under excitement. 'He expressed the hope that the new political association in Bombay would remedy this particular defect, but he referred to the current desire of its leaders to start at once a daily newspaper in English and warned them against trying to do too many things at the same time. Another great defect of Bombay, according to the 'Political Rishi', was its proneness to think that nothing good or great could be accomplished 'without the co-operation of the upper ten' and that "money alone made the the political mare go'. Here, too, Bombay could learn from Poona, 'a city to whom the art of politics has become a second nature' and which had a 'mania for enterprise' and not for money. Thanks to 'indomitable workers' like G.V. Joshi, S.H. Chiplonkar and S.H. Sathe, he added, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha had lived down official prejudice and hostility. Ripon's acceptance of an address from the Sabha in 1880 had turned the tide and now its opinion was solicited by the government on every important public issue.17

British officials still differed as to the character of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, 'some holding that it is a disaffected body seeking opportunities for doing mischief, and others believing that whatever may have been its intentions at one time, it is not now animated by a spirit hostile to our rule', but they all recognized that it was a power to be reckoned with.18 The Sabha probably was not as popular as it used to be. The death of G.V. Joshi in July 1880 had deprived it of a charismatic leader. In leaning over backwards to gain the respect of the government, the Sabha often ran counter to the sentiments of its more radical supporters.19 Complaints against the constitution and working of the Sabha were increasing.20 Moreover, J. G. Phule21 had already launched his crusade against the Brahmans, who dominated the Sabha and the public life of Maharashtra generally, and in 1884 G. B. Mashke22 had organized the Deccan Association in Poona to further the interests of the Maratha (non-Brahman) community.23 The anti-Brahman sentiment was encouraged and exploited by missionaries and reactionary British officials for their own ends. But, under the overall control of Ranade, the Sabha still wielded enormous influence and was conducted with great energy and ability. What was more significant was the fact that in the 1880s there existed extreme cordiality and co-operation between its leaders and those of Bombay.
As we have already noted, Hume regarded the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha as

17 Indu Prakash, 2, 9 February 1885.

18 See Ripon to Kimberley, 19 July 1883, Ripon Papers, B.P. 7/3, no. 55.

19 See, for example, Native Opinion, 26 August, 9 September 1883.

20 See, for example, Mahratta, 8 January, 18 June 1882, 22 September 1883.

21 B. 1827; social reformer; d. 1890.

22 B. 1831; pleader; attended first Indian National Congress at Bombay; d. 1901.

23 For information about the Deccan Association, see Theosophist, April 1884, p. 169, and Mahratta. 1 February 1885, 2 May 1886.

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' the leading Sabha in India' and he had already in November 1884 written to its secretary about his 'linking in' project. The leaders of the Sabha were closely involved in the confabulation which took place after Hume's arrival in Bombay in mid-December 1884. It is not improbable that before he moved on to Madras early in March 1885, Hume had already persuaded the Sabha to play host to the first 'Conference of the Indian National Union' to be held in December of that year.

Early in March 1885 Hume arrived in Madras. The southern presidency was no longer the 'sleepy hollow', it had been. A band of patriotic and dedicated men, chief amongst whom were G. Subramania Aiyar, M. Viraraghavachari,24 S. Subramam'a Aiyar,25 P. Rangiah Naidu,26 R. Balaji Rao,27 C. Vijayaraghav-achari,28 P. Ananda Charlu29 and Salem Ramaswami Mudaliar,30 had galvanized it into political life. They had been aided in their efforts by the reactionary regime of Sir M.E. Grant Duff31 and the liberal policies of Ripon. The appointment of Grant Duff as governor of Madras in 1881 by Gladstone's Liberal ministry had aroused great hopes in the presidency. But these hopes were disappointed when he showed himself in his true colours—a pompous and unsympathetic ruler who was a Liberal in name only. His mishandling of the 'Chingleput scandal'32 and of the 'Salem riots case'33 caused widespread discontent in the presidency, particularly amongst Hindus. The dissatisfaction of the people of Madras with their governor was matched only by their enthusiasm for the viceroy. Madras took Ripon's local self-government scheme very seriously. Even the Madras Native Association, which had generally remained lethargic ever since its revival in early 1881, was spurred into action. Steps were taken to memorialize the authorities in regard to the scheme and G.Subramania Aiyar was deputed to tour the mofussil in order to mobilize public opinion in its favour.34 Aiyar's tour of the Tamil districts of the presidency in the summer of 1882 proved to be extremely useful. Not only did it enable him to establish contact with leaders at various centres, it also served to stimulate political consciousness
24 B. 1857; managing proprietor of Hindu 1878-1905; d. 1906.

25 B. 1842; lawyer; Theosophist; member of Madras legislative council 1884-8; judge of Madras high court 1895-1907; d. 1924.

26 B. 1828; landholder and lawyer; member of Madras legislative council 1893-9; d. 1902.

27 B. 1842; lawyer; d. 1896.

28 B. 1852; lawyer at Salem; sentenced to ten years' transportation for alleged part in Salem riots, but sentence quashed by high court; president of Indian National Congress 1920; d. 1944.

29 B. 1843; lawyer; president of Indian National Congress 1891; d. 1908.

30 B. 1852; lawyer; d. 1892.

31 B. 1829; M.P. 1857-81; under-secretary of state for India 1868-74 and for colonies 1880; governor of Madras 1881-6; d. 1906.

32 The scandal arose from an attachment of the property of certain cultivators in Chingleput district for, as the cultivators alleged, their refusal to pay bribe to the local tahsildar.

33 The case arising out of the Hindu-Muslim riote at Salem in August 882, in which many influential Hindus were wrongly punished.


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and organization in the mofussil. In a leading article on 3 May 1883 the Hindu pointed out how the agitation in connexion with the local self-government question had led to the holding of numerous public meetings and the growth of many new political associations throughout the country, and added: 'Such combination for public objects is a certain sign of the people's advancement in political knowledge.' 35 The remark was particularly true of Madras. During 1883-4 Madras leaders staged three large-scale political demonstrations — the first, on 21 April 1883, to demand an extension of Ripon's term as viceroy; the second, on 18 May 1883, to celebrate the first anniversary of the issue of Ripon's famous resolution on local self-government: and the third, on 31 January 1884, in honour of Ripon's visit to Madras. These demonstrations were characterized by unprecedented enthusiasm, unanimity of feeling, careful organization, and growing co-operation between the metropolitan and mofussil leaders. But the rapid growth of political life in Madras in the early 'eighties revealed a schism between the old and the young, in many ways similar to that which already existed in Bengal and Bombay. The young were more ambitious, impatient, independent-minded and self assertive than their elders. In particular, they were unwilling to remain tied to the apron-strings of British officials and the wealthier sections of their own community. The schism in the public life of Madras became glaringly apparent in
late 1883 over the issue of giving a farewell reception to a retiring member of the governor's council named D.F. Carmichael.36 While the older leaders, such as Madhav Rao, Raghunath Rao,37 T. Mthuswami Aiyar,38 V. Bhashyam Aiyangar39 and Humayun Jah Bahadur,40 wanted to do honour to Carmichael, the younger public men, such as G. Subramania Aiyar, M. Viraraghavachari, Ananda Charlu, Balaji Rao, Ramaswami Mudaliar and P. Rangiah Naidu,41 actively opposed the move on the ground that Carmichael's career had not been such as to deserve any special recognition on the part of Indians. There were two important political organizations in Madras city at the time: the Madras Native Association and the Triplicane Literary Society. The Carmichael affair caused a split in both organizations, though the former was dominated by the older men and the latter by the younger ones.

It was the anti-Carmichael faction which took the lead in establishing the Madras Mahajana Sabha. While engaged in organizing a grand reception for Ripon during his visit to Madras in January-February 1884, the

35 Hindu, 3 May 1883.

36 B. 1830; joined East India Company's service in Madras 1851; chief secretary 1877-8; member of governor's council 1878-83; d. 1903.

37 B. 1831; uncovenanted civilian 1856-88; diwan of Indore state 1875-80, 1886-8; d. 1912.

38 B. 1832; judge of Madras high court 1878-93; d. 1895.

39 B. 1844; lawyer; member of Madras legislative council 1888-1902; judge of Madras high court 1901-4; d. 1908.

40 B. at Calcutta 1837; settled in Madras 1860; landlord; member of Madras legislative council 1867-92; d. 1893.

41 Though in his fifties, Rangiah Naidu was the leader of the younger public men in Madras.

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faction began canvassing support for the idea of a comprehensive central association which could claim to speak on behalf of the entire presidency.42 The need for such an association had been felt for a long time by the educated public of Madras. It was heavily underscored by recent events. In March 1884 the anti-Carmichael faction issued a prospectus which proposed the formation of an association, to be called the 'Mahaiana Sabha', consisting 'ordinarily of non-official members representing all interests in and out of Madras, [to] watch public interests and take ... steps to promote them from time to time'. The existing local associations were invited to affiliate themselves with the Sabha and be represented on its managing committee. The Sabha was to hold conferences at Madras twice a year to which the affiliated associations were to send delegates. Similar conferences were to be held at mofussil centres every three years.43
The Madras Mahajana Sabha, as the new association ultimately came to be designated, was formally, though rather unostentatiously, inaugurated at a meeting held in the metropolis on 16 May 1884. Rangiah Naidu was elected its president, and Viraraghavachari and Ananda Charlu became its secretaries. Speaking at the inaugural meeting, Rangiah Naidu was at pains to emphasize that the Sabha, unlike the Madras Native Association, 'would consist of non-officials alone, who would represent fearlessly the wishes of the public'. He also suggested that 'the Sabha should be connected with institutions of a similar nature in sister presidencies'.44 According to the constitution adopted by the Sabha later in the year, its object was laid down to be 'to endeavour to promote the interests of the people of this country'. Any Indian who was more than 21 years of age could, on being recommended by two existing members and on payment of an annual subscription of not less than one rupee, become a member of the Sabha. The management of the Sabha was vested in a committee of twenty-five which was to be elected annually and to which were to be added the nominees of the affiliated associations.45

The Mahajana Sabha progressed rapidly. The Madras Native Association ceased to exist and left its rival in possession of the field. In June 1885, just over a year after its establishment, the Sabha claimed a membership of 205.46 The leaders of the Sabha succeeded in enlisting the cooperation of the infussil associations. They also won over some of those public men with whom they had recently quarrelled over the Carmichael affair, notably G. Mahadev Chetty,47 C. V. Sundaram Sastri48 and P. Somasundaram Chetty.49 The Sabha took

42 See the proceedings of the Udamalpet Patriotic Sabha, in Madras Times, 7 February 1884.

43 For the text of the prospectus, see Madras Standard, 19 March 1884.

44 Madras Mail, 20 May 1884.


47 Merchant and philanthropist; d. 1892.

48 B. 1848?; lawyer; d. 1897.

49 B. 1824; businessman; d. 1898,

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a leading part in organizing meetings at several places in the presidency at which laudatory farewell addresses were voted to Ripon. In order to present these addresses to Ripon, a deputation from Madras, which included the leading lights of the Sabha, travelled in mid-December 1884 to Bombay. While in Bombay the members of the Madras deputation exchanged views with local leaders on subjects of mutual interest. One such subject was the desirability of holding annual conferences of representative men from all parts of India. The Madras leaders
were known to be ardent advocates of such conferences and during the last couple of years they had displayed an extraordinary degree of political sophistication. It was probably in recognition of both these facts that K.T. Telang suggested to them that they should take the lead in holding the first such national conference. But the Madras leaders knew their limitations and declined to act upon Telang’s suggestion.50

