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THE INDIAN IN BURMA

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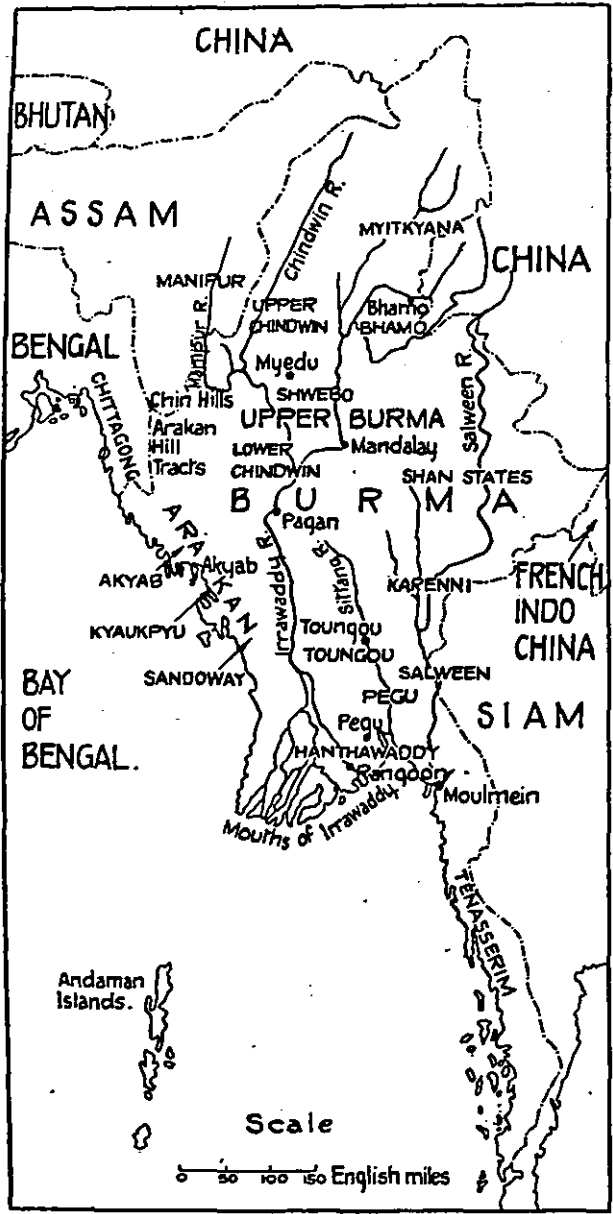
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THE INDIAN IN BURMA

IMMIGRATION from India into Burma is no recent phenomenon ; difficult as is the mountain barrier between, the two lands are contiguous and, in however small numbers, migrants have made their way across the frontier from time immemorial, while the journey by sea from the major ports of the one to those of the other is of no great distance or difficulty. It is known that in the first century of the Christian era a trade-route from India to China crossed northern Burma, probably down the Chindwin valley and then up the Irrawaddy to Bhamo, although, indeed, it was not much used ; and, so far as the sea-route is concerned, whether by coastal voyage along the eastern fringe of the Bay of Bengal or with the aid of the south-west monsoon from the Madras coast, ships for many centuries have made their way from India to Burma. Shipping, indeed, before the days of steam, more commonly came from the Madras coast than from Bengal ; voyagers from Bengal naturally tended to contact the Arakan country which was not part of Burma till the later eighteenth century and from which passage into Burma proper is troublesome, whereas the south-west and north-east monsoons rendered the sea-journey between Madras and the Irrawaddy Delta easy at the right seasons of the year. WHEN Indians first established contact with Burma proper no one can say. Hindu kingdoms existed in the countries now known as Siam and French Indo-China in the first century of the Christian era, and though there is no certain evidence of the existence of such kingdoms in Burma, Burmese legend indicates Indian contacts from prehistoric days ; and certainly by the third century Hindu colonists from the east coast of India, and some also from the west coast, were established in small trading-posts on the coasts of Burma. There they erected Hindu shrines, some of which can still be traced. From India in due course came the religion of Burma, Buddhism, though it may be that Buddhism originally entered Burma not from India direct but through Tibet.

