

## THE FUTURE OF INDIA.\*

BY SIR LEWIS TUPPER, K.C.I.E., C.S.I.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS INSTITUTIONS.

It may, I think, be taken as a maxim of administration that, where there is a foreign Government of a ceded and conquered country, it is wiser to recognise, and develop than to destroy or supplant existing indigenous institutions.† This maxim has greater force in proportion as the ruling authority differs in tradition, history, social life, law, religion, language, and race, from the subject populations. In that proportion there is the stronger temptation to violate the rule, and in that proportion will its violation produce the greater degree of discontent. There are, of course, obvious limitations to the rule; for the foreign Government, if civilised, will necessarily stamp out practices which, according to its own view of law and morality, are criminal and cruel; and will, with more or less success, oppose corruption and oppression. For the rule with these limitations there are reasons of expediency, and reasons which may be fairly termed scientific. It is a commonplace that men acquiesce more readily in an order of things with which they are familiar. Existing institutions are part of the social heritage, the joint products of heredity and environment. Human progress does not escape from the great law of evolution; and in developing what is indigenous and adapting it to a new environment we avoid the penalties consequent on ignoring that law.

### ILLUSTRATIONS OF SUCH DEVELOPMENT.

In India, without any conscious advertence to a political philosophy of recent growth, we have for the most part

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† Compare address of Professor William Ridgeway, Anthropological Section of the British Association, Dublin, 1908, where he quotes 'Naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurrit.'

followed the maxim to which I have referred. What we did is best seen on a large scale. Our land revenue administration—a matter of the first practical importance to nearly two-thirds of the population—great as is its variety in different provinces, is, except in permanently settled districts, an improved version of the arrangements of our predecessors. We have rebuilt, on a model of far greater strength and precision of design, the shattered Delhi Empire.\* Our Empire, like that Empire before its fall, consists of great provinces officially administered, and of dependent States exercising various degrees of sovereignty. The heads of provinces stand in the place of the *subadar*, and the district officers in the place of the *ámil*. On a smaller scale there are various instances. It will suffice to mention the legal recognition and employment of councils of elders in three frontier provinces, the utilisation of village headmen, not only for village purposes, but also in support of the criminal law; and, in Upper India, the conversion of the village accountants into an organised subordinate agency for the administration of the land.

#### DEPARTURES FROM THIS PROCESS.

No doubt we mistakenly acted on a set of purely Western ideas, when, at the end of the eighteenth century, we made the famous Permanent Settlement of Bengal. We also extended that Settlement to about one-third of the Madras Presidency, and then we discovered our mistake. The theory was that the unscrupulous tax-gatherers of the fallen Empire and the dependent chieftains, whose status we confused with theirs, could be turned into landlords of the English type by the wholesale gift to them of certain State rights over the land. The complete failure of that theory is a matter of history, and I need not enter on it here. In introducing representative institutions in

\* The present writer elaborated this argument at pp. 198, 199, of "Our Indian Protectorate," a book published in 1893, and long out of print.

India we are making a mistake closely analogous to the mistake of the Permanent Settlement, and with far less excuse, because there is now available, for those who do not decline to make use of it, a knowledge of the country greatly superior to that possessed by anyone in 1793. At that time we honestly admired our own system of landed property, and tried with signal ill-success to give Bengal the benefit of it. Now, that is to say, twice within my own recollection, the Government of the day has taken its own admiration for certain elements in our own political system as its guide; and upon that admiration has attempted to deal with conditions severed from our own by impassable barriers of race and evolution.

#### VALUE OF CONSULTATIVE COUNCILS.

The Local Legislative Councils as heretofore constituted are doubtless new, but I regard them as improving, not as supplanting, the normal institutions of the country. There is nothing opposed to the indigenous institutions of India in the ruler of the day seeking the advice of the leading men of his State. The provincial organisation of the Local Councils accords with the general model of administration in British territory which we have taken, with improvements, from our predecessors. So long as there is always an official majority in nominated Councils they are in effect consultative, and the function of offering advice and freely defending it is one which they can most usefully discharge. In the Select Committees, in which the detailed work of legislation is really done, the help given by non-official members is invaluable. Legislation itself was a novelty in India, and was the inevitable consequence of one of the first necessities of orderly administration—the establishment of courts of justice worthy of the name. The creation of Legislative Councils naturally followed the inception of the reign of formally enacted law, though not, indeed, till after a long interval. Between consultative Legislative Councils and the little Parliaments which may

be brought into existence by the proposed reforms there are fundamental differences of principle.

#### LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT A FAILURE.

I have said that twice within my own recollection we have taken as our guide in dealing with Indian political institutions certain elements in political institutions of our own. These reforms are one instance, the other is the Local Self-Government Scheme of 1882. It would help the advocates for the present reforms if they were able to claim that the scheme of 1882 had succeeded. My own opinion is that so far it has failed. The time for the discussion of this question has not yet come. In two pregnant paragraphs of his despatch of November 27 last, replying to the India Councils proposals of the Government of India, the Secretary of State asserts the necessity of attempting without delay an effectual advance in the direction of local self-government. He admits that "non-official members have not been induced to such an extent as was hoped to take real interest in local business, because their powers and responsibilities were not real." The causes which have made local self-government in India an unfortunate counterfeit of the local self-government of the West would be matter for controversy which had better be postponed until we see the answer made by the Government of India to the relevant paragraphs in the Secretary of State's despatch, and can take up the discussion of the report of the Decentralisation Committee.

#### ASSUMPTION THAT THE PRESENT REFORMS WILL BE EFFECTIVE.

In making my own suggestions I will assume that in British territory local self-government will become real, that Executive Councils, with at least one Indian member on each, will be given to Lieutenant-Governors, and that the Legislative Councils will grow into little Parliaments. An Indian member of the Viceroy's Executive Council we

have already. I will take it that in British territory the exotic system of popular government will be forced upon a country quite unprepared for it, and that, in deference to the supposed preference of Englishmen for their own system, the serious risks which will accompany this procedure will be faced. What is the remedy? Or, if there is no complete remedy, what is the counterpoise, and in the counterpoise what security against the risks which assuredly will be much required?

#### AN ALTERNATIVE OR REMEDIAL POLICY ADVOCATED.

I do not think that in British territory there is any complete remedy. The pendulum has swung back to the ideas of 1882, and even if the present scheme could be arrested now, hereafter the pendulum of English opinion would again swing back to the ideas of 1908 and 1909. But just as we stopped territorially the process of permanent settlement, so we could gradually limit the extent of territory exposed to the risks of popular government, and increase the extent of territory still subject to Imperial rule. It is not, however, merely or primarily as a counterpoise to present action that I advocate a certain policy. I think the policy about to be explained ought to have been adopted in lieu alike of the scheme lately proposed by the Government of India and of that substituted for it by the Secretary of State.

The British Indian Empire is twofold. British territory is officially administered. So-called foreign territory—the 615 Indian States (excluding the Shan States and the Khasi States of Assam)—is, with a few exceptions, administered by ruling chiefs and their ministers. The system under which their administration is conducted is known as the political system, and its gradual elaboration, guided wholly in accordance with the principle of improving indigenous institutions, is one of the greatest of our successes. As the Greek and Roman streams of Aryan immigrants evolved the City State, as a great part of

modern Europe has evolved the Nation State, so the Aryan immigrants entering India evolved the Indian *Ráj* or Principality. The Moghals accepted and even copied it in their official institutions. Fortunately, just when it was in its greatest peril from our doctrine of lapse and our entirely erroneous disbelief in the possibility of the good government of Indians by Indians, we saw how it would add to our strength; and over a third of India the preservation of Indian rule is now an accepted principle. The policy that I advocate is: Stay your hand as much as may still be possible in pressing on popular government, but without fear, with benefit to loyal aspirants for place and power, and, with an addition to our political strength, multiply the *Ráj* and extend the operation of our political system.

PRINCIPLES OF THE INDIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM  
EXHIBITED IN THE MYSORE INSTRUMENT OF TRANSFER.

The creation of new Native States—and that is what I mean—is by no means without precedent. I will take what is virtually a capital instance of this process because it will enable me to exhibit, in their wisdom and strength, the leading principles of our Indian political system.