However, the Madras leaders had already decided to hold a provincial conference late in December 1884 to coincide with the Madras fair and the annual convention of the Theosophical Society, both of which were expected to bring many mofussil leaders to the metropolis, and the Mahajana Sabha had in September 1884 notified the mofussil associations to this effect.51 The conference met at Pacheappa's Hall, Madras, from 29 December 1884 to 2 January 1885. It was attended by over 70 delegates, most of whom came from the mofussil. Both the Tamil and the Telugu districts were represented. There were even three delegates from Bangalore. The main subjects discussed at the conference were the reform of the legislative councils; the separation of the judicial from the executive functions; the changes desired in the structure of the Indian government, and the condition of the agricultural classes.52

Having been since December 1882 the headquarters of the Theosophical Society Madras felt directly and immediately the impact of that Society. The Theosophical Society not only did a great deal to stimulate the educated Indian's pride in the history and culture of his own country, it also provided him with an example of an all-India organization. By June 1884 the Society had over eighty branches scattered all over the subcontinent and the number of its members and sympathizers ran into thousands.53 The anniversary meetings of the Society, particularly from 1882 on, acquired the character, and in fact the designation, of conventions, which brought together the faithful from all parts of the country and even from abroad. While the 1884 convention of the Society was being held in the Christmas week at Adyar, Madras, almost

50A. Charlu, who was a member of the Madras deputation, later recorded that at an evening party held while they were at Bombay in December 1884, Dadabhai Naoroji broached the idea 'that an annual gathering should be convened of all India, beginning with the next ensuing year, so far as delegates might be willing or be induced to come to a central city, to discuss questions in which the country, as a whole, may be said to be interested, and on which a practically unanimous opinion could be arrived at and declared', and Telang even suggested that 'Madras should make the first move', but it was 'of course too much for the "benighted", at least just then'. A. Charlu, 'The Indian National Congress: A Suggestive Retrospect', Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar, July-August 1903, pp. 2-3, See also Charlu, 'The Indian National Congress: As It Has Been and as It Need Be', ibid., October-November 1906, p. 301, and Hindu, 16 March 1888, 21 September 1903.

51 Athenaeum and Daily News, 22 December 1884.

52 Proceedings of the [First] Conference of Native Gentlemen, Held at Pacheappa's Hall under the auspices of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in January 1885.
simultaneously with the conference of the Mahajana Sabha, Raghunath Rao, who was an ardent Theosophist, suggested that the convention might as well be used to advance the political and social interests of India. He was, however, 'told [by Blavatsky and Olcott?] that it was a fundamental principle of the Theosophical Society to eschew all questions relating to politics and sociology'.54 Undaunted by this rebuff, Raghunath Rao privately collected at his residence in Mylapore, Madras, 'a dozen or so' of the delegates who had come to attend the Theosophical convention, 'as well as a few Madras Hindu gentlemen', in order to discuss the desirability of establishing an organization for promoting the political and social interests of the country. 'It was soon felt that it was not possible to obtain anything like unanimity on the social questions of the day, and that to press these questions at that time on the country would only amount to sowing seeds of dissension far and wide. But no such difficulty was to be feared in questions political. There the representatives of almost all castes and creeds in India were agreed unanimously, except, perhaps, on points of mere detail.' After much discussion the following programme was drawn up and agreed to:

1. Each station should have a Political Association of its own.

2. There should be a Central Association at the capital of each Province (Presidency), solely composed of members, nominated by the different Associations both in the Mofussil and the capital City.

3. The chief object of all these Associations shall be to strengthen the hands of the Government and British Public with facts, admitted as such by as large a number of the people of India as possible.

4. Each Association shall not nominate more than three representatives for the Central Association.

5. No Association consisting of less than fifteen members shall be at liberty to nominate more than one member for the Central Association.

6. The Central Association of one Province may, when necessary, act in concert with corresponding Associations of other Provinces.

7. The Central Associations shall arrange to organize a Committee in England to act in concert with them.

8. There shall be an annual Conference of the delegates of the Central Associations at places to be determined at each Conference, the first Conference being held at Puna.

53 See letter from Damodar K. Mavlankar, joint recording secretary of Theosophical Society) to the editor, Indian Mirror, 8 June 1884.

54 See Raghunath Rao's speech at Indore, 24 February 1888, reported in Times of India 6 March 1888.
9. That funds shall be raised for the purpose of meeting the cost of important telegrams to be sent in all matters through the Committee in England for publication in England.


N.N. Sen, editor of the Calcutta Indian Mirror, was one of those who took part in the meeting held at Raghunath Rao's house late in December 1884. According to Sen's testimony recorded in May 1889, the resolutions adopted at the Madras meeting were later embodied in a circular which was issued 'shortly after, that is, in the beginning of 1885' and of which he himself received a few copies from Rangiah Naidu.56 On his return to Calcutta, Sen wrote in January-February 1885 a number of articles in his paper urging the desirability of establishing a national organization in India on the lines agreed to at Madras. 57 In noticing the Indian Mirror articles, the Indian Spectator of Bombay made the following significant remark: 'It is curious to note that this idea [of a national organization] has occurred almost at the same time to friends in different parts.'58

No sooner was the Indian National Congress born than the Theosophists began to claim it as their child. Olcott asserted in 1886 that 'the Theosophical Society was the parent of the Indian National Congress, for it had first shown the possibility of bringing men from different parts of the country together into a friendly relation which had never been known before'.59 Raghunath Rao in 1888 60 and N.N. Sen in 1889 61 reiterated the claim and virtually accused Hume of having stolen their thunder. Both asserted that the real origin of the Congress should be traced back to the meeting held at Raghunath Rao's

55 Indian Mirror, 26 May 1889. Most of those whose names are mentioned here were neither Theosophists nor present at the meeting in Madras.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., 13, 14, 18, 20, 21, 28 January, 3,7, 13 February 1885.

58 Indian Spectator, 15 February 1885.

59 Supplement to Theosophist, January 1887, p. liv. But a year earlier Olcott was reported to have thus spoken slightingly of the Indian National Congress: 'The present Congress [i.e. the 1885 Theosophical Convention at Adyar] was a far higher and nobler thing than the political
Congress in Bombay, which was now sitting, for here they were met to improve humanity. See ibid., January 1886, p. Ixxxvii.

60 See Times of India, 6 March 1888.

61 See Indian Mirror, 21, 26 May 1889.

house in Madras late in December 1884. The claim has become a part of Theo-sophist hagiography.62 How far Hume was influenced in the matter of organizing the Indian National Congress by the model of the Theosophical conventions or by the deliberations of the Madras meeting in December 1884, it is impossible, in the present state of our knowledge, to say. While granting that the Theosophical movement contributed a great deal to the growth of patriotism and public spirit in India, that the annual conventions of the Theosophical Society added to the popularity in India of the idea of holding periodical conferences of representatives from various parts of the country for political purposes, and also that amongst those who gathered at Bombay for the first Indian National Congress in the last week of December 1885 there were quite a few who were, or had been, associated with the Society, it is necessary to urge a few points against the exaggerated claim of the Theosophists regarding the parentage of the Congress. First, the idea of holding annual conferences of representative men from different parts of the country in order to promote national objectives had been current in India long before the founders of the Theosophical Society landed in Bombay in February 1879. Second, the deliberations at Raghunath Rao's residence in Madras in December 1884 were not followed by any practical action. Third; the organization of the first Indian National Congress in 1885 was the result of developments which had nothing to do with the Theosophical Society and was on lines very different from those agreed upon at the Madras' meeting.

We have little definite information about Hume's activities while he was in Madras in March 1885. It would, however, be safe to presume that during his stay in Madras he discussed privately with local leaders the political programme which he had already matured in consultation with the leaders of the western presidency. He seems to have been able to assure himself that the southern presidency would be contributing Rs. 300 per month towards meeting the expenses of the projected Indian telegraphic agency and sending a sufficient number of delegates to the conference of the Indian National Union to be held in Poona in December 1885. Hume also appears to have succeeded in enlisting for his programme the co-operation of D. S. White, the leader of the Eurasian community in Madras. Before leaving Madras on 16 March 1885, Hume even tried to help the Theosophical Society, from which he had been alienated and which was just then under a cloud because.

62 See, for example, A. Besant, How India Wrought for Freedom (1915), pp. 1-2.

63 See below, p. 395.

64 See Report of the First Indian National Congress, Held at Bombay on the 28th, 29th and 30th December, 1885 (Lucknow, 1886?) p. 3. An earlier and rarer edition of the report is entitled
Proceedings of the First Indian National Congress. Held at Bombay, on the 28th, 29th and 30th December, 1885 (Bombay, 1886).

65 B. 1832; assistant to director of public instruction, Madras; president of Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association of Southern India; d. 1889.

66 In a letter to the editor, Statesman and Friend Of India, 20 September 1884, Hume said: '. . .all connection between myself, Madame Blavatsky, Col. Olcott, Mr. Damodar has

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of the recent Coulomb disclosures.67 He suggested to Raghunath Rao and other prominent Theosophists a scheme for reorganizing the Society, but it proved unacceptable to the latter.68

On 19 March 1885 the P. and O. steamship Mirzapore brought Hume to Calcutta from Madras.69 One of the most significant developments in India during the viceroyalty of Ripon had been the decline of Bengal's pre-eminence in national politics and it was no accident that Hume arrived in Calcutta after having visited Bombay and Madras. Noticing how Bengal was lagging behind other provinces in making arrangements for giving a suitable farewell to Ripon, Hume had written to the Indian Mirror on 29 October 1884: 'The other provinces, and even the most backward of them all, are bidding fair to cast you into the shade—you the people of Bengal, the foremost in all the political and intellectual movements in the country, the Athenians of the Indian races. You will have to blame yourselves, if the lead is taken off your hands in future, as on the present occasion, by the more active and less talkative brothers of Bombay and any other provinces.'70 What Hume had written in warning had, in fact, already come to pass. Bengal had ceased to be the leader of political India. How did it happen? Bengal was still the largest, richest and most populous province of India. It had many more institutions of higher learning and newspapers than any other province. Its educated middle class was the most numerous and widely spread in the country. This class may have had its peculiar defects of character,71 but they were by no means new.

Part of the explanation for the decline of Bengal's pre-eminence in Indian politics may be found in the growing disunity in Bengali public life, particularly in Calcutta. Paradoxically enough, this disunity was largely the result of the fact that the Bengali intelligentsia was drawn from a wider spectrum of society and was far more politicized than its counterpart in any other region of India. long since ceased. I was unable to approve of many things in the conduct of the Society and of its journal, and hence, though still warmly sympathizing in its avowed objects, I have, for the last two years or more, been only a nominal member of the Theosophical Society.' For Hume's short-lived and uneasy association with the Theosophical Society, see A.P. Sinnett, The Occult World (1881), Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky (1922 ed.), The Early Days of Theosophy in Europe (1922); and A.T. Barker (ed.) The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett (1925), The Mahatma Letters (1962 ed.).