AT first, no doubt, Indian influence was in general limited to the sea-board areas, for the land route in the north was difficult and it was from the sea that the Indian contacts chiefly came ; but there is ample evidence that from at least the middle eleventh century onwards the influence of the Hindus had penetrated through the *Mons* and *Pyu*, who occupied Lower Burma, to the people of the centre of the country. There, from the middle eleventh to the later thirteenth centuries in the greatest period of Burman culture, the city of Pagan was founded and flourished, now one of the famous ruined cities of the world. And Pagan owed an immense debt to India. Though its people, the *Mranma* or Burmans, were Mongolian in origin, their culture was derived mainly from India.

“PAGAN’s main debts to India are obvious and vast ; the Three Gems of Buddhism, together with the Brahmanic cults and Naga worship which preceded or accompanied them ; all the main features, and many details, of her architecture ; her script ; the Pali Tipitaka and law books, which formed the basis of her literature and gave a new dimension to her thought. How far Indian social and political influence went, is difficult to define ; titles of royalty and officials are predominantly Indian, but this may not mean very much ; and the fact that the Mranma called the Indians ‘ caste-people ’ in distinction from themselves, points to obvious limits to their influence. And we must allow for modifications of it due, not only to the Burmese character and temperament, but also to those of the Mons and Pyu, who to some extent transmitted it ”*

THE word *kula*, probably derived from Pali or Sanskrit and meaning ‘ family ’ or ‘ caste ’, appears, applied to Indians, in many of the epigraphs of the Pagan period, in most cases in connection with slaves. Inscriptions recording the dedication of a number of *kula* slaves to pagodas are not infrequent, and the numbers of slaves involved are surprisingly high, amounting to as many as 500 in some cases. These slaves are recorded as being musicians, dancers, carvers in wood or in stone, painters, blacksmiths, masons, weavers, spinners, chair-makers, chiropodists or barbers, gardeners, oil-sellers, rice-cooks, clerks. There are references also to whole villages of *kulas* dedicated in the same way.

THE slave-names indicate that many of these Indian slaves were Indo-Aryans, but a considerable proportion also were Dravidians who must certainly have come from south India, presumably by sea.

It is obvious that, while the Indian slaves may not have been present in great numbers, they nevertheless must have exercised a great influence on the Burman people. It is interesting to note also that the word used by Burmans for the indigenous inhabitants of southern Burma, *Talaing*, is almost certainly derived from *Telinga*, a variant of *Kalinga*, meaning the east and south of India ; this same word is found in Malaya, Siam and Cambodia, where it denotes Indians. It appears that the word *Talaing* was used by the Burmans of Pagan to denote any inhabitant of Lower Burma, and that later, as the term *Kula* came into use in respect of the Indians, the earlier usage, *Talaing*, became restricted to the indigenous people who called themselves the *Mons*. The adoption by the Burmans of an Indian name for the indigenous inhabitants of Lower Burma in this way, would seem to indicate that the number of Indians resident among the Mons of southern Burma was by no means small.†

OCCASIONAL references to the presence of Indians in Burma may be traced in subsequent centuries ; but at no time did Indian influence, so far as can be seen,

* G. H. Luce, *Note on the Peoples of Burma in the 12th–13th Century A.D.*, Census of India, 1931, Vol. XI—Burma Part 1, p. 301.

† G. H. Luce, *ibid.*

approach the power which it exercised in the great days of Pagan. In the later thirteenth century the Tartar Empire of China overthrew Pagan, and the kingdom then broke up into a number of petty states owing allegiance to Peking; it is probable that from that time Chinese influence tended to oust Indian influence; and later, in the fifteenth century, predominance in the Indian Ocean passed from Hindus to Arabs, and this again would tend to weaken Hindu influence.

II.

INDIAN sailors and traders did, however, continue to frequent the Burma ports, some settling there permanently; Indian slaves no doubt were still brought across the sea to find their compulsory homes in Burma. Later, Indians came in small numbers in the train of the Portuguese, Dutch, French and English adventurers who came to war or to trade in Burma in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and there is evidence of a regular trade conducted by Muslims between the Coromandel Coast and Burma in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But the numbers involved were small, and it is probable that they were no more than would be normal among the cosmopolitan populations of sea-ports.

THE situation was different in Arakan. Bordering the Chittagong district of Bengal, from which access is easy, Arakan had a close connection with India, and the Kings of Arakan, who retained their independence of Burma till 1784, at times ruled considerable parts of Bengal also. It naturally followed that Indian settlement in Arakan was on a larger scale than in other parts of Burma.