The rendition of Mysore on March 25, 1881, was technically the restoration of Hindu rule in a State created by the British Government out of conquered territory after the fall of Seringapatam and the death of Tipu on May 4, 1799. It may be fairly taken as a precedent, because at the time of rendition Mysore had been under British administration for fifty years—that is, for much more than half the period of our general supremacy in India at that date, even if we suppose that period to have begun so early as 1803. It is the Instrument of Transfer, giving effect to the rendition, which is in itself an epitome of the main principles of Indian political law; and these principles, with one possible exception, should be followed in inaugurating new Indian States with ruling chiefs of our own creation.

Without exhausting the provisions of the Instrument of

Transfer, I may summarise the most important of them. The succession devolves upon the lineal descendants of the Maharaja, whether by blood or adoption, but no succession is valid until it has been recognised by the Governor-General in Council. The Maharaja is bound to remain faithful in allegiance and subordination to His Majesty the King-Emperor. The British Government undertakes to defend and protect the Mysore territories against all external enemies. The Maharaja must not, without previous sanction, build any new or repair any existing fortresses. The importation and manufacture of arms, ammunition, and military stores, except with permission, are forbidden. The Maharaja must not object to the maintenance or establishment of British cantonments in the Mysore territories whenever and wherever the Governor-General in Council may consider such cantonments necessary. The military force employed in the Mysore State for the maintenance of internal order and the Maharaja's personal dignity, and for any other purposes approved by the Governor-General in Council, must not exceed the strength which that authority may from time to time fix; and its directions in respect to the enlistment, organisation, equipment, and drill of troops must at all times be complied with. The Maharaja must abstain from interference in the affairs of any other State or Power, and may have no communication or correspondence with any other State or Power, or the agents or officers of any other State or Power, except with the previous sanction and through the medium of the Governor-General in Council. The Maharaja may not employ in his service any person not a native of India without the previous sanction of the Governor-General in Council, and must, on being so required by the Governor-General in Council, dismiss from his service any person so employed. Separate coinage is prohibited, and the coinage of the Government of India is legal tender. The extradition may be demanded of any person accused of having committed an

offence in British India. Plenary criminal jurisdiction over European British subjects in Mysore territories is vested in the Governor-General in Council, and in respect to such subjects the Maharaja may exercise only such jurisdiction as may be delegated to him.

The time has probably now come when the rule against intercourse between Indian States may safely be relaxed, but, in other respects, provisions substantially similar to those of the Mysore Instrument would be necessary in the case of every new State. There are others of special importance intended to safeguard the rights and expectations of the inhabitants of transferred territory.

Thus, the Instrument declares that all laws in force, and rules having the force of law in Mysore territories at the time of the rendition, must be maintained and efficiently administered, and left unaltered except with the previous consent of the Governor-General in Council. Without such consent, no material change in the system of administration is allowed. Title-deeds granted and settlements of land revenue made are maintained. Clause 22 clinches the whole matter. It runs :

“The Maharaja of Mysore shall at all times conform to such advice as the Governor-General in Council may offer him with a view to the management of his finances, the settlement and collection of his revenues, the imposition of taxes, the administration of justice, the encouragement of trade, agriculture, and industry, and any other objects connected with the advancement of His Highness's interests, the happiness of his subjects, and his relations to the British Government.”

In the event of the breach or non-observance of any of the foregoing conditions, the possession and administration of the Mysore territories may be resumed.

#### OTHER FEATURES OF THE SCHEME PROPOSED.

So far I have dealt with the constitutional position of new States, which should be practically identical with that



of the States which now exist. There are other essential matters in the scheme. All strategic routes, all strategic points, including all cantonments and great cities, should be kept under British administration. If by an exception a cantonment or great city were included in State territory, it would be treated ex-territorially, so that the civil and criminal jurisdiction of the British Government would be untouched. Moreover, blocks of British territory should be so interspersed with blocks of State territory that there should be easy and speedy communication between the States and British districts. This would supplement other measures for preventing ignorance of passing events, and would make certain that we should have immediate notice of the signs of misrule which are given when the tax-paying peasantry begin to desert their lands, and bands of armed pillagers appear and commence depredations.