67 In late 1884 M. and Mme. Alexis Coulomb, the erstwhile associates of Mme. Blavatsky, disclosed that the latter's 'psychical phenomena' were fraudulent. See 'The Collapse of Koot
Bengal had reached a degree of differentiation in public life which was hardly conducive to combined action in provincial or national affairs. Almost every interest which was centred in Calcutta had become organized. Educated Muslims had two separate organizations—the Mahomedan Literary Society and the Central National Mahommedan Association—to promote their interests, which they increasingly felt to be at variance with those of educated Hindus. The old British Indian Association, representing the wealthy Bengali zamindars, was fast losing ground. Some of its recent activities, such as its 'unholy alliance' with the leaders of the European and Anglo-Indian Defence Association in order to oppose the proposed Bengal tenancy legislation and its refusal to co-operate in the general demonstration in honour of Ripon in 1883 and again in 1884 had made it extremely unpopular. [The Indian Association, representing the younger generation of professional Bengalis, was the most ambitious and energetic political body in Calcutta. But the radical and highly westernized character of its leadership made it distasteful to both the zamindars and orthodox Hindus. The East Bengal Association, founded in Calcutta in January 1883 tried to promote the interests of the educated classes, both Hindu and Muslim, belonging to the eastern districts of Bengal.72 In March 1884 a more broad-based political association was organized in Calcutta. It was called the Indian Union and had the Maharaja of Darbhanga as its president and W. C. Bonnerjee as its secretary. It was intended to be a sort of 'Indian Defence Association', representing 'the whole nation' and acting 'in concert with the other public bodies in India'.73 But, though it secured the support of many leading barristers, journalists and zamindars, the Indian Union failed to prosper 'owing to differences within its body'.74 Calcutta thus had many political associations in the early 1880s, but not one which could really speak and act on behalf of the entire province. The nascent public life in the mofussil of Bengal proper lacked suitable direction and utilization, while that in the non-Bengali-speaking regions of the presidency—Assam, Bihar and Orissa—was allowed to acquire an anti-Bengali bias.

While in Calcutta late in March 1885, Hume stayed with Manmohan Ghose at 4 Theatre Road, where he met many local leaders.75 Some idea of what transpired at these meetings may be had from the following entry made by A.M. Bose in his diary on 22 March 1885: ‘Called on Hume at
Mr. M. Ghose's. It is a pleasure and an honour to know a man like him, one who may be said to have devoted himself to the cause of missionary labour on behalf of India. May God bless his noble heart and grant success to his noble efforts! Had talk with him principally about the National Telegraphing Agency matter. He has already raised more than Rs. 400 a month at Bombay, Rs. 200 a month in two or three other Bombay centres (Poona, Ahmedabad and Surat), nearly Rs. 300 a month in Madras, and wants Rs. 350 a month from Calcutta, to complete the amount of Rs. 1,250 a month, necessary to give effect to their plan. In the evening went again to Ghose's where there was a conference on the subject; and a sum of Rs. 150 a month was subscribed on the spot by the 15 persons or so present. This was a much better beginning than I had ventured to hope for and there is no doubt now that the requisite Rs. 350 a month will be raised in Calcutta. It is interesting to note that Bose's entry in his diary makes no mention of the proposed conference of the Indian National Union, which according to N.N. Sen and W.C. Bonnerjee was one of the subjects which Hume discussed with them while he was in Calcutta in March 1885. Could it be that Hume did not tell Bose about the conference because he did not belong to his 'inner circle'? Whether it was due to lack of time or of local contacts, Hume did not visit Assam, Bihar or Orissa while he was in the eastern presidency in the spring of 1885. Assam, Bihar and Orissa were far behind Bengal proper in political development, but the forces of modernization and the vivifying influences of Ripon's viceroyalty had not left them entirely untouched. The Bengalis themselves had, by their example and exertions, contributed in no small measure to the political awakening of Assam, Bihar and Orissa. There was, however, a growing anti-Bengali sentiment in these regions, due partly to the jealousy of expatriate Bengalis, who held some of the better-paid jobs, and partly to the rather supercilious attitude adopted by the latter towards the indigenous population, which British officials were quick to exploit. While the Assamese were still in what may be called the debating or literary society stage of development, the Oriyas had already, in 1883, established an Oriissa People's Association at Cuttack. Noises had even begun to be made that all Oriya-speaking territories should be united. In both Assam and Orissa movements were under way aimed at preserving the identity and promoting the status of the regional language. In Bihar the battle of the language had already been won and Hindi had
been recognized as the language of the courts. The government's attempts to clip the wings of the zamindars had led to the establishment in November 1878 of the influential Bihar Landholders' Association at Patna.

On his way back to Simla from Calcutta in April 1885, Hume visited several


77 See Indian Mirror, 26 May 1889.

78 See W.C. Bonnerjee, 'A Call to Arms III', Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar, December 1903, p. 478.

79 The secretary of the Orissa People's Association, however, was a Bengali named Dinanath Banerji. See Indian Mirror, 31 July and 3 December 1884.

80 See, for example, Utkal Patra, cited in Friend of India, 16 June 1874.

places in the North-Western Provinces and Avadh and probably also in the Punjab. English education was slowly advancing in these parts, despite the step-motherly treatment accorded to it and its products by local British officials. It was in order to further the cause of English education and the claims of the new English-educated elite that the Tribune was started at Lahore in 1881 and the Indian Union at Allahabad in 1885. Thanks to the spread of English education, the impact of the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj and the efforts of expatriate Bengalis, which were markedly stimulated by the recent visits of S. N. Banerjea, voluntary associations were fast multiplying in the towns of upper India. But the language controversy had already begun to cast its shadow over the nascent public life of the North-Western Provinces and Avadh and to embitter relations between educated Hindus and Muslims. Part of the blame for this unfortunate development must attach to the government, which persisted for more than half a century in refusing to grant the just and reasonable demand of local Hindus for the recognition of Hindi, along with Urdu, as a language of the courts.

'Some little speculation was excited' in Anglo-Indian circles by Hume's quiet travels about India in the early part of 1885,81 but his precise objects could not be divined. When, therefore, it was rumoured in June 1885 that Hume would shortly be going to Britain, where he would try to enter Parliament and organize an 'Indian Party', the Pioneer recalled his 'mysterious movements' during 'last cold weather' and observed: 'Mr. Hume's objects have now unfolded themselves.'82 In a letter to the Pioneer, Hume complained that 'a quiet old retired officer like myself should be persistently made the subject in this way of cock-and-bull stories'. He confirmed that he would shortly be visiting Britain 'for a few 'months', but denied that he would be trying for a seat in Parliament. 'My home is in India,' Hume added, 'and I think I can be more useful (it is not much that I can do anywhere) here than in Europe. There was nothing mysterious in my tour during last cold season. I merely went from place to place to renew, or, in some cases, make the
personal acquaintance of native gentlemen with whom, directly or indirectly, I had been long in communication.'83

Soon after his return to Simla, early in May 1885, Hume saw Dufferin and acquainted him with his project of a conference of representative men from all parts of India to be held in Poona in the coming December. This is what Dufferin wrote-to Lord Reav.84 the governor of Bombay, on 17 May 1885: 'There is

81 Pioneer, 12 June 1885.

82 Ibid

83 Ibid 22 June 1885.

84 Donald James Mackay, eleventh Baron Reay (1839-1921). Born at The Hague and educated at Leiden; entered Dutch foreign service; settled in Britain 1875; created baron 1881; governor of Bombay 1885-90; under-secretary of state for India 1894-5. Though reputed to be a liberal, Reay was an arch imperialist and a confirmed believer in the policy of 'divide and rule' in India. See Reay to Cross, secretary of state for India (1886-92), 28 January, 1 April, 12, 19 May, 8 December 1887, 16 January 1888, Cross Papers MSS. Eur. E. 243/49-51 nos. 19, 28, 33, 34, 58, 61.

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here a gentleman of the name of Hume. He is a son of Joe Hume, whom I very well remember in Parliament. He was at one time employed by Government, but was got rid of on account of his impracticability. Since then he has become a resident in the country, and a disciple of Madame Blavatsky. He is clever and gentleman-like, but seems to have got a bee in his bonnet. Ripon told me he knew a good deal of the Natives, and advised me to see him from time to time, which I have done with both pleasure and profit. At his last interview he told me that he and his friends were going to assemble a Political convention of delegates, as far as I understood, on the lines adopted by O'Connell previous to Catholic emancipation, and he said they propose to ask you to act as Chairman. I took it upon myself to say that it would be impossible for any one in your situation to accept such an offer. The functions of such an assembly must of necessity consist in criticizing the acts or policy of the Government, in formulating demands which probably it would be impossible to grant, and in adopting generally the procedure of all reform associations. The idea of wishing to associate the head of the Executive Government of a Province with such a programme I told him was absurd. I mention the fact, however, in order that you may be upon your guard. It is our duty carefully to watch the signs of the times, and cautiously and conscientiously to liberalize the administration of India, but I am sure it would be a mistake if we identified ourselves personally either with the reforming or the reactionary enthusiasts.'85

Hume's version of the interview with Dufferin is contained in a letter which he wrote to Ripon in January 1889: 'In June [sic] 1885 before the congress was started Lord Dufferin was one of the first persons consulted. At that time the idea was to include officials as well as non-officials—and Lord Reay was to have been invited to be the first President—both by reason of his warm
sympathy with the movement and his being Governor of the Province in which the first Congress was to be held. Lord Dufferin warmly approved the proposal, considering that it would at last furnish the Government with something like an authoritative statement of the views and wishes of the educated and intelligent classes throughout the country. The whole scheme exactly as it was carried out (save as regards the exclusion of the official element) was laid before him—there has not been the smallest change in the programme. "But", he said, I quote his exact words, "don't ask Lord Reay to preside—don't have officials—if you gentlemen do your duty you will criticize the administration and officials ought not to take part in this. Consider how awkward it will be for Lord Reay, if Grant Duff's administration comes to be severely criticized whilst he is 'in the chair'." I told him that his views would I was sure be law in such cases, and he said "then I am perfectly satisfied and I wish you every success".86

85Dufferin to Reay, 17 May 1885, Dufferin Papers, reel 528, no. 173.

86Hume to Ripon, 13 January 1889, Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. 43616, fo. 160. Hume's letter was in reply to Ripon's of 15 December 1888 (ibid., fos. 148-50), in which the latter had written that Dufferin's speech at the St. Andrew's Dinner, Calcutta, 30 November 1888, attacking the Congress had 'startled' him. When in 1905, following the publication of A.C. Lyall's

The extracts quoted above provide conclusive evidence on three points: first that Hume consulted Dufferin before launching the Congress; second that Dufferin acquiesced in the project; and third that it was at Dufferin's suggestion that the idea of associating officials with the Congress was dropped. Dufferin might have" had other reasons for sanctioning the project of Hume and his friends besides the one allegedly advanced to Hume, namely that the Congress 'would at last furnish the Government with something like an authoritative statement of the views and wishes of the educated and intelligent classes throughout the country'. For example, he might, as a Liberal and an Irishman, have sympathized with the Indian political aspirations which the Congress was intended to promote.87 He might have thought that the Congress in India would be like the 'Legislative Assembly' which he had himself instituted in Egypt.88 He might have been eager to win the approbation of educated Indians and to assure them that he meant to continue the policy of Ripon, especially at a time when the Russians were knocking at the gates of India. He might have desired to see a counterpoise to the Anglo-Indian party created in the country. He might even have shared the belief of Hume and Ripon that it was necessary to provide safe and constitutional channels for the discharge of the Indian ferment. But all this is speculation.