PARTICULAR occasions might bring settlers to Burma. Thus when Shah Shuja failed in his attempt to seize the throne of the Mogul Emperor from his brother Aurangzeb in 1660, he fled with his followers to Arakan, where the descendants of his men still live as a distinct community, known as *Arakan Kamans* (from Hindustani *kaman*—a bow), because after Shah Shuja's death his retainers were formed into a bodyguard of archers by the Arakanese King.

AGAIN, prisoners taken in wars along the Indian frontier were settled at Myedu, in the Shwebo district, and others who came voluntarily to serve in the Burmese army were given land in the same area; these *Myedus*, as they are called from their place of settlement, have, like the Arakan Kamans, become assimilated to the Burmans except in regard to their religion, for, along with the Kamans, they adhere to Islam.

THEN again, during the wars with Manipur in the later eighteenth century, Manipuri prisoners were brought into Burma to serve the King. Thus Captain Symes, in his account of his mission to the King of Burma in 1795, relates that the boat in which he was travelling up the Irrawaddy was escorted by war-boats rowed by *Cassayers* (i.e., Manipuris) "who had been brought away from their native country at times when the Burmans carried their predatory incursions across the Keenduem

[i.e., Chindwin River]”.* Other Manipuris, it is recorded, were employed as weavers at the royal court; and in general the Kathes, as they are called in Burma, who were brought to the country, were noted for their skill in music, dancing and massaging.

SYMES, like other travellers of the age, records also the presence in Burma of a number of Brahmins, who had come from Arakan or from Manipur to practise the art of astrology for which they were famous.

IN general, however, at the end of the eighteenth century such Indians as were in Burma were to be found in the sea-ports, notably in Rangoon. To quote Symes again, in Rangoon “Malabars, Moguls, Persians, Parsis, Armenians, Portuguese, French and English, all mingle here, and are engaged in various branches of commerce”. Thus, among the foreign inhabitants of Rangoon, Symes mentions first Malabaris (a term then used to denote inhabitants of Southern India generally) and Moguls, or Muslims, most of whom would have come from Bengal in all probability. THE kindly tolerance of the Burmans enabled Indians, like other aliens, to live in peace and to follow their own religious rites unmolested. “The members of this discordant multitude,” says Symes† “are not only permitted to reside under the protection of government, but likewise enjoy the most liberal toleration in matters of religion. They celebrate their several rites and festivals, totally disregarded by the Burmans, who have no inclination to make proselytes. In the same street may be heard the solemn voice of the Muezzin, calling pious Islamites to early prayers, and the bell of the Portuguese chapel tinkling a summons to Romish Christians. Processions meet and pass each other, without giving or receiving cause of offence. The Burmans never trouble themselves about the religious opinions of any sect, nor disturb their ritual ceremonies, provided they do not break the peace, or meddle with their own divinity, Gaudama; but if any person commit an outrage, which the Mussulmen, in their zeal for the true faith, will sometimes do, the offender is sure to be put into the stocks; and if that does not calm his turbulent enthusiasm they bastinado him into tranquillity”. It would thus appear that difficulties with Indian Muslims were not altogether unknown in Burma in the eighteenth century.

It is significant that Symes, in common with other travellers of that era, thinks chiefly of Muslims when he considers the presence of Indians in Burma. It would appear that the majority of Indians in Burma at that period were indeed Mohamedans. There are, unfortunately, no real data on this point. Captain Canning, in reporting on his mission to Burma in 1804, states that there were 5,000 Muslims in Rangoon and 500 “Malabars” but as the total population of the city appears to have been only some 10,000 his figure for Muslims is evidently a vast overestimate. It is, however, clear that Hindus were few in comparison.

* Symes: *Embassy to Ava* 1827 edn., Vol. II, p. 6.

† *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 251.

It is to be feared that many of these aliens were not of the highest character, a defect which was shared by most of the foreigners resident in Rangoon, whatever their race. To quote once more the invaluable Symes, "Having long been the asylum of insolvent debtors from the different settlements of India, it [*i.e.*, Rangoon] is crowded with foreigners of desperate fortunes, who find from the Burmans a friendly reception . . . Here are to be found fugitives from all countries of the East".

