

DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS TRADE

Conditions and Prospects of  
United Kingdom Trade  
IN  
INDIA

1930-31

*(Revised to August, 1931)*

REPORT

BY

THOMAS M. AINSCOUGH, C.B.E., M.Com., F.R.G.S.

*H.M. Senior Trade Commissioner in India and Ceylon*

*(The previous Report covered the year 1929-30)*



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## DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS TRADE.

### COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATION ABROAD.

To foster British overseas trade, the Department has developed and controls the following Services of Commercial Intelligence Officers:—

#### 1. IN THE EMPIRE.

##### *The Trade Commissioner and Imperial Trade Correspondent Services.*

At the present time there are 17 Trade Commissioners' offices. These are situated, four in Canada (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg); three in South Africa (Capetown, Durban, Johannesburg); two in Australia (Sydney, Melbourne) and India (Calcutta and Bombay—to cover also Ceylon), and British West Indies (Trinidad, Jamaica); and one each in New Zealand (Wellington), Irish Free State (Dublin), British East Africa (Nairobi), and Malaya (Singapore).

The Trade Commissioners have the assistance of Imperial Trade Correspondents at a number of important centres.

In various parts of the Empire in which at present there are no Commissioners, there are Correspondents with whom the Department deals direct.

The Department is represented in India by Mr. T. M. Ainscough, C.B.E., H. M. Senior Trade Commissioner, Calcutta, and Mr. W. D. Montgomery Clarke, H. M. Trade Commissioner, Bombay.

#### 2. IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

##### *(a) The Commercial Diplomatic Service attached to the British Diplomatic Missions.*

This service consists of 44 officers who are stationed in all the more important foreign markets of the world. The members of the Commercial Diplomatic Service are styled "Commercial Counsellors" in the highest grade, and "Commercial Secretaries" in the two lower grades. They are members of the staff of the British Embassy or Legation in which they serve.

The Commercial Diplomatic Officer has general supervision over the commercial work of the consular officers in his area and, with the co-operation of these two services, a complete network of Government commercial representatives is thrown over foreign countries.

##### *(b) The British Consular Service.*

Particular attention has been given to the commercial side of consular work since the re-organisation of the service. In certain countries where no Commercial Diplomatic Officer is stationed the senior Consular Officer undertakes duties of a similar character.

Further information regarding the above services can be obtained on application to the Department of Overseas Trade, 35, Old Queen Street, London, S.W.1.

Members of British firms are urged to call upon the Department's representative abroad when they visit an overseas country. It is also important that they should make a point of their representatives abroad keeping in close touch with the Department's officers.

#### NOTE.

*It should be understood that the views expressed in annual reports are the views of the officers themselves, and are not necessarily in all respects those of the Department.*

## COVERING DESPATCH.

*To the Right Honourable  
the President of the Board of Trade.*

Office of H. M. Senior Trade Commissioner in India,  
Fairlie House,  
Fairlie Place,  
Calcutta.

October 8th, 1931.

SIR,

I have the honour to forward for your information a Report on the Conditions and Prospects of United Kingdom Trade in India during the Indian fiscal year 1930-31, revised to August, 1931.

The period under review has been one of the most critical in the history of trade relations between the United Kingdom and India. After reaching the trough of the world-wide economic depression, the Indian market was prejudicially affected by the unsettled political conditions, of which the most remarkable manifestation in the commercial field was the boycott of foreign goods; this boycott reacted disastrously upon internal and external trade alike, inflicted heavy losses upon traders, and dealt a severe blow at India's credit overseas. The combined effect of the economic slump and the political agitation has been seriously to weaken the position of the United Kingdom exporter in important branches of the import trade and to stimulate the substitution of the lower-priced products of indigenous manufacture and also of our German and Japanese competitors. Although the influence of the political movement is, at the moment, waning, the deepening of the agricultural depression and the widespread lack of confidence in the future are factors which will retard recovery.

Since the report was written, two events of paramount importance have taken place which will have wide repercussions on Indian trade :—

The suspension by the United Kingdom of the gold standard and the linking of the rupee to sterling at the existing ratio of 1s. 6d. should act as a powerful stimulus to India's exports to countries which are still on the gold standard, among which are some of her principal customers, *e.g.*, the United States, Germany, France and Italy. Conversely, the depreciation of the sterling and rupee exchange now enables United Kingdom exporters to quote rupee prices which are below those ruling in the case of gold countries, notably Germany and the United States, who are among our keenest rivals in the Indian market. Other things being equal, therefore, there should be a considerable advance in price of the country's principal agricultural products which will increase the purchasing power of the people and will be reflected in a greater demand for imported goods. It is to be hoped that the United Kingdom manufacturer, by reason of his advantage in exchange, will do all that lies in his power to secure an increased proportion of this trade.