Did Dufferin also advise Hume, as W.C. Bonnerjee later claimed, not to discuss social questions at the Congress? Unfortunately, it is not possible to answer this question with any certainty, for Bonnerjee's own claim, based obviously on information supplied by Hume, is available in two different versions, one of which sounds most improbable, and we have no other evidence to go by.89
biography of Dufferin, doubts were expressed in certain quarters over the late viceroy's alleged acquiescence in the project of the Congress in 1885. W.C. Bonnerjee secured from Hume a public confirmation of the matter. See Bonnerjee's letter to the editor, Hindu, 31 July 1905.

87In August 1886 Dufferin told the Brahmo leader, P.C. Majumdar: 'Remember I am an Irishman. And is it possible for me not to sympathize with the aspirations of a nation so similarly circumstanced as my own?' See 'Six Months at Simla', Interpreter, December 1886, p. 123.

88See Further Correspondence respecting Reorganization in Egypt, Parliamentary Papers, 1883, vol. lxxxiii, C. 3529, pp. 25-6, 41-3, 47-50, 83, 88-91; and Despatch from Lord Dufferin, Forwarding the Decree Creating New Political Institutions for Egypt, ibid., C. 3733, pp. 2-11.

89The first version forms part of Bonnerjee's speech at Amraoti in December 1897, in which he was reported to have said that 'Mr. Hume's original scheme of Congress... was to have mixed assemblies at different centres consisting of both the official and non-official elements, of which the chief local Government authority was to be the President, and the discussions were to embrace even social topics. When he submitted this scheme for Lord Dufferin's approval, His Excellency suggested that a movement should be started on different lines and that the official element should be dropped altogether.' Vaidarbha, quoted in Hindu, 29 December 1897 and Bengalee, 15 January 1898. The second, and more well-known, version is contained in Bonnerjee's 'Introduction' to a book called Indian Politics in 1898 and reads as follows: 'Mr. A.O. Hume, C.B., had, in 1884, conceived the idea that it would be of great advantage to the country if leading Indian politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss social matters and be upon friendly footing with one another. He did not desire that politics should form part of their discussion, for, there were recognised political bodies in Calcutta,

Social reform was an extremely live issue in India in 1884-5, thanks mainly to the publication of Malabari's famous 'Notes on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood'. Educated Indian opinion was sharply divided over the issue. While a very small minority considered social reform to be far more urgent than political reform and even favoured government action to put down social evils, the vast majority was inclined to go slow in the matter and was absolutely opposed to the idea of government interference. British officials were, generally speaking, unwilling to be drawn into the controversy. While most of them privately sympathized with Malabari's crusade, they were reluctant to say or do anything which might antagonize the vast majority of their subjects or place them in an embarrassing position with their own people in India and at home. When, for example, Malabari pressed Ripon in 1884 to commit himself publicly on the subject, the latter is said to have remarked: My friend, you are leading me into a jungle where the lions may devour me.' Before leaving India Ripon had probably warned his successor against falling into Malabari's trap. It is also significant that the very first letter which Hume wrote to Dufferin, from Bombay in February 1885, dealt with Malabari's campaign against infant marriage and enforced widowhood in India. In this letter Hume advised Dufferin 'to seize some occasion for preaching a little sermon' to 'my enthusiastic little friend, Mr. B.M. Malabari,' as he had himself recently done in a note of which he enclosed a copy for Dufferin's perusal. Dufferin wrote back thanking Hume for his letter and its enclosure and adding: 'I hope some of
these days to have an opportunity of further conversation with you on the subject.'93 It is highly probable that in their many 'long interview[s]'94 later in May-June 1885 Dufferin and Hume discussed the question of social reform in India in its various aspects.

Bombay, Madras and other parts of India, and he thought that these bodies might suffer in importance if when Indian politicians from different parts of the country came together, they discussed politics. His idea further was that the Governor of the Province where the politicians met should be asked to preside over them and that thereby greater cordiality should be established between the official classes and the non-official Indian politicians. Full of these ideas he saw the noble Marquis [of Dufferin] when he went to Simla early in 1885 ... Lord Dufferin took great interest in the matter and after considering over it for some time he sent for Mr. Hume and told him that, in his opinion, Mr. Hume's project would not be of much use. He said... it would be very desirable in the interests as well of the rulers as of the ruled that Indian politicians should meet yearly and point out to the Government in what respects the administration was defective and how it could be improved; and he added that an assembly such as he proposed should not be presided over by the local Governor... .' [G.A. Natesan (ed.), Indian Politics (1898), pp. vii-viii.

90In late 1884 Malabari also projected an all-India social reform association. See Hindu, 5 December 1884.

91Indian Mirror, 23 October 1885.

92Hume to Dufferin,? February 1885, Dufferin Papers, reel 528, no. 84.

93Dufferin to Hume, 17 February 1885, ibid., no. 59.

94 This is the second long interview I have had with [His Excellency] ... . ’ Private and confidential circular from Hume to the 'Inner Circle or Select Committee', enclosure in Hume to Dufferin, 12 June 1885, ibid., no. 391,

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aspects. The government of India was just then busy formulating its views on the vexed question.95 It was under mounting pressure from social reformers in India—a small but very vocal minority—and their influential friends in Britain to abandon its attitude of neutrality towards certain notorious social abuses. Dufferin might have feared that in case the conference of representatives from all parts of India which Hume and his friends were planning to hold in the coming Christmas demanded legislation against, say, infant marriage and enforced widowhood, it would only add to the embarrassment of his government. For, if the government of India turned down the demand, it would put itself in the wrong with enlightened opinion both in India and at home. On the other hand, if it acceded to the demand, it would surely antagonize the millions of orthodox people in India. It is, therefore, not unlikely that Dufferin advised Hume to exclude social questions from his proposed conference. Hume himself was obviously anxious that the conference should steer clear of social questions, which he knew to be highly
controversial, and he must have found the authority of Dufferin's counsel extremely useful in checkmating those of his associates who wanted the conference to take up social questions also.

It was probably after his consultations with Dufferin in May 1885 that Hume issued the circular which is reproduced in the Report of the First Indian National Congress. The circular was apparently treated as a private and confidential document and circulated amongst a very small number of people whom Hume called 'the inner circle of the National Party' or 'the Indian National Union'. It read:

'A Conference of the Indian National Union will be held at Poona from the 25th to the 31st of December 1885.

'The Conference will be composed of Delegates—leading politicians well acquainted with the English language—from all parts of the Bengal, Bombay and Madras Presidencies.

'The direct objects of the Conference will be: (1) to enable all the most earnest labourers in the cause of national progress to become personally known to each other; (2) to discuss and decide upon the political operations to be undertaken during the ensuing year.

'Indirectly this Conference will form the germ of a Native Parliament and, if properly conducted, will constitute in a few years an unanswerable reply to the assertion that India is still wholly unfit for any form of representative institutions. The first Conference will decide whether the next shall be again held at Poona, or whether following the precedent of the British Association, the Conferences shall be held year by year at different important centres.

'This year the Conference being in Poona, Mr. Chiplonkar and others of the Sarvajanik Sabha, have consented to form a Reception Committee, in whose hands will rest the whole of the local arrangements. The Peshwah's Garden near the Parbati Hill will be utilized both as a place of
meeting (it contains a fine Hall, like the garden, the property of the Sabha) and as a residence for the delegates, each of whom will be there provided with suitable quarters. Much importance is attached to this since when all thus reside together for a week, far greater opportunities for friendly intercourse will be afforded than if the delegates were (as at the time of the late Bombay demonstrations) scattered about in dozens of private lodging houses all over the town.

'Delegates are expected to find their own way to and from Poona—but from the time they reach the Poona Railway Station until they again leave it, everything that they can need, carriage, accommodation, food, &c, will be provided for them gratuitously.

'The cost thus involved will be defrayed from the Reception Fund, which the Poona Association most liberally offers to provide in the first instance, but to which all delegates, whose means warrant their incurring this further expense, will be at liberty to contribute any sum they please. Any unutilized balance of such donations will be carried forward as a nucleus for next year's Reception fund.

'It is believed that exclusive of our Poona friends, the Bombay Presidency, including Sindh and the Berars, will furnish about 20 delegates, Madras and Lower Bengal each about the same number, and the N.W. Provinces, Oudh and the Punjaub together about half this number.'98

The fall of Gladstone's Liberal ministry early in June 1885 excited 'a general feeling of the liveliest gratification among Anglo-Indians'," but it alarmed educated Indians. 'The ascendency of the Conservative party, however temporary it may be,' wrote the Indian Mirror, for example, 'means retrogression or stagnation for India, especially just now, when the renewed energies of a regenerating India are in their first activity.'100 The inclusion of Lord Randolph Churchill, who had recently visited India and left behind a not entirely un favourable impression, as secretary of state for India in the new Tory government headed by Salisbury did little to allay Indian apprehensions. Developments at home might have given Hume cause for concern, but, as already planned, he sailed from Bombay on 14 July 1885 for Venice en route to London.101 Hume had three main objectives in visiting Britain: first, to acquaint Liberal leaders at home with his project of the Indian National Union; second, to organize an 'Indian party' in Britain to act as a pressure group for India both in and out of Parliament; and third, to negotiate with the editors of British newspapers for the publication of news from India giving the Indian point of view. Soon after his arrival in Britain, however, Parliament was prorogued and an autumn general election seemed likely. This must have encouraged Hume, as it did so many Indian nationalists and their British
friends, to hope that the Liberals might be returned to power again and that Ripon might become
the next secretary of state for India.

During his stay in Britain from early August to mid-November 1885, Hume consulted with many
leading Liberals, such as W. E. Baxter,102 John Bright, James Bryce,103 Sir James Caird,104
Joseph Chamberlain,105 John Morley, Florence Nightingale,106 R.T. Reid,107 Ripon and John
Slagg. 'He has gone everywhere and seen everybody; and has obtained encouragement and
promises of assistance from all whom he has seen ...', reported the London correspondent of the
Calcutta Statesman.108 He impressed everyone he met with his extraordinary energy,
enthusiasm and knowledge of India.109 In a letter to

101 Times of India, 14 July 1885.

102 B. 1825; businessman; M.P. 1855-85; secretary to admiralty 1868-71; joint secretary to
treasury 1871-3; advocate of disestablishment; d. 1890.

103 B. 1838; jurist, historian and statesman; M.P. 1880-1906; chief secretary for Ireland 1905-6;
British ambassador at Washington 1907-13; d. 1922. Hume carried a letter of introduction for

104 B. 1816; authority on agricultural subjects; M.P. 1857-65; visited India as member of Indian
famine commission 1878-9; d. 1892.

105 B. 1836; president of board of trade 1880-5; president of local government board 1886;
secretary of state for colonies 1895-1903; d. 1914. Hume was introduced to Chamberlain by
Ripon. See Chamberlain to Ripon, 5 October 1885, Ripon Papers, Add. MSS. 43635, fos. 164-5.

106 B. 1820; reformer of hospital nursing; interested in all phases of Indian life; d. 1910. In a
private communication to W. Wedderburn at Bombay, Miss Nightingale made the following
significant remark: 'Mr. Hume who brought me a letter from Mr. Ilbert was so good as to give
me a good deal of his time. This "National Liberal" Union [sic], if it keeps straight, seems
altogether the matter of the greatest interest that has happened in India, if it makes progress,
perhaps for a century. We are watching the birth of a new nationality in the oldest civilization in
the world. How critical will be its first meeting at Poona. I bid it God-speed with all my heart.'
India Office Library MSS. Eur. B. 151; also copy in Florence Nightingale Papers, Add. MSS.
45807, fos. 189-90.