SOME of these immigrants, however dubious their methods, appear to have flourished. Captain Cox, who conducted a mission to Burma in 1796, records that the foreign traders in Rangoon were distressed because monopolies in certain articles of trade had been obtained by a Muslim named Boodham, "an insolent unprincipled villain".

III

THE war which broke out in 1824 between the King of Burma and the East India Company radically altered the situation of Indians in Burma. From being merely foreigners, tolerated so long as they behaved themselves, they were now in a position to be citizens of the provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim which were ceded to the Company by the treaty of Yandabo in 1826. Naturally the number of Indians in these parts of Burma increased. Apart from the greater facilities for trade which were now available, the establishment of the Company's system of Government provided openings for Indians. At first there was some attempt to continue much the methods of government used by the Burmese Kings, but within a few years the administration of Arakan and Tenasserim was assimilated to that of the other territories of the Company, and, since Indians were accustomed to that system while Burmans were not, there was a tendency to employ Indian subordinates in government offices in preference to Burmans.

THERE is no certain evidence of the number of Indians who came to settle in the new towns of Akyab and Moulmein which sprang up at this time, but they must have constituted an important element in the population.

IN Independent Burma, on the other hand, their numbers did not, so far as can be seen, markedly increase. Moulmein at this period replaced Rangoon as the Chief port of Burma, and it may be that the Indian population of Rangoon actually declined, though some Indians indeed still traded and settled there.

It appears that "an overwhelming crowd of adventurers" had come to Rangoon in the train of the Company's forces in 1824, in the hope of making their fortunes; but very few of them remained after the withdrawal of the army in 1826. In 1838 there were only nineteen British-Indians, twelve being Parsis from Bombay, among the inhabitants of the town. They were ship-builders and dealers in timber and cheap cottons. But restrictions on trade, and in particular the imposition of monopolies on major articles of commerce, were a deterrent, and until 1852 there

was little incentive for Indians or other foreigners to come to independent Burma. IN 1846, however, a traveller records that there were no less than three mosques in Rangoon, though he mentions the presence of only "a dozen foreigners, chiefly Moguls". It is improbable that there was any number of Burmans of the Muslim persuasion, for the conversion of Buddhists to other religions was frowned on by the Burmese Kings, and that there should be less than a dozen Indian Muslims in Rangoon tallies with other evidence; the existence of as many as three mosques remains therefore inexplicable, except on the assumption that so small a handful of Muslims was divided into three sects.

IV

THE beginnings of Indian immigration into Burma on any appreciable scale may be dated to 1852. Prior to that date, as has been seen, mere handfuls of Indians were to be found in the country, and centuries-old as the Indian connection with Burma was, it had had no marked economic or political consequences. But with the annexation to the East India Company of the Irrawaddy Delta and the territory immediately to the north of the Delta in 1852, the position changed radically. The Delta is the most fertile part of Burma; it was in 1852 still undeveloped, very largely a waste of marsh and creeks; and, though its development was not immediate, within a few decades what had been the most sparsely populated part of Burma was to become the most prosperous and thickly populated.

As in 1824, the army which occupied Rangoon was followed by a large number of civilians. Hundreds of Indians came in the train of the military, and numbers also at once transferred themselves from Moulmein, for it was apparent that Rangoon would now resume its former place as the chief port of Burma. The town was occupied in April, 1852, and already by July of the same year it was affirmed, with no doubt a good deal of exaggeration, that there were between sixty and seventy thousand people in the place. The name given to one of the streets in the new town-plan which was adopted, *Mogul Street*, is in itself indicative of the number of Muslim traders who promptly arrived in Rangoon.

FOR some time, it would appear, the Indian immigrant confined himself to the towns, and principally to the largest town, Rangoon; but precise details of population are unfortunately not available. No Census was held in British Burma till 1872; the next was held in 1881, and thereafter the decennial Census was imposed. But the earlier Census reports attempt no classification by race; classification by religion was adopted, and also classification by language, but neither religion nor language is a necessary index of race. It was not till 1921 that any serious attempt at a racial grouping was attempted. Furthermore, in 1872 and 1881 the Census necessarily omitted independent Burma, and not till 1891, at the first Census after the annexation of Upper Burma, was anything approximating the whole country

covered; and even since 1891 there have been variations in the Census area with the extension of administration into the hills of the perimeter of Burma. Furthermore, slight variations in the dates of successive Censuses, which have varied by as much as a month, may make a considerable difference with a population part of which comes from outside the country for periodic labour. It is thus apparent that the Census reports do not give exact data on a true basis of comparison between one period and another. Nevertheless, any errors are likely to constitute only a small percentage and the statistics which the reports provide are sufficient to indicate the general trend of development.