#### METHOD OF APPLYING THE POLICY.

Of course, I make no specific proposals that in particular tracts old States should be revived or entirely new States constituted. I merely advocate a policy. Its detailed application would necessarily be spread over a considerable length of time. In every case we should have to find a suitable locality, a suitable population, and a suitable chief. Hindus would have to be ruled by Hindus, Muhammadans by Muhammadans. In reviving old States or in proposing to confer ruling powers upon certain chiefs or *zamindars*, who would certainly have had them from the first if we had understood the institutions of the country as well as we do now, and had possessed the same political and material preponderance, we should naturally seek for a suitable ruling chief in the old hereditary line. In constituting entirely new States we should have excellent opportunities of rewarding great landholders, or *jagirdars*, or present ruling families who had served us well, perhaps in many cases by taking cadets from their families. Generally the size of a new State should be that of an average British

district in Upper India, because experience has shown that this amount of territory, when not too densely populated, is what one man can control. But there should be no hard-and-fast rule, and for local reasons many new States might be much smaller.

Although I make no specific proposals, I may indicate groups of local leaders in parts of the country where it would be reasonable to consider the promotion to ruling powers of specially selected chiefs already possessing an hereditary status. Amongst such would be certain chiefs in Kangra and Kulu, who fared badly indeed compared with the ruling chiefs of the Simla Hill States of similar origin; various Cis-Sutlej chiefs, who unfortunately took or sympathised with the wrong side in the first Sikh War, and were disfranchised accordingly; the Oudh Talukdars; many of the great *zamindars* of Bengal and parts of the Madras Presidency; and some of the more important chiefships out of the total of one hundred in the Central Provinces which lost their chance of ruling powers in consequence of Sir Richard Temple's famous inquiry and report of 1863. In constituting entirely new States we should look for localities to rural districts of homogeneous populations off the main lines of strategy, communication, and industry; and for the Rajas and Nawabs to leading and ruling families.

#### PRECAUTIONS AGAINST MISRULE.

The work of selection would be very gradual, and for a good many years new States or old States revived would simply be added to existing political charges. In course of time, as the operation of the scheme was extended, new political agencies, perhaps on a considerable scale, would be formed. It would be a principle that British control of every State should be exercised through a political officer. This would be our great security against misrule, and for the observance of the conditions of the Instrument of Transfer. I have already suggested a subsidiary security

derived from the intermixture of British and State territory. I may add here that railways, posts, and telegraphs would remain in British hands.

#### CESSIONS OF TERRITORY UNNECESSARY.

It is important to note that the rearrangements of jurisdiction and authority here proposed do not involve any cession of British territory. Everything necessary can be done by an Act of the Indian Legislature. This facilitates the inception of the scheme, because the power of the Government of India or of the Crown to cede territory in India in time of peace has been the subject of elaborate discussion. To establish this point it is sufficient to say that in the case of the forty Shan States in Burma—shown in the Census Report as Native States—their legal position, the character of the control exercised over them, the modifications of British laws extended to them, and the powers of the chiefs are fixed by a British enactment (Sections 10 to 12 of the Burma Laws Act of 1898), and by a series of notifications in the *Burma Gazette*. What has been done in Burma can be done elsewhere in British India by like means.

#### THE SCHEME HAS BECOME FEASIBLE ONLY IN COMPARATIVELY RECENT YEARS.

It is only within recent years that the scheme here suggested has become feasible. The political system dates from the Mutiny, and has only of late been completed. I could not propose the making of new States unless the constitutional mould into which the materials might be fitted were at hand in the Mysore Instrument. Bombs notwithstanding, our strength in India was never so great as it is now; the army is better than ever and more mobile; improved communications bring instant news and expedite the use of our power. Simultaneously with the political system, the British administrative system has reached a high degree of elaboration. Some may hold that it is

over-elaborate, but at least there is this benefit, that the vast experience consolidated in our laws and rules and manuals, and in the procedure of our great departments, is available for the guidance of the new chiefs. Nor should it be forgotten that in the Census Reports and District Gazetteers and Settlement Reports there are immense stores of information ready for the use of those who would have to work out the details of any scheme for the constitution of new States.