107 B. 1846; Liberal M.P. 1880-1906; supported Boer cause during South African war 1899-
1902; lord chancellor with title of Lord Loreburn 1905-12; d. 1923.

108 Statesman and Friend of India, 4 November 1885.

109 See ibid. Bright was obviously referring to Hume when he said at Birmingham on 5
November 1885; 'I met not long ago a gentleman who had been more than 30 years in India.He
had been in the Civil Service. I have never met with a man—and I have met with scores and
conversed with them—who appeared to know so much about all parts of India, and about all
Europeans there, with a great acquaintance with the natives also, over whom he had been called to act.' Times of India, 25 November 1885. See also Christian World, 29 October 1885.

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the Standard early in September 1885 about the current Indian agitation against racial discrimination in volunteering in India, Hume declared himself, probably for the first time in public, to be 'the representative and delegate pro tern, of the Indian National Union, an Association that includes the great majority of the foremost members of the Native community of all parts of India'.110 He arranged with several national and provincial newspapers in Britain for the publication of telegrams from the Indian National Telegraphic Union. He kept his friends in India regularly informed of the progress of his mission in Britain.111

On 10 August 1885 the Bombay Gazette carried a letter, dated 9 August, from a correspondent who signed himself 'English Elector'. The correspondent advised Indians to take advantage of the long interval between then and the autumn, when a general election was likely to take place in Britain, 'to place before the English public the Indian view of Indian questions'. As a means to this end he suggested that Indians should arrange for public meetings to be addressed and leaflets to be distributed in the more important constituencies, and also that they should make known to the British electors which candidates were the friends or 'un friends' of India. William Digby, formerly editor of the Madras Times and then secretary of the National Liberal Club, had as early as April 1885 written to the Bombay Presidency Association emphasizing the importance of the next general election in Britain for India. He had even offered to act as a 'Member for India' provided Indians contributed financially towards his election expenses and maintenance.112 Digby's letter had set the Bombay Presidency Association considering ways and means of informing and influencing the British electorate.113 In the summer of 1885 Digby again wrote to 'a friend in Bombay', making certain suggestions as to the work that might be done in view of the approaching British general election in the interest of India.114 The letter which appeared in the Bombay Gazette on 10 August 1885 probably owed its inspiration to Digby. Ripon showed great interest in the matter. He made suggestions to Digby regarding the leaflets on Indian subjects which were proposed to be circulated among the British electors.115 He also contributed £359 towards the publication in September 1885 of Digby's pamphlet India's Interest in the British Ballot Box, which

110Stan
dard, 4 September 1885. The letter was also carried by Evening Standard, 4 September 1885.


112 Digby to secretary of 'National Indian Association, Bombay', 24 April 1885, Mehta Papers; also Malabari to Naoroji, 25 March, 17 April 1885, Naoroji Papers.

113See minutes of proceedings of the meeting of the council of the Bombay Presidency Association on 9 May 1885, in Manuscript Minute Book of Council Meetings, 13 March 1885 to 17 June 1893, vol. i, Bombay Presidency Association Records.
contained, among other things, a vigorous defence of his viceroyalty in India. Educated Indians evinced far greater interest in the British general election of 1885 than they had done in that of 1880. This was due not only to their expectation that it might lead to a Liberal victory and the appointment of Ripon as secretary of state for India, but also to their appreciation of the implications of the Irish question, which dominated it, for their own country and to the fact that for the first time one of their compatriots, Lalmohan Ghose, was trying to enter Parliament as a Liberal candidate from Deptford. The letter in the Bombay Gazette of 10 August 1885, to which reference has already been made, attracted a good deal of attention in the Indian press and it was universally urged that all parts of India must combine in order to educate their masters, the British people. The Bombay Presidency Association and the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha took the lead in translating this sentiment into action. They raised money for Digby's election expenses and propaganda work on behalf of India in Britain. They issued an appeal to the British electors which listed Indian grievances, suggested remedies and concluded with a proposal for the appointment of a parliamentary commission to inquire into Indian affairs. They prepared fourteen leaflets, on the model of those issued by the Cobden Club, giving the Indian view of important Indian questions and arranged, chiefly with the help of Digby, for their publication and distribution in Britain. They invited and secured the co-operation of other leading associations in the country in their patriotic endeavours. In September 1885 they sent a rising Bombay journalist and lawyer, N.G. Chandavarkar, as their delegate on a speaking-tour of Britain. It was at their suggestion that the Madras Mahajana Sabha deputed one of its leading members, S.R. Mudaliar, to proceed to Britain as the delegate of the southern presidency, and the Calcutta Indian Union nominated its secretary, M.M. Ghose, who was already in Britain, to act as the delegate of Bengal. The most controversial step taken by the Bombay Presidency Association and the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha was that they named those candidates in the British general election whom they regarded as being friendly to India or otherwise. It led the president and one of the vice-presidents of the Bombay Presidency Association to resign their offices in protest against what they considered to be an unnecessarily partisan move. It was also not approved of by the Calcutta British Indian Association.

The attempt of Indians to intervene, a la Irish, in a British general election was not liked by many Britons, particularly those who were Tories. But with the assistance of Digby and some other friends of India, mostly belonging to

Indian Mirror, 6 November 1885. Digby's speech at a meeting held at the National Liberal Club early in October 1885.

See Digby to Ripon, 26 September 1885, Ripon Papers Add MSS 43635 fos 160-3. '}

114 Indian Mirror, 6 November 1885. Digby's speech at a meeting held at the National Liberal Club early in October 1885.

115 See Digby to Ripon, 26 September 1885, Ripon Papers Add MSS 43635 fos 160-3. '}

116 Ibid

117 See Telang's speech at a public meeting organized by the Bombay Presidency Association, in Bombay Gazette, 2 October 1885.
118 B. 1855; lawyer and editor of Indu Prakash; member of Bombay legislative council 1897-1900; president of Indian National Congress 1900; judge of Bombay high court 1901-13; d. 1923.

119 Times of India, 7, 13, 16 October 1885.

120 See Hindoo Patriot, 26 October, 21 December 1885.

121 Pall Mall Gazette, 8 December 1885.

122 See letter of Chandavarkar to the Bombay Presidency Association, reproduced in Indian Mirror, 20 November 1885.

123 Believing that these results were due largely to Parnell's decision in asking the Irish in England to vote against Liberal and Radical candidates in the election, Indian newspapers were critical of him, but they were also full of joy, envy and admiration at the victory which he had
secured for his own party. The Indian Echo of Calcutta, which claimed that Parnell 'does us the honour of reading the Echo every week', even expressed the hope that 'he will use his strength in the interests of the many millions who are immeasurably more wronged than the Irish'. See Voice of India, December 1885.

124 Indian Mirror, 6 December 1885.

125 Hindu, 12 December 1885.

126 Manchester businessman; occasional correspondent of Mahratta.

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town, so that when they make a demand, the English Government may know that it is made, not only by a few clever men, or a few journalists, or a small minority of the people of India, but by the people of India itself.127 The Ananda Bazar Patrika of Calcutta, however, was more outspoken: 'The Liberals and Conservatives are alike to us. So long as we cannot help ourselves our miseries will not cease.'128

Though the decision to hold a 'Conference of the Indian National Union' at Poona in the then coming Christmas was taken in March 1885,129 it remained a closely guarded secret for a very longtime. Until after the return of Hume to India on 2 December 1885,130 there was virtually no hint of it in the Indian press,131 which had continued throughout the preceding months to spasmodically urge the need for some sort of a national organization to evolve and pursue a common political programme for the country. The secretary of the Indian Association, S. N. Banerjea, was obviously ignorant of the decision of Hume and his friends when late in November 1885 he issued the following circular: 'It is proposed to hold a National Conference at Calcutta during the Christmas vacation (December 25th to December 27th, both days inclusive) to discuss questions of national importance. The discussion of public questions by representative men assembled from all parts of the country cannot fail to have a most salutary effect upon the formation of public opinion and even on the course of legislation. The time has also perhaps come, when the public interests demand that a common programme should be accepted as the basis of united action on the part of the different public bodies scattered throughout the country. A conference of delegates, leading to an interchange of views, must materially help to bring about such a result. I beg your Association will be good enough to send or nominate a delegate or delegates to be present at the Conference and to take part in the proceedings. If you intend sending delegates, kindly inform me of the fact. The following and such other subjects as the delegates may think necessary may be discussed:

'1. The reconstitution of the Legislative Councils.

'2. The native volunteer movement.

127 Indian Spectator, 6 December 1885.

128 Quoted in Englishman, 28 December 1885.
The rather sudden decision of the Indian Association to hold a 'National Conference' at Calcutta almost at the same time when the 'Conference of the Indian National Union' was scheduled to meet at Poona must have caused serious embarrassment to those who had been intimately associated with Hume in planning the latter conference, particularly the leaders of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the Bombay Presidency Association. We have no means of knowing precisely how they reacted to the situation. It would, however, appear that they waited until the P. and O. steamship Nizam brought Hume back to Bombay from London on the morning of 2 December 1885. Then in consultation with him, they decided to call their forthcoming conference at Poona a 'Congress' so as to avoid confusion with the proposed 'National Conference' at Calcutta, and also to postpone the start of their meeting from 25 to 28 December 1885, a day after the Calcutta conference was over. Telegrams were immediately dispatched to the various 'Select Committees' informing them of these changes. Even an attempt seems to have made later to persuade Banerjea to cancel his conference, but he refused to do so. As Banerjea recorded in his autobiography: 'Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, who presided over the Bombay Congress, invited me to attend it? I told him that it was too late to suspend the Conference, and that as I had a large share in its organization it would not be possible for me to leave Calcutta and attend the Bombay Congress.' Obviously, Banerjea was hurt to find that he has been kept in the dark about the Congress by its organizers until the very last moment.

The first public announcement of the forthcoming Congress was made by the Madras tri-weekly Hindu. 'We understand', wrote the paper on 5 December 1885, 'that there will be a Congress of
native gentlemen from different parts of India at Poona at the end of the month. The Congress is held under the auspices of the Poona Sarvajanicka Sabha and the dates of the meeting are the 28th, 29th and 30th instant.134 The Bombay weekly Indu Prakash was obviously relying on hearsay when it wrote on 7 December: 'Instead of the national conference at Calcutta which we announced last week a conference is to be held at Puna in next Christmas, when representatives of different cities throughout the country will meet and discuss certain questions of national importance.

132 Bengalee, 12 December 1885; Hindu, 28 November 1885; Native Opinion, 20 December 1885; Tribune, 12 December 1885.

133 S. N. Banerjea, op. cit., pp. 98-9. Latter-day suggestions that Banerjea was deliberately kept out of the first Congress (see, for example, B. C. Pal, Indian Nationalism: Its Principles and Personalities (1918), pp. 97-8) seem to be far-fetched and based on a total misconception of the character of the gathering at Bombay in December 1885.

134 Hindu 5 December 1885.

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The Presidency Association, and the Puna Sarvajanik Sabha have already sent invitations to Calcutta, Madras, Benares, Ahmedabad, Surat and other places. The preliminaries are, we hear, all settled ... .'135 The Calcutta daily Indian Mirror told its readers about the proposed Congress at Poona for the first time on 12 December by reproducing and commenting upon the news item from the Hindu of 5 December. It was later pointed out by the Hindu and the Indian Mirror that the Congress was, in fact, being convened by the Indian National Union,136 but they did not care to say, nor did anybody else care to enquire, when this Union was organized and who were its leaders. From the scanty and often confused notices of the Congress in the Indian press during December 1885, it would appear that no attempt was made by the conveners of the Congress to publicize its meeting or programme. This might have been deliberate, for the first Congress was intended to be a private gathering of friends.