MORE serious is the loss of the Census data of 1941, owing to the Japanese invasion of Burma; these data can never be replaced, and so the latest detailed statements available on population in Burma are now already fifteen years out of date.

In 1872, twenty years after the annexation of the Delta, the whole of British Burma contained a population of 2,747,148; of this population, Indians constituted 136,504, or 4.9 per cent. 15,677 or 11½ per cent. of the Indians in Burma lived in Rangoon where they constituted 16 per cent. of the population; and of the Indians in Rangoon 15,261 were Hindus and 416 were Muslims. The disproportion between Hindus and Muslims is curious, and may arise from some irregularity in the returns; but it is clear that the number of Indians in Burma had vastly increased within the twenty years between 1852 and 1872, and further that Hindus had come to form the majority of the Indian population. It is also apparent that a remarkably high percentage of Indians lived in Rangoon. In 1872 the population of Rangoon formed 3.6 per cent. of the total population of British Burma, whereas Indians in Rangoon formed 11 per cent. of Indians in the country.

By 1881 the development was even more marked. In that year the total population of British Burma was 3,736,771, of whom Indians were 243,123 or 6.5 per cent. In Rangoon, Indians were 66,077, or almost 50 per cent. of the city's total population of 134,176; and whereas Rangoon still provided less than 4 per cent. of the whole population of British Burma, it contained 27 per cent. of the Indians in the country. Thus not only was the number of Indians in British Burma increasing rapidly, but also the Indian population was increasing faster than the indigenous population, and further the concentration of the Indian element in Rangoon was developing. In this year, 1881, there were in Rangoon 44,908 Hindus and 21,169 Muslims, so that the disparity in numbers between Hindus and Muslims was tending to correct itself.

If the returns for Arakan be disregarded in view of the peculiar condition of that area, British Burma contained in 1881 a total population of 3,149,253 of whom 129,566 or 4.1 per cent. were Indians, and the Indian population of British Burma was over 50 per cent. of the whole Indian population of British Burma.

In 1891 Upper Burma was first brought into the Census area, though the Shan

States and Karenni States were still omitted. The Census returns from 1891 to 1931 may be summarised as follows :—

ALL BURMA

<i>Date</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Indian Population</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1891	8,098,014	420,830	5·1
1901	10,490,624	568,263	5·4
1911	12,115,217	743,288	6·1
1921	13,212,192	887,077	6·7
1931	14,667,146	1,017,825	6·9

UPPER BURMA (Excluding Shan States and Karenni)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Indian population</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1891	3,063,426	62,658	2·0
1901	3,823,935	61,645	1·6
1911	4,397,844	82,087	1·8
1921	4,852,694	106,800	2·2
1931	5,336,434	134,157	2·5

LOWER BURMA (Less Arakan)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Indian Population</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1891	3,986,728	217,532	5·5
1901	4,643,865	324,097	6·9
1911	5,372,516	453,469	8·4
1921	5,952,860	556,053	9·3
1931	6,757,079	631,580	9·3

RANGOON (i)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Indian Population</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1891	180,324	87,487	49·5
1901	248,060	119,290	48·1
1911	293,316	165,495	56·5
1921	341,962	187,975	55·0
1931	400,415	211,692	52·9

RANGOON (ii)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Percentage of Rangoon Population to Total Population of (a) Burma, (b) Lower Burma less Arakan</i>		<i>Percentage of Rangoon Indians to Total Indian Population of (a) Burma, (b) Lower Burma less Arakan</i>	
	<i>(a)</i>	<i>(b)</i>	<i>(a)</i>	<i>(b)</i>
1891	2·2	4·5	20·8	40·2
1901	2·36	5·3	21·0	36·8
1911	2·42	5·4	22·3	36·5
1921	2·59	5·7	21·2	33·8
1931	2·79	5·9	20·8	33·5

It is apparent that there was a steady increase in the number of Indians in Burma ; that their numbers were always greater in Lower Burma than in Upper Burma ; and that the Indian population in Lower Burma increased more rapidly than did the indigenous population, until by 1921 one in eleven of the inhabitants of Lower Burma (excluding Arakan) was an Indian.