The supplementary budget, introduced on September 30th, 1931, with its provisions for retrenchment, the imposition of certain new import duties and of an all-round surcharge of one-quarter on existing import duties and excise, while acting as a further temporary restriction on the import trade, should, in the long run, redound to India's advantage by demonstrating to the world that the Government of India is determined to balance the budget and adhere to the strictest financial principles. The ultimate effect should be to restore confidence in Indian securities and to convince the world of the inherent soundness of the country's financial position.

Once again I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to the officials of the Commerce, Industries and Finance Departments of the Government of India for their unfailing courtesy and assistance during the year. Special thanks are due to the Director-General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics and his staff who have prepared the special tables embodied in the report, to the Chief Controller of the Indian Stores Department and to the Collectors of Customs for their valuable help and co-operation which have always been so willingly rendered. I should also like to record my appreciation of the numerous memoranda which have been contributed by officers in charge of important works throughout the country and which have, in most cases, been incorporated with due acknowledgments in the report.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

THOMAS M. AINSCOUGH,

*H.M. Senior Trade Commissioner in India.*

## PREFATORY TABLES.

*Note.—The author desires to express his indebtedness to the Director-General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics for the particulars given in these tables.*

### 1.—TRADE DISTRIBUTION :—PRINCIPAL ARTICLES.

TABLE SHOWING VARIATIONS IN THE SHARES OF THE PRINCIPAL ARTICLES IN THE IMPORT AND EXPORT TRADE OF BRITISH INDIA DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS, AS COMPARED WITH AVERAGES OF THE PRE-WAR AND WAR PERIODS.

#### IMPORTS (*in percentages*).

(Sea borne : exclusive of treasure and of imports on Government account.)

	1909-14 Average	1914-19 Average	1928-29	1929-30	1930-31
Cotton manufactures ... ..	36	35	25	25	15
Iron and steel ... ..	7	6	8	7	7
Machinery ... ..	4	4	7	8	9
Sugar ... ..	9	10	6	6	7
Hardware ... ..	2	2	2	2	2
Mineral oil ... ..	3	3	4	5	6
Silk ... ..	3	2	2	1	1
Other articles ... ..	36	38	46	46	53

#### EXPORTS (*in percentages*).

(Sea borne : exclusive of treasure and of exports on Government account.)

	1909-14 Average	1914-19 Average	1928-29	1929-30	1930-31
Jute, raw and manufactures	19	25	27	26	20
Cotton, raw and manufactures ... ..	15	16	23	23	24
Food grains ... ..	21	17	10	11	14
Seeds ... ..	11	6	9	9	8
Tea ... ..	6	8	8	8	11
Hides and skins ... ..	7	8	3	3	2
Other articles ... ..	21	20	20	20	21

## II.—TRADE DISTRIBUTION: PRINCIPAL COUNTRIES.

TABLE SHOWING VARIATIONS IN THE SHARE OF THE PRINCIPAL COUNTRIES IN THE IMPORT AND EXPORT TRADE OF BRITISH INDIA DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS, AS COMPARED WITH AVERAGES OF THE PRE-WAR AND WAR PERIODS.

### IMPORTS (in percentages).

(Sea borne: exclusive of treasure and of imports on Government account.)

	1909-14 Average	1914-19 Average	1928-29	1929-30	1930-31
United Kingdom ... ..	63	56	45	43	37
Other parts of the British Empire ... ..	7	9	9	9	9
United States ... ..	3	7	7	7	9
Japan ... ..	2	10	7	10	9
Java ... ..	6	8	7	6	6
Germany ... ..	6	1	6	7	7
Other foreign countries ...	13	9	19	18	23

*Note.*—Imports from Germany during the quinquennium, 1914-19, consisted mostly of receipts in the early part of the official year 1914-15, and the residue of cargoes of prize vessels imported during the war period.

### EXPORTS\* (in percentages).

(Sea borne: exclusive of treasure and of exports on Government account.)

	1909-14 Average	1914-19 Average	1928-29	1929-30	1930-31
United Kingdom ... ..	25	31	21	22	24
Other parts of the British Empire ... ..	16	21	14	14	16
United States ... ..	8	12	12	12	9
Japan ... ..	8	11	10	10	11
France ... ..	7	4	5	5	5
Germany ... ..	10	1	9	8	6
Other foreign countries ...	26	20	29	29	29

*Note.*—Exports to Germany during the quinquennium, 1914-19, were confined to the early part of the official year 1914-15.

\*Including re-exports.