The last third of December 1885 was a time of unusual political activity in India, with conferences being held in different parts of the country, which prompted S. N. Banerjea to remark, with pardonable exaggeration, that 'all India seemed at the present moment to have met in solemn conclave to think out the great problem of national advancement'.137 The Mahajana Sabha was the first to hold its second annual conference in Madras from 22 to 24 December 1885. The conference was so timed as to enable the leaders of the Sabha to attend the Congress at Poona. It was attended by no less than 45 delegates from the mofussil, representing almost all the districts in the presidency and even including some peasants. On the opening day the conference discussed two draft memorials: the first dealing with the reform of the legislative councils and the second with the separation of the judicial from the executive functions. The subsequent two days were devoted to the discussion of the forest and salt laws, whose operations had caused widespread discontent in the presidency.138
The second National Conference convened by the Indian Association met at Calcutta from 25 to 27 December 1885. Unlike 1883, the Indian Association was able this time to secure for its venture the support of other important political bodies in the metropolis, namely the British Indian Association, the Indian Union and the Central National Mahommedan Association. This was due not only to the exertions of the Association's new secretary, Banerjea, but also to the extreme unpopularity of the lieutenant-governor of the province, Rivers Thompson, with educated Bengalis and the elimination of the erstwhile controversial tenancy legislation question. But if the Conference of 1885 was much more representative of Calcutta than that of 1883 had been, it had fewer delegates from the mofussil of Bengal or from other parts of India than on the last occasion. The few non-Bengalis who attended the Conference, of whom the most notable was V. N. Mandlik from Bombay, just happened to be in Calcutta on business wholly unconnected with the Conference. However, the subjects discussed at the Conference—they were the same as indicated in the circular announcing the Conference—were almost all of them of national interest, and there was no mistaking the real intention of its conveners. 'We have met', said Banerjea in his opening remarks at the Conference, 'to talk, to deliberate, to consult, and if possible, to arrive at a common programme of political action. Too often our energies are frittered away in isolated and individual efforts.... Our ideals to bring the national forces so to speak, into a focus and if possible to concentrate them upon some common object calculated to advance the public good.' Meeting almost at the same time and with similar objectives, it is not improbable that the organizers of the National Conference and those of the National Congress eyed each other with some jealousy, but they were magnanimous enough to exchange telegrams of greetings and later to merge their forces.

Eurasians from several parts of India met in a 'quiet Conference' at Jabalpur on 26 December 1885. It is interesting to note how the conference came to be held. In 1876 a Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association was started in Calcutta and branches were established in some half a dozen places such as Madras, Mysore, Bombay, Hyderabad, Simla and Rangoon. But 'in a very little time special local requirements and local peculiarities were found to be too exuberant for the absurd trammels of the original central institution, and every community with any real life and vigour in it very soon developed an independent association of its own.... To avoid contradictions...
and arriving at cross purposes, which must result in much friction and waste of effort, it seems to
have occurred to the leaders of the... community in different parts of the Empire to establish an
annual Conference at some convenient central place, at which delegates from all the several
associations could meet and agree upon some concerted action in regard to matters of general
importance.'142 The proposal for such a conference was made by D. S. White when he visited
Calcutta, significantly in the company of Hume, in March 1885. The Calcutta Eurasian and
Anglo-Indian Association issued a circular letter in July 1885 inviting the opinion of sister
associations on the subject. The date for the conference was not firmly fixed until early in
December 1885. There was a good deal of criticism of the manner in which the conference was
convened and attendance at the conference was not satisfactory. The conference met in private
and discussed questions relating to the welfare of Eurasians only.143 There were two important.

140Quoted in Bagal, History of the Indian Association, p.81.

141Bombay Gazette, 29 December 1885; Bengalee, 2 January 1886.

142Bombay Gazette, 30 December 1885.

143 Ibid

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things about the conference: first, that it was held; and second, that White, who took a prominent
part in its organization and proceedings, went straight from Jabalpur to Bombay to attend the
first Indian National Congress

Another sectional conference met at Allahabad from 27 to 30 December 1885. It was convened
by the Prayag Central Hindu Samaj and discussed subjects concerning the welfare of Hindus in
northern India, chief amongst which was the encouragement of Hindi and its recognition as one
of the languages of the courts in the North-Western Provinces and Avadh. It was the second
conference of its kind, the first having been held at the same place in December last year,144 and
was attended by delegates from many towns of northern India. One of the principal participants
in this year's conference was Raja Rampal Singh, who had recently returned from Britain.145

While the ordinary observer of the Indian scene in December 1885 tended to equate the
forthcoming Congress in western India with the other conferences scheduled to be held in
different parts of the country at about the same time, particularly the one at Calcutta, it was clear
to the discerning that the former was going to be different from the latter. The Indian Mirror, for
example, wrote on 18 December 1885 that while the proposed conferences at Calcutta,
Allahabad and Madras would be of 'a provincial character', the Poona Congress would be
'altogether national in its composition as well as in its objects' and fulfil 'the long-cherished
dream of an Indian patriot'.146 The prophecy was justified by the event.

Fate, however, deprived Poona of the honour of playing host to the first Indian National
Congress. The Sarvajanik Sabha had completed all the necessary arrangements, when the
outbreak of cholera in the town forced the organizers of the Congress in the third week of
December 1885 to shift its venue to Bombay. Thanks to the exertions of the leaders of the Bombay Presidency Association, who had from the very outset been intimately associated with their friends in Poona in organizing the Congress, and the liberality of the managers of the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College and Boarding Trust, who placed the buildings above the Gowalia Tank at the Association's disposal and supervised their furbishing up, furnishing and lighting, everything was ready by the morning of 27 December, when the 'representatives' to the Congress began to arrive. 'During the whole day and far into the night of the 27th,' says the Report of the First Indian National Congress, 'informal discussions were carried on between the representatives and the order of the proceedings for the next three days was thus settled.'147 Time, however, was found the same afternoon for

144 See Prayag Samachar7January 1885, cited in Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers Published in the Punjab, North-Westener Provinces, Oudh ... up to 13 January 1885, p. 29, and Indian Mirror, 6 January 1885.

145For the proceedings of the 1885 conference, see Prayag Samachar, 6 January 1886, cited in Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers Published in the Punjab, North-Westener Provinces, Oudh ... up to 12 January 1886, p. 34.

146 Indian Mirror, 18 December 1885.

147 Report of the First Indian National Congress .... 1885, p. 4.

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an informal gathering at which the representatives were introduced to some of the leading citizens of Bombay, including a few Anglo-Indians,148 who came to the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College to welcome the representatives and express sympathy with the work on which they were about to enter. The 'most unique and interesting' spectacle was thus described by an Anglo-Indian eyewitness:

'There were men from Madras, the blackness of whose complexion seemed to be made blacker by spotless white turbans which some of them wore. A few others hailing from that Presidency were bare-headed and bare-footed, and otherwise lightly clad, their bodies from the waist upwards being only partially protected by muslin shawls. It may fairly be presumed that they are the leading lights of the towns which they represent, and as such it may be supposed that they are well educated. But they have preferred to retain their national dress and manners, and in this respect they presented a marked contrast to the delegates from Bengal. Some of these appeared in entirely European costume, while others could be easily recognized as Baboos by the peculiar cap with a flap behind which they donned. None of them wore the gold rings or diamond pendants which adorned the ears of some of the Madrasees; nor had they their foreheads painted, like their more orthodox and more conservative brethren from the Southern Presidency. Then there were Hindustanis from such places as Delhi, Agra, Lucknow and Benares, some of whom wore muslin skull-caps and dresses chiefly made of the same fine cloth. On the other hand, there were delegates from the North-West—bearded, bulky, and large-limbed men—in their coats and flowing robes of different hues and in turbans like those worn by Sikh soldiers. There were
stalwart Sindhees from Kurrachee, wearing their own tall hat surmounted by a broad brim at the

top. In this strange group were to be observed the familiar figures of Banyas from Gujarat, of
Marathas in their "cart-wheel" turbans, and of Parsees in their not very elegant head-dress, which
they themselves have likened to a slanting roof. Some members of this community had, however,
appeared in their "phenta", which is now largely patronized by the younger generation of
Parsees, and which threatens in course of time to supersede the time honoured turban. All these
men, assembled in the same hall, presented such a variety of costumes and complexions, that a
similar scene can scarcely be witnessed anywhere except at a fancy ball.... They included a large
number of lawyers and conductors of newspapers, and they all appeared to have agreed in the
opinion that they had some political aspirations which could by no possibility clash with
opposing interests, and that for the promotion of their common object there was a necessity for
concerted action. It may be easily imagined that there were some enthusiasts in their number, one
of whom was profuse in the expression of his unbounded joy at seeing in flesh

148Namely, William Wedderburn, Professor Wordsworth, Justice John Jardine of Bombay high
court, and Colonel P. Phelps, late of royal engineers, Bombay.

and blood good men and true working for the public weal, whom he had formerly known only by
name.'149

The first meeting of the Indian National Congress began at midday on Monday, 28 December
1885, in the hall of the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College, Bombay. It was attended by 'very
close on one gentlemen', of whom no less than 72 were non-officials and described as
'representatives',150 The largest number of representatives—38 in all—belonged to the western
presidency and came from six different centres. The southern presidency sent the second largest
contingent to the Congress, but its 21 representatives came from thirteen different places. Bengal
had only three representatives, all of whom were from Calcutta, a fact which was attributed by
W. C. Bonnerjee to 'a series of misfortunes, death's, illnesses and the like'.151 Four principal
towns of the North-Western Provinces and Avadh sent 7 representatives,152 while three towns
of the Punjab had one representative each at the Congress. 'Not only were all parts of India thus
represented,' claimed the Report of the First Indian National Congress without undue
exaggeration, 'but also most classes; there were barristers, solicitors, pleaders, merchants,
landowners, bankers, medical men, newspaper editors and proprietors, principals and professors
of independent colleges, headmasters of schools, religious teachers and reformers. There were
Hindus of many castes, high and low, Mahomedans (though owing to certain unfortunate
accidents far fewer than were expected) and Christians, both native, Eurasian and European. All
the leading native political Associations and principal Anglo-native newspapers were
represented; there were members of Legislative Councils, Presidents and members of Municipal
Committees and Local Boards, and it is difficult to conceive any gathering of this restricted
number more thoroughly representative of the entire nation than was this Congress. ..'.153

Officials present at the first Congress included such important personalities as Ranade,
Raghunath Rao, Bajnathj154 K. Sundararaman ,155 R.G. Bhandarkar and White. They did not,
with the exception of White, take any direct part in the discussions, 'but attended only as Amici
curiae, to listen and advise'. The Congress met in camera. Only a brief report of its proceedings was supplied

149 Bombay Gazette, 29 December 1885.

150 Report of the First Indian National Congress..., 1885, pp. 3-4.

151 Ibid., p. 7. The reasons given by Bonnerjee for the presence of only three Bengalis at the first Congress were no mere excuses. On 15 December 1885 Wedderburn had informed Chiplonkar that '15 have promised [to attend the forthcoming Congress] from Madras, 7 from Bengal'. See Chiplonkar Papers.