In addition, the percentage of Indians in Rangoon continued to be high, and although the proportion of Indians living in other parts of Lower Burma tended to increase on the whole, and also the Indian inhabitants tended to become a slightly smaller percentage of the city's whole population after 1911, nevertheless Rangoon was obviously an Indian rather than a Burman city.

Of the million or so Indians in Burma in 1931, 565,609 were Hindus and 396,594 were Muslims ; there were 30,135 Indian Christians, 12,600 Buddhists, and 10,896 Sikhs.

V

THE greater part of the Indian population of Burma at any date had been born outside the country. In 1881 only 14 per cent. of Indians had been born in Burma ; in 1891, 33·8 per cent. ; in 1901 only 26·1 per cent. ; in 1911, 32·8 per cent. ; in 1921, 23·9 per cent. ; and in 1931, 28·1 per cent.

If Arakan be excluded, the Lower Burma percentages for those born in the country are markedly lower, *viz.*, 1881, 12·3 per cent. ; 1891, 19·5 per cent. ; 1901, 13·1 per cent. ; 1911, 16·7 per cent. ; 1921, 21·1 per cent. ; and 1931, 17·6 per cent. It will be seen that although there were periodic variations, always the great majority of Indians were immigrants and not country-born. Although it is evident that a proportion of Indians settled in the country and brought up their families there, clearly only a minority did so.

MOST of the immigrants passed through the port of Rangoon. But large numbers also left the port of Rangoon. As with the Census returns, the data in respect of immigration and emigration are unsatisfactory ; there are marked discrepancies between the returns given by port authorities and those given by shipping companies ; but the numbers, so far as ascertainable, of entries and exits through Rangoon from 1885 to 1889 averaged 76,600 and 55,300 a year respectively. Thus in the 1880's there was a constant excess of entries over exits. At later periods the numbers passing through the port from and to India were far greater. From 1913 to 1917 the average number of entrants each year was 235,400 and the average number of exits was 167,000. From 1918 to 1922 the corresponding figures were 275,800 and 207,800 ; from 1923 to 1927, 333,100 and 257,000 ; from 1928 to 1932, 309,700 and 277,000 ; and from 1933 to 1937, 226,300 and 183,400.

IMMIGRATION reached its peak in 1927 and 1928, when 361,000 and 360,000 entrants passed through the port. In 1930 there was actually a small excess of emigrants

over immigrants, a phenomenon repeated in 1931. Thereafter there was a slight excess of immigrants until 1938, when again more passengers left Rangoon for India than came in, 213,600 leaving as against 197,400 entering. In general, immigration figures were progressively high until about 1930; in all the years from 1922 to 1930 the figure was over 300,000; after that it fell, and in 1938 was under 200,000.

It is obvious from these data as it is from the Census return that while there was a great deal of immigration there was also a good deal, though somewhat less, of emigration. Of the large number of Indians who entered the country, the great majority sooner or later returned to India, while a small minority settled in the country and produced the country-born Indian population. But the greater part of the Indians in Burma comprised temporary residents only.

ANOTHER feature of this large Indian population is the excess of males over females, which was particularly marked among the immigrants; in 1931 among Indians born in Burma, there were 893 women for every thousand males, whereas among Indians born out of Burma there were only 191 women for each thousand men, or less than one female for every five males.

THE explanation of these phenomena is that the greater part of the Indians of Burma came to the country for only short periods; normally they would come to Burma and work for two or three years and then return to their homes in India. Many, after some months at home, would again come to Burma for a further period; but Burma was definitely not their home; it was merely a place of work. Their homes were in India, where their wives and children remained, and they normally remitted most of their pay to maintain their families there. The immigrants were thus predominantly males.

MANY of the Indians were coolies, who would arrive towards the end of the year in time for the rice-harvest, would work through two-and-a-half years, so covering three harvests, and then return home, perhaps to come to Burma again after spending six or seven months with their families. Hence the peak years for immigration, 1927 and 1928, were followed by high emigration figures in 1930 and 1931. The high emigration figure for 1938, on the other hand, and the low immigration figure for that year, were due to the anti-Indian riots of that period.