## COMMERCIAL SUMMARY.

<i>Area.—</i>				<i>Sq. miles.</i>
British India	...	...	...	1,094,300
Native States	...	...	...	711,032
				1,805,332

*Population Census of 1931.—*

British India	...	...	...	271,749,312
Native States	...	...	...	81,237,564
				352,986,876

*Language (Commercial use of English, etc.).—English.**Monetary unit(s).—*

3 pie=1 pice.

4 pice=1 anna.

16 annas=1 rupee.

1 lakh = Rs.1,00,000 } e.g., Rs.1,45,67,200 = 1 crore, 45 lakhs, 67,200

1 crore = 100 lakhs } rupees.

*Rate of Exchange (pre-war and current average quotations).—*

Pre-war	...	...	...	1s. 4d.
Current, June 30th, 1931	...	...	...	1s. 6d.

*Index Numbers—July, 1914=100.*

Wholesale prices, Bombay	...	...	...	June, 1931=108.
Retail prices (food), Bombay	...	...	...	June, 1931=121.
Cost of living (working class), Bombay	...	...	...	June, 1931=109.

*Principal Weights and Measures (other than ordinary metric or British) with British equivalents.*—Weights and measures in India vary not only from district to district but also for different commodities within the same district, and though the railways have given a lead to the adoption of a uniform system, the country is so vast that the differences are likely to persist for many years to come. The principal units in all the scales of weights are the maund, seer and the tola, and the standard weights for each of these are 82·28 lbs., 2,057 lbs. and 180 grains troy. The tola is the same weight as the rupee. In addition to these weights, there is the viss of 3·60 lbs. or 140 tolas and the candy of 500 to 840 lbs. It is not necessary for the purposes of this volume to detail any variation of the weight of the maund, except those which enter into the export trade. It will be sufficient to say that in any particular city there are probably as many different maunds as there are articles to weigh. The only varieties which need be considered in connection with the foreign trade are the Bengal or railway maund already specified, the factory maund of 74 lbs. 10 ozs. 11 drs., the Bombay maund of 28 lbs. and the Madras maund of 25 lbs. In October, 1913, the Government appointed a Committee to inquire into the whole question, and their majority report, which was presented in the following year, recommended the extension of the railway system based on the 180 grains tola, while the minority report advocated the adoption of the metric system. The views of the Provincial Governments on these reports were obtained and the Government of India in their resolution dated the 3rd January, 1922, declared themselves in favour of the ultimate adoption in India, excluding Burma, of a uniform system of weights based on the scale now in use on the railways. It has been decided that no new measures prescribing all-India measures of weight or capacity should be introduced at present but that the Local Governments should take such executive action as they can to educate public opinion in favour of the standard maund and seer.

In the table below an attempt has been made to present within a small compass the principal weights and measures employed in the Indian export trade.

*Principal weights and measures in use in the export trade.—*

Name of Unit.	General.	British Imperial Value.
Tola ... ..	...	180 grains troy.
Seer (Standard or Railway or Indian) ...	...	2,057 lbs.
Seer (Factory) ... ..	...	1 lb. 13·5 oz.
Viss ... ..	...	3·60 lbs.
Maund (Standard or 40 seers Railway or Indian) ... ..	...	82 lbs. 4 oz. 9 dr.
Maund (Factory) ... ..	...	74 lbs. 10 oz. 11 dr.

*Note.*—For local variations consult " Handbook of Commercial Information for India " by C. W. E. Cotton, C.I.E., I.C.S., 2nd Edition, 1924.

*Total Imports—1st April, 1930, to 31st March, 1931.*

	Rs.
Merchandise ... ..	1,64,82,54,520
Government Stores ... ..	8,26,89,069
Treasure ... ..	26,86,48,373
<b>Total</b> ... ..	<b>1,99,95,91,962</b>

Principal Imports.—Cotton manufactures, machinery, sugar, oils, iron and steel.

	Rs.
Imports of merchandise from United Kingdom	61,25,07,686
" " " United States ...	15,15,29,633
" " " Japan ...	14,52,92,661
" " " Germany... ..	12,41,46,381
" " " Java ... ..	10,34,07,470

*Total Exports—(Indian merchandise)—1st April, 1930, to 31st March, 1931.*  
Rs.220,45,52,676.

Principal Exports—Cotton, jute, grain, pulse, tea and seeds.

	Rs.
Exports of Indian merchandise to United Kingdom	51,84,89,044
" " " Japan ...	23,76,34,306
" " " United States	20,61,34,287
" " " Germany ...	14,05,86,627

*Railway mileage.—31st March, 1930.*

Railways owned by the State ... ..	44,473
Other railways ... ..	12,002
<b>Total route mileage opened for traffic</b> ... ..	<b>56,475</b>



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