152 The name of Mr. J. Ghosal, editor of the Indian Union, who represented Allahabad, is missing from the list of representatives given in Report of the First Indian National Congress ..., 1885, pp. 4-5, though he is found taking part in the proceedings of the Congress. See also Proceedings of the First Indian National Congress ..., 1885, p. 9.

153 Report of the First Indian National Congress ..., 1885, p. 5.

154 B. 1853; subordinate judge at Agra and later chief justice in Indore state; d. 1914.

155 B. 1854; lecturer in government college, Kombaconam; d. 1938.

156 Report of the First Indian National Congress ..., 1885, p.4.

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to the press each day. The detailed report was not published until late next year.

On the proposal of Hume, which was seconded by S. Subramania Aiyar, supported by Telang, and unanimously carried, W.C. Bonnerjee was elected president of the Congress. The election of Bonnerjee as president of the Congress was widely appreciated in Bengal and assuaged any soreness people in that province might have felt on account of the manner in which the Congress was convened or their inadequate representation at it. It also established a healthy precedent, namely that the president of the Congress should be chosen from a province other than the one in which the Congress was being held. In his opening remarks to the Congress, Bonnerjee was at pains to emphasize the representative and constitutional character of the gathering. He defined the objects of the Congress to be as follows:

(a) The promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in our country's cause in [all] parts of the Empire.

(b) The eradication by direct friendly intercourse of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices amongst all lovers of our country, and the fuller development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in their beloved Lord Ripon's ever memorable reign.
(c) The authoritative record, after this has been carefully elicited by the fullest discussion, of the matured opinions of the educated classes in India on some of the more important and pressing of the [political and] social questions of the day.

(d) The determination of the lines upon and methods by which during the next twelve months it is desirable for native politicians to labour in the public interests.'159

Bonnerjee refuted in advance the charge that the Congress was a nest of conspirators and disloyalists' and affirmed that 'there were no more thoroughly loyal and consistent well-wishers of the British Government than were himself and the friends around him.' 'Much had been done by Great Britain for the benefit of India,' he said, 'and the whole country was truly grateful to her for it. . .But a great deal still remained to be done.' In particular, they desired that 'the basis of the government should be widened and the people should have their proper and legitimate share in it'. He asserted that 'their desire to be governed according to the ideas of government prevalent in Europe was in no way incompatible with their thorough loyalty to the British Government'. 'In meeting to discuss in an orderly and peaceable manner questions of vital importance affecting their well-being, they were following the only course by which the constitution of England enabled them to represent their views to the ruling authority.' He expressed his belief that the deliberations of the Congress would be as advantageous to the government as to the people at large.160

A detailed examination of the proceedings of the first Indian National Congress does not fall within the scope of the present work and we must content ourselves with a bare mention of the subjects which the Congress discussed during its sittings from 28 to 30 December 1885. The Congress devoted the first day to a discussion of the need for parliamentary inquiry into Indian affairs and the form which such an inquiry should take. It concluded its discussion of this subject by adopting a resolution which asked for the appointment of a royal commission on which Indians would be adequately represented and which would take evidence both in India and in Britain.161 The second day and part of the third day were spent in debating the desirability of abolishing the council of the secretary of state for India 'as the necessary preliminary to all other reforms', and of liberalizing the constitution of the supreme and existing local legislative councils by the admission of a considerable proportion of elected members (and the creation of similar councils in the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab) and by enabling them to
consider the budgets and interpellate the executive.162 The Congress also resolved, after due deliberation, on the third day to demand the holding of simultaneous examinations for the covenanted civil service both in India and in Britain, to urge upon the government the need for reducing its heavy military expenditure and for raising any additional revenue it might require in the future by the re imposition of the customs duties and the extension of the licence tax to those classes who were hitherto exempted from it, and to deprecate the recent annexation of upper Burma.163 Before concluding its labours on 30 December 1885, the Congress adopted two more resolutions which made it clear that it was no isolated demonstration, but the beginning of a movement. The first of these resolutions provided for the ratification of the decisions of the Congress by political associations throughout the country, while the second resolution announced that the Congress would re-assemble at Calcutta on 28 December 1886.164

Despite pressure from some of the representatives, the Congress did not formally take up questions of social reform. But advantage was taken of the presence of so many leading men from "various parts of the country to discuss those questions informally. Moreover, on 30 December 1885, after the Congress had concluded its sittings, a public meeting was held at the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College at which well-known reformers like Raghunath Rao, Ranade and Telang put forward their views on how best to tackle the evils of infant marriage and enforced widowhood.165

The detailed official Report of the First Indian National Congress fails to give us a vivid sense of the atmosphere which prevailed in the hall of the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College during those three days of late December 1885 when the Congress was in session there. Thanks, however, to a 'Special Correspondent' of the Calcutta weekly Reis and Rayyet, who was 'present on this the most important occasion in the history of British India' and who adopted the pseudonym 'Chiel',166 we have a 'Pen-and-ink Sketch' of the historic gathering which enables us even after the lapse of more than eighty years to recapture something of the spirit of the occasion and of the men who distinguished themselves thereat. According to this eyewitness account, the most remarkable thing about the first Congress was the moderation, the earnestness, the practicality and the loyalty which characterized its proceedings. 'It seemed to me', he wrote, 'that as if every member had inwardly resolved upon having less of words and more of work, every one of them inspired with an inward feeling that it was real work for his country which had called him to that hall, real work and no long or tall talk. There was an attempt in almost every speech to be brief, concise and to the point, an anxious care to assist than to complicate the discussions, and a ring of true patriotic earnestness which thrilled through the sympathetic chords of all listeners every
now and again. Above all, there was moderation in the tone and language such as would have ... put the most moderate Anglo-Indian to the blush.... This loyal tone which pervaded the Congress attained now and then almost a painful pitch whenever the tongue of grievance grew eloquent, whenever the despair of Native aspiration was painted with vivid colors, whenever the easy and original banter of a speaker betrayed a bleeding heart.'167

W. C. Bonnerjee, who presided over this assembly of 'some hundred honest, loyal, and earnest people, sitting round a long table, all bent upon real work and no fuss and sound', was 'at once the envy, the pride, the cynosure of all the eyes in the hall'. He discharged the duties of his office 'with the easy grace of one who is accustomed to the work he performs—with the easy grace with which he conducts a law-suit'. 'A fine tall figure, with a handsome face, and a graceful flowing beard, with a splendid unimpeachable address, with suave manners ... and added to this an almost musical tone in his rich voice and correct pronunciation, he contributed almost half to the smoothness of the proceedings. His dress was English, his every attitude, sitting or standing, was English, his

165Indian Spectator, 3 January 1886; also letter of K.T. Telang to the editor, The Times, in Proceedings of the First Indian National Congress ..., 1885, Appendix D, pp. 163-4. W.C. Bonnerjee later claimed that 'it was to a great extent on my advocacy that the Congress leaders agreed to leave out social questions from the movement and make it a purely political one'. See Bonnerjee, 'A Call to Arms III', Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar, December 1903, p. 478.

166The correspondent might well have been Girija Bhushan Mukerji, pleader and editor of the Navavibhakar, who was one of the three delegates from Calcutta.

167 Reis and Rayyet, 16 January 1886.

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gestures were English, from a gentle wave of his hand to a slight toss of the head—he looked, in fact, every inch an Englishman. And yet, for all that, he looked every inch a Hindoo. There was a grace—in his tone, in his look, in his movements—which was about him in all its native eloquence.'168 The other notable representative from Bengal, N. N. Sen, was no orator, but 'he commanded the respect of the entire assembly by his simplicity, candour, earnestness and an uncompromising attitude that is wholly his own.... He seemed to feel every word he uttered, every sentiment he breathed out, and every breath that escaped his lips. It seemed from the tenor, and manner of delivery, of his speech, that his patriotism, or the discussion of the subjects before the Conference admitted of no joke, wit or pleasantry.'169

The chief among the Bombayites were Mehta, Telang and Naoroji. About Mehta 'Chiel' wrote: 'There is a boldness in his attitude, in his voice, and in his delivery which will instil warmth and animation into the dullest assembly of people. His reasoning is convincing, his expressions terse and concise, his argument always to the point. A fine tall figure like that of Mr. Bonnerjee, with a Europeanish fair complexion and black luxuriant whiskers,...he was a good challenge...to Mr. Bonnerjee, sitting opposite, from Bengal. He stands up suddenly like a note of admiration, sits
down as suddenly like a full stop, and enjoys the vehement applause which follows this latter action with a nervous pleasure which he vainly tries to conceal by constantly pushing his specs closer and closer to his bright, bold eyes.' Telang was 'brighter and livelier in his conversation' than Mehta and when addressing the Congress he showed 'great buoyancy of spirits and ... plenty of good humour' as well as 'a marvellous fluency of speech'. 'Middle-sized in stature, of fair olive complexion, handsome features—no beard, no whiskers, a long but thin moustach', dressed in a pair of white trousers and a white long china coat, with a small brimless cap on his shaven head, he 'cut a very striking figure'. 'The grey-haired patriot [Naoroji] is short and thin, but full of spirit, enthusiasm and good sense. He dresses himself in a somewhat old, if not orthodox, Parsee fashion—a pyjama, a long yellowish china or old-fashioned Parsee coat and the slanting Gujerati hat. He took his stand at the end of the discussion of each Resolution and recapitulated the whole. It is a pleasure and an honor to hear him. The old man is also full of sparkle, wit and sly humour and sarcasm. With rare fluency of speech and curt expressions, harmonized all conflicting points raised in the discussions and gave nerve, tissue and fibre to the wordings and tone of the Resolutions. On every occasion that he rose, he opened his vast fund of information and experience for the adjustment of doubts and differences of opinions, and" to the delectation of all round the table . . . . It was Mr. Dadabhai Nowrojee who thus put the object of the conference in a nutshell: "To demand for the rights of British subjects, as British subjects".'

168 ibid

169 Ibid 30 January 1886.

170 Ibid.

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Murhdhar from Ambala made a sensation both by his appearance and by his speech. 'With his Punjabee coat and trousers and glittering Cabulee turban, he presented an imposing figure. He was essentially a Punjabee speaker, full of enthusiasm and spirit and no little sarcastic humour. He kept the Congress in a continued roar of laughter. When at the conclusion of the Congress, the visiting representatives were expressing their gratitude to their Bombay hosts, Murhdhar 'brought down the hall by laying to their door the charge of theft and robbery. They had stolen and robbed his heart.' J. Ghosal, who represented Allahabad, 'was remarkable for his calmness of manner and temperate tone. He seemed to be a lover of silent work.' 'But by far the most striking figures in this assembly of Delegates', 'Chiel' went on to add, 'were those from Madras They mustered strong on the occasion and belied the impression that Madras was ever at any time "benighted". Benighted indeed, when her representatives brought a flood of light before which those of all the other Provinces and Presidencies actually paled. There were, among them, all sorts of speakers. If one was wanting in one thing, another more than sufficiently supplied it. If one speaker was serious unto dullness, another opened a battering of such withering sarcasm and banter that the grim truths which they couched stood before us in all their nakedness.'