38.9 per cent. of Indians in Burma in 1931 were unskilled or semi-skilled labourers. 32.5 per cent. of the Indian workers in the country in that year were engaged, according to the census returns, in Production of Raw Materials, 51.5 per cent. in Industry, Transport and Trade, 6.5 per cent. in the Public Services and the Professions; and 4.1 per cent. in Domestic Service.

In all these various forms of occupation the Indian element was of importance, and in some it was of very great importance. The Census of 1931 shows the following

comparison between indigenous and Indian workers under the various heads:—

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Indigenious</i>			
	<i>All Races</i>	<i>Races</i>	<i>Indians</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Exploitation of Animals and Vegetables ..	4,321,356	4,094,240	176,208	4.0
Exploitation of Minerals ..	39,505	20,037	14,752	37.3
Industry	664,376	536,995	104,767	15.8
Transport	222,055	108,390	101,536	45.7
Trade	557,248	408,445	96,211	17.3
Public Force	30,816	14,543	13,995	45.4
Public Administration..	44,867	28,434	13,762	30.8
Professions	198,890	182,912	10,418	5.2
Domestic Service ..	44,689	17,575	24,326	54.4

THAT in some forms of occupation half of those so engaged should be aliens, and that in other forms of employment over 40 per cent. should be aliens, would be a remarkable situation in any country. If the same data be sought for the Irrawaddy Delta only, the situation under some heads is even more striking.

IRRAWADDY DELTA

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Indigenious</i>			
	<i>All Races</i>	<i>Races</i>	<i>Indians</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Exploitation of Animals and Vegetables ..	1,605,556	1,502,430	95,692	5.3
Exploitation of Minerals ..	407	237	129	31.4
Industry	203,706	117,943	73,887	36.3
Transport	100,650	30,304	66,258	65.8
Trade	275,856	178,422	65,746	24.0
Public Force	10,696	5,301	4,291	40.0
Public Administration..	20,566	8,476	10,730	52.1
Professions	63,354	53,186	7,028	11.1
Domestic Service ..	25,306	6,872	17,287	67.9

THE data for the various occupations are to some extent misleading; for some labour was seasonal. Thus there was a heavy demand for agricultural labour during the harvest and much Indian labour would at such seasons go to the land; but when the harvest was over it would return to the towns for casual employment as coolies in rice-mills, on road work, at the wharves of Rangoon, as rickshaw-pullers, etc. The Indians provided in 1931, 47.4 per cent. of unskilled and semi-skilled labour among male earners in Burma.

INDIANS had a very strong grip on certain essential forms of employment. Some, such as the work of scavenging, Burmans would not touch; scavengers were almost

100 per cent. Indian, and in a country where modern forms of sanitation are the exception, the Indian thus played a vital part. Again, in water-transport, Indians in 1931 provided 51·3 per cent. of those employed—and in a country where coastal and river transport are as important as any form of land transport, again the Indian filled a very important role. In road transport the percentage of Indians was also high, being 35 per cent. In the case of railway transport, Indians actually formed 73·1 per cent. of those employed. In the postal, telegraphic and telephone services, 31·6 per cent. were Indians. 39·5 per cent. of traders in textiles were Indians. In metallic mining, Indians provided 56 per cent. of those employed, and in the petroleum industry 41·6 per cent. 42·3 per cent. of clerical workers were Indians. THE immigrant nature of much of this labour is shown by the circumstance that over 80 per cent. of all Indian workers were born outside Burma.

THE position of the Indian in agriculture is of particular interest. In 1931, in the Irrawaddy Delta, Indians formed 3·8 per cent. of non-cultivating land-owners, 2·0 per cent. of cultivating owners, 7·6 per cent. of tenant-cultivators, and 6·1 per cent. of agricultural labourers; in all, 5·7 of those thus engaged were Indians. In Burma as a whole, Indians formed 2·9 per cent. of non-cultivating owners, 1·6 per cent. of cultivating-owners, 5·5 per cent. of tenant-cultivators, and 5·2 per cent. of agricultural labourers, in all 3·9 per cent. Of all Indian workers in Burma, only 3·7 per cent. were engaged in cultivation.