#### ADVANTAGES OF THE SCHEME.

The scheme sketched above would possess considerable advantages. I advocate it on political grounds ; but I do not think that grounds of administrative efficiency would be wanting, because the scheme would prove a most powerful measure of decentralisation, and over-centralisation is, perhaps, our greatest defect. We should not be introducing, almost by a stroke of the pen, sweeping reforms of one type all over a vast Empire in various degrees of civilisation ; we could make a change here and there as our inquiries were perfected ; elasticity and adaptation would be regarded ; in course of time a process already visible in Indian States would set in ; and as the people advanced so also would their form of government. The rate of advance might, and would, differ largely in different parts of the Empire. We should add to our political strength because the new chiefs would owe everything to us, and would look to us for rewards and further honours ; and because the people would regard our power as their shield against the possible caprice or misrule of their Nawab or Raja. We could reward those who are really our friends, and confirm the stability of those whose interests are already the most stable. As for educated Indians, English is already the diplomatic language of India. Thanks to chiefs' colleges and other influences, the members of the rising generation of the great houses are often, or usually, literate ; and, politically, they deserve even more consideration than the

schoolmasters and graduates and undergraduates of no family, and the journalists and lawyers of no great repute who form a not insignificant proportion of the agitators. New Native States would open fresh fields of employment to well-affected literates, and valuable opportunities of promotion to our own Indian officials. Men desire power and dignity no less than money, and the officials of Indian States would have more power than our Provincial Service men, and would enjoy the high-sounding titles of Foreign Minister, Minister of Education, Minister of Justice, and the like. I do not think that Lieutenant-Governors, as distinguished from their secretaries and heads of departments, need be overworked in consequence of having to meet their little Parliaments; but there will certainly be some addition to their work, and, in either case, the measure of decentralisation here proposed would afford that real relief which association with colleagues would deny them. Partitions of provinces would be avoided, and for such measures further need will otherwise certainly arise from the increase of population, the spread of education, the growth of industries, and the constantly enhanced complexity of every sort of public business. The formation of new groups of States within a province would be no break in its movement towards the rank of a nationality within the Empire. More than all, we should escape the race difficulty which is fundamental in India. There are few worse dangers in India than the dangers arising out of the subjection of the ruling race to those whose government is its duty. This is to cause us to abdicate our functions and to lessen our prestige and self-respect, on which, having regard to our scanty numbers, we largely depend for our authority. Every system is radically bad which involves the subordination of Europeans to Indians. That subordination will be the direct consequence of appointing Indian members of new Executive Councils of Lieutenant-Governors. If such a system is persisted in, the character of the Indian Civil Service will

be changed for the worse. Under the scheme which I propose the new chiefs would be in their right place. They would exercise great authority over their fellow-Indians, but would do so subject to British control.

#### OBJECTIONS TO THE SCHEME.

By far the most important objection to this scheme is that the inhabitants of the tracts proposed for transfer would, almost invariably, prefer to remain under British rule. This admission is a satire on Indian self-government; but I appeal to anyone who has had experience of Indian provincial administration for confirmation of its accuracy. I think the objection is outweighed by the advantages. The peasantry would cry out, but they would not really be hurt. What they desire is, in time-honoured phrase, that the *ryot* shall not be subject to unwarrantable exactions, and, duly paying his rent or revenue, shall not be dispossessed of the lands he occupies. As I have indicated, all British laws would be maintained. If a chief exercised oppression, he would, without hesitation, be removed, and a long minority established with a superintendent in charge. I quite allow that there would be corruption; but if it became materially worse than it is in British territory, it would be time to change the chief. So frequent are transfers, due mainly to leave and promotions, so crushing is the burden of the desk, that fewer officers than is desirable have time to get to know their districts really well. A good chief holding by a life tenure would know every village in his charge, and all the leaders of the tribes and castes, and all the local magnates. Such a Raja might very well be a better earthly providence for the peasantry than the fleeting collector, Indian or European. The village headmen, who habitually violated the Excise laws and made a practice of sharing the plunder with thieves, would take another view, and probably their outcry would be loudest when the transfer of territory was proposed. We gain confidence in our impartiality, obedience, and respect,

but we do not touch the heart or the imagination of the people. The change once made, the pomp and show and circumstance of a native court would be popular; and no one who has heard an Indian crowd greet a chief with the subdued cry of "Maharáj, Maharáj!" and seen them raise their joined hands to their foreheads in salutation, can doubt that there is a depth of feeling there which our cold official rectitude entirely fails to fathom.