The solitary Briton in this motley assembly was A O. Hume, rightly regarded as 'the father of the Indian National Congress'. He was not the first person either to conceive the idea of an all-India political organization or to attempt to realize it, but his were the authority, the energy and the
organizing skill that accomplished the seemingly impossible The three cheers given for him at the conclusion of the first Congress were an acknowledgement of this fact Of Hume 'Chiel' had this to say 'With a face beaming with intelligence and frankness, softness, geniality, and sympathy beaming forth from his lustrous eyes, the first to cheer and first to appreciate a sentiment or a joke, he at once formed the chief feature, "attraction and almost hope of all around him '173

Those who attended the first Indian National Congress at Bombay in the last week of December 1885 were very conscious of two things, first, that they were making history, and second, that the Congress was a symbol and a vindication of their growing unity as a nation 'Surely never had so important and comprehensive an assemblage occured with in historical times on the soil of India,' claimed W.C Bonnerjee in his presidential address to the Congress

171 Ibid

172 See Report of the First Indian National Congress , 1885, p 59 Being a government official, Wedderburn had to remain in the background, but his role in organizing the first Congress was second only to Hume's

173 Reis and Ray yet, 30 January 1886

174 Report of the First Indian National Congress , 1885, p 7 On his return journey to Calcutta after the Congress, Bonnerjee found himself travelling in the same railway compartment as the famous Russian traveller, I P Minayeff When asked by the latter 'what practical results they expected from the conference', Bonnerjee replied 'Growth of national feeling

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This 'large and influential meeting that I have the honour of addressing today,' remarked G.S. Aiyar, moving the first resolution at the Congress, 'this assemblage in Bombay of my chosen countrymen from Calcutta and Lahore, from Madras and Sind, from places wide apart and difficult of intercommunication, indicates the beginning of a national political life, destined to produce a profound change in the immediate future. From today forward we can with greater propriety than heretofore speak of an Indian nation, of national opinion and national aspirations.'175 )

The same twin notes—of triumph and vindication—ran through most contemporary press comment on the event. 'It marks', wrote the Indu Prakash about the first Congress, 'the beginning of a new life, and whatever traducers may say, it will greatly help in creating a national feeling and binding together distant people by common sympathies, and common ends.... The very fact that such a conference has met and fairly promises to be a success belies the supposition that we are not a nation. It must be conceded that we are wanting in many qualities which make a nation. We are divided by a variety of languages, religions, and social customs, separated from each other by long distances, and are wanting in homogeneity of race and feeling. Nevertheless it is undeniable that we are at present politically one nation, or at least have the makings of one.'176

The Indian Spectator remarked: 'Is unity of action possible to us Indians as a race? Those
sceptics, who found themselves face to face last week with the splendid gathering of nationalities, merged into one united nationality, will find it scarcely worth while to trouble themselves with the question again.'177

'The first National Congress at Bombay', wrote the Indian Mirror, 'forms an important chapter in the history of British rule in India. The day on which it opened, namely, the 28th December, 1885, will form a red-letter day in the annals of the national progress of the Native races. It is the, nucleus of a future Parliament for our country, and will lead to good of inconceivable magnitude for our countrymen. If we were asked what was the proudest day in our life, we should unhesitatingly say it was the day on which we, for the first time, met all our brothers of Madras, Bombay, the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab under the roof of the Gokul Dass Tejpal Sanskrit College for the purpose of the National Congress. From the date of this Congress we may well count the more rapid development of national progress in India in future.' The paper expressed the wish that the lieutenant-governor of Bengal and the editor of the St. James's Gazette, both of whom had recently questioned whether the feeling of nationality existed, or could ever grow, in India, were present at the

and unity of Indians.' See Minayeff, Travels in and Diaries of India and Burma (translated into English by Hitendranath Sanyal and others, n.d.), p. 120.

175Report of the First Indian National Congress . . , 1885, p. 9.

176 INDU Prakash, 28 December 1885.

177Indian Spectator 3 January 1886.

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Congress 'to see for themselves what new life India has lately been imbued with, and what national unity is springing up among the various races inhabiting this vast peninsula'.178 The Hindoo Patriot remarked: '... it has been a great and unprecedented gain for us to have been able to demonstrate practically that united action in India after all is not an utter impossibility, that we have every chance of success in meeting on a common platform, and that at no very distant date the so-called hostile nationalities of India may, their Anglo-Indian friends notwithstanding, unite for common political good.'179

'The Indians', said the Hindu, 'have not indeed issued a manifesto, nor, like some European nations, have they chosen to commemorate the birth of their national unity by any fantastic demonstration or uproarious jubilee. They have been content to look upon the event calmly and with self-possession. Moderation and coolness are the two great characteristics of Indian reformers, and although the inauguration of the Congress at Bombay would have justified demonstrative accompaniments, it passed off as quietly as any of the public meetings that nowadays so frequently take place in our country. ... A policy and a programme adopted by the collective wisdom of leading lights in all parts of India and urged under a common understanding are sure to receive consideration than otherwise. Indian opinion will then acquire an influence and prestige which cannot be obtained by isolated and unorganized efforts. The
spirit of patriotism will spread abroad and lead to the gradual diffusion and consolidation of public opinion.'180

The Hindustani of Lucknow remarked: 'When the historian of the future sets himself to write the history of the National Congress, he will not fail to mention prominently the 28th, 29th and 30th December 1885, when the various forces of the country were brought together. We have very often used the word "nation". We know what this word means, and we know also that there are many Anglo-Indians who will not believe that there is anything like a nation in India. But if any of these gentlemen had been present at the National Congress alluded to above at the Goculdas Tejpal Sanskrit School, Bombay, he would have been convinced of the existence of something like a nation in India. The assembling of Sindhis, Punjabis, Bengalis, Madrasis, Guzeratis, Mahrattas, Parsis,

178 Indian Mirror, 5 January 1886. Speaking at the annual dinner of the Calcutta Trade Association on 30 January 1885, the lieutenant-governor of Bengal, Rivers Thompson, had remarked: 'We are dealing . . . with a vast area and a vast people of many tribes, and tongues, and creeds. It is ethnologically impossible and historically improbable that any effort or will could ever weld these into one nation . . ..' Englishman, 31 January 1885. The St. James's Gazette, 8 December 1885, had written: 'There is no nation, nor germ of national life yet discernible in the great peninsula. Whether in the course of ages such a spirit may at last be slowly created amongst those numerous populations, differing in race, creed, traditions, and qualities from each other far more than the races of Europe amongst themselves, is more than doubtful. '

179Hindoo Patriot, 11 January 1886.

180 Hindu, 7 January 1886.

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Marwaris, Hindus and Mahomedans, under the same roof, and for a common object, is by no means a trifling thing.'181

The verdict of history has confirmed—something it seldom does— the judgement of contemporaries on the significance of the first Indian National Congress.

181 Quoted in Indian Minor, 17 January 1886.

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Glossary

ABKARI: excise duties on the manufacture or sale of intoxicating liquors or drugs.

AMLA, AMLAH: an officer of the judicial or revenue court.
ANJUMAN: an association.

BABOO, BABU: a title of respect in northern India, but sometimes used by the British disparagingly to denote English-educated Indians.

BANIA, BANYA: a Hindu of the trading caste.

BAZAAR, BAZAR: a market.

CHABUK: a whip.

CHADAR, CHADER: a sheet or cloth.

CHAKRAVARTIN: a universal emperor.

CHAPATI, CHUPATTY: a thin bread or cake.

COOLIE, COOLY: a hired labourer.

DAFTAR: office.

DARBAR: a public levee; a royal court.

DARUL-HARB: a land of war where Muslims have the duty of struggling against the infidel.

DAYABHAGA: partition of inheritance; title of Hindu law books relating to the apportionment of heritable property.

DEVASTHAN: a religious endowment; a place of worship.

DHARMA: moral duty; law; religion.

DHARMAGHAT: strike; passive resistance.

DHOTI, DHUTTY: a loin-cloth.

DIWAN: a royal court; a council; a minister; a chief officer.

FAKIR: a religious mendicant.

FATWA: a judgement; a ruling on a disputed point of Muslim law.

FERINGHEE: a European; a foreigner.

GADDI, GADI: the seat of rank or royalty.
GOSSAIN, GOSWAMI: a religious mendicant.

HARTAL: a strike; the closing of business as a mark of protest or sorrow.

HOOKKAH, HUKKA: a hubble-bubble.

HOWDAH: seat on elephant's back.

IMAM, IMAUM: a head or chief in religious matters.

JAGHEERDAR, JAGIRDAR: the holder of a large estate.

JEHAD, JIHAD: holy war.

KAFIR: an infidel.

KHOI: parched rice.

KHOTE: a cultivator.

KIRTAN: a ballad; a song.

KOONBEE, KUNBI: a peasant; an agricultural caste in western India.

KULIN: of good family; a class of Brahmans in Bengal who take precedence over all other Brahmans.

LAKH: a hundred thousand.

MADRASA, MADRASSA: a Muslim school, college or academy.

MAHAJAN: a banker.

MAHARAJA: a great king; a title.

MAHATMA: a great soul.

MAHOUT: an elephant-driver.

MAULVI, MOULVEE, MOULVI: a learned Muslim.

MELA: a fair.

MIRASIDAR: the holder of hereditary lands, especially in south India.
MITRA: a friend.

MLECHA, MLECHCHHA: an unclean person.

MOFUSSIL, MUFASSIL: the country as opposed to the principal town.

MUHATARAF, MUTARPHA: a tax on trades and professions.

MUKHTIAR: an attorney or agent.

MUKHTIARNAMA: power of attorney.

NABOB, NAWAB: a governor or nobleman; a title.

NYAYASABHA: a court of arbitration.

PANCHAYAT: a court of arbitration; a council of five.

PANDIT: a learned man.

PARDAH, PURDAH: a curtain, especially one serving to screen women from the sight of strangers; the secluding of women.

PATNIDAR, PATTANIDAR: the holder of an under-tenure.

PINDAREE, PINDARI: a marauder.

POORANA, PURANA: a class of Hindu sacred works.

PUJA: worship.

QAZI: a Muslim judge.

RAIYAT, RYOT: a peasant; a cultivator.

RAIYATWARI, RYOTWARI: a system of land revenue settlement made by government with each actual cultivator for a term without the intervention of a third party.

RAJ: a kingdom, rule or sovereignty.

RAJA: a king, prince or ruler; a title.

RAJSUYA YAJNA: a sacrifice which only a universal emperor was entitled to perform.

SABHA: an assembly; an association.
SADAR, SADR, SUDDER, SUDDR: chief.

SADAR DIWANI ADALAT: the chief civil court.

SAHIB: a master; a European; an honorific affix.

SAHUKAR, SOWKAR: a banker; a money-lender.

SALAAM: salutation; obeisance; to salute.

SANATANIST: an orthodox Hindu.

SARDAR, SIRDAR: a chief.

SARKAR, SIRCAR, SIRKAR: government.

SARVAJANIK SABHA: a people's association.

SASTRA, SHASTRA: a scripture; a work of authority.

SATI, SUTTEE: the rite of widow-burning.

SEPOY, SIPAHI: an Indian soldier.

SWADESHI: of one's own country; home-made.

TAHSILDAR: a collector of revenue.

TALUKDAR, TALUQDAR: the holder of an estate.

TANTRIST: a believer in magic.

TICCA, THIKA: hired; on contract.

VAKIL: a pleader or lawyer.

VEDANTIST: a believer in Hindu philosophy founded on the Vedas.

WAHABI: a follower of Abdul-Wahhab, an eighteenth-century Arab reformer, who preached a kind of puritanical Islam.

YOOGA, YUGA: an age.

ZAMINDAR, ZEMINDAR: a landholder, paying revenue to government directly.
ZENANA: female apartment.

ZILLAH: an administrative district.

ZULAM, ZULM: oppression; tyranny; extortion.

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