#### NO FINANCIAL OR MILITARY DIFFICULTY.

I cannot pretend to meet in this paper all the objections to my scheme which have occurred to me, but I wish to say that I do not think there need be any financial or any military difficulty. There would be some initial expenditure in setting up the chief with his palace and equipage, but places and men for chiefships would be so gradually selected that this would not perceptibly affect any Imperial Budget. After establishment the chiefship should be dealt with exactly like a local government, so that there would be no loss of revenue, the financial arrangements being the same. Against the civil list of the chief and the salaries of his officials should be set the whole cost of the administration of a British district. Many of the new chiefs would offer Imperial Service troops or transport trains, which would be sent to the front in time of war. The number of isolated civil stations taxing our regulars and volunteers, if we had to face an external enemy, would be satisfactorily reduced. There would be no fear of flank attacks on our strategic lines of communication. On the contrary, the authority of the chief would be of great use in the collection of transport and supplies.

#### THE POLICY OF LORD CANNING.

As a part of the pacification which followed the Mutiny, Lord Canning, with the approval of the Home Government, granted to Ruling Chiefs the privilege of adopting successors, thus indicating by an impressive sign that we did

not lie in wait to annex their territories. In his despatch on this subject he said, referring to the Mutiny: "In the time of which I speak these patches of native government served as breakwaters to the storm which would otherwise have swept over us as one great wave. And in quiet times they have their uses. Restless men who will accept no profession but arms, crafty intriguers bred up in native courts, and others who would chafe at our stricter and more formal rule, live there contentedly; and should the day come when India shall be threatened with an external enemy, or when the interests of England elsewhere may require that her Eastern Empire shall incur more than ordinary risk, one of our best mainstays will be found in these Native States. . . . It was long ago said by Sir John Malcolm that if we made all India into *zillahs* (or British districts) it was not in the nature of things that our Empire should last fifty years; but that if we could keep up a number of Native States, without political power, but as royal instruments, we should exist in India as long as our naval superiority in Europe was maintained. Of the substantial truth of this opinion I have no doubt; and recent events have made it more deserving of our attention than ever."

The plan here advocated is an extension of the policy of Lord Canning, with modifications intended to make it suitable to the circumstances of the present time.

NOTE.—When this article was first published, in May last, I was indeed aware that Colonel L. J. H. Grey, c.s.i., had written something about the Native States; but I did not see what he had written till August 7. His conclusions and mine were thus reached quite independently. He has published a series of articles in the *United Service Magazine*, and all of them (except one which appeared later in that magazine for last August) have been republished in pamphlet form, with a preface by Lieutenant-General Sir Edmund R. Elles, under the title of "The India of the Future." It is very satisfactory to me to find that, on the main question of principle, Colonel Grey and myself are in close agreement. Writing in September 1907, he proposed "to extend by slow degrees the system of native administration, which already covers one-third of India, over as much as may be possible of the remaining two-thirds of that country." This is



identical with my main proposal; but I ought to add that there are important points on which I do not agree with Colonel Grey:

(1) While I would not lay down a rigid rule against extending the territory of existing states, I am not in favour of this process. Such States are already pillars of the Empire. We need fresh support. Extensions would cause much importunity and heart-burning.

(2) I dissent altogether from Colonel Grey's financial proposals for pooling Indian debt over the States. This plan would completely wreck the scheme.

(3) I do not think that Colonel Grey's suggestions for the expansion of Imperial Service Troops are practicable.

(4) Without denying that there is a certain connection between the extension of the political system and imperial defence, I think each of these subjects will gain by entirely separate discussion. In a preliminary stage of a large subject like the present some differences of opinion are inevitable; and of course no close review of Colonel Grey's proposals can be attempted in a mere footnote. I am greatly obliged to him for his kind notice of my article in the United Service Magazine for August 1909.