So far as agriculture is concerned, therefore, though the numbers of Indians engaged were in themselves not inconsiderable, being roughly 83,000 in the Delta and 141,000 in Burma as a whole (or 91,000 if Arakan be excluded), it remains that the work of agriculture was predominantly effected by the indigenous peoples, and that the Indian element played proportionately a small part.

THE Indian in Burma, indeed, was to a considerable extent a town dweller; in 1931 45 per cent. of the Indians in Burma lived in the towns and not in the rural areas.

As to the origin of the Indian population, leaving aside the Chittagonians who are found mainly in Arakan, a very large part hailed from the east coast of India; out of the total of over one million in 1931, 252,000 were Chittagonians, 150,000 were Tamils, 160,000 Telugus, 62,000 were Oriyas; Bengalis numbered 66,000, and of these 11,000 were in Arakan; 175,000 came from northern India.

In regard to their distribution within the country, it has been seen that the greater part were to be found in Lower Burma. 21 per cent. of Indians in the country in 1931 were in Akyab district; 21 per cent. in Rangoon; 7 per cent. in the Hantawaddy district which adjoins Rangoon. In general, 83·4 per cent. of the Indian population was in Lower Burma. But no district, even the most remote, was without them. Thus there were in the districts on the periphery of Burma, 587 in the Salween district, 1,683 in Karenni, 11,351 in the Southern Shan States, 21,253

in the Northern Shan States, 3,136 in the Bhamo district, 16,721 in the Myitkyina district, 1,727 in the Chin Hills, and 500 in the Arakan Hill Tracts.

BUT it was in Rangoon that the Indian population was most omnipresent. Indians indeed formed a very large proportion—30 per cent.—of Burma's town population generally; but in Rangoon, in 1931, they comprised 52·9 per cent. of population, and formed 73·3 per cent. of all male earners in the city, 53·7 per cent. of clerical workers, 56·1 per cent. of the craftsmen, 88·5 per cent. of the labourers, and 69·5 per cent. of the traders and shop-assistants.*

VI

THE circumstances which brought this large Indian population to Burma may next be examined.

AFTER 1852 there were clearly opportunities in Burma for employment and for trade which had not previously existed. But it was not immediately that any great influx occurred. The circumstance which produced the influx was the development of the rice industry of Burma.

IN the days of the Burmese Kings, the export of rice had been prohibited for fear of denuding the country of food; and even when this restriction was abolished after 1852 it still remained to find a market for any large production. In the last decades of the century the market was available.

THE opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 provided an immense stimulus to trade throughout southern and eastern Asia. The intensive economic development of these regions then began and, together with improvements in navigation, notably the replacement of sail by steam, created profitable markets in India and elsewhere for Burma's rice. Formerly subsistence agriculture had prevailed in Burma; now cultivation for export began. In Lower Burma there were wide areas of undeveloped land ready at hand; for their development an abundant supply of capital and of cheap labour was needed.

THE details of areas under cultivation at successive periods show the extent of the development which ensued.

Date	ACREAGE UNDER PADDY		Total
	Lower Burma	Upper Burma	
1830	66,000		
1855	993,000	No data	
1860	1,333,000	prior to	
1870	1,735,000	annexation in	
1880	3,102,000	1885-6	

* Much valuable information about the occupational incidence of the Indian population in Burma is to be found in the *Report on Indian Immigration*, (Rangoon, 1941).

ACREAGE UNDER PADDY—*continued.*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Lower Burma</i>	<i>Upper Burma</i>	<i>Total</i>
1890	4,398,000	1,357,000	5,755,000
1900	6,578,000	1,972,000	8,550,000
1910	7,808,000	2,142,000	9,950,000
1920	8,588,000	1,751,000	10,339,000
1930	9,911,000	2,459,000	12,370,000
1935	9,696,000	2,178,000	11,874,000

It has commonly been held that this development was due mainly to the work of Indian cultivators and labourers, but this view appears to be erroneous. It would appear that the development of the Irrawaddy Delta was effected chiefly by labour from Upper Burma. The population of Lower Burma grew from 2,747,148 in 1872 to 7,765,614 by 1931—an increase of 5,000,000; the Indian population of the same area increased from 136,504 to 849,381—an increase of 700,000. Though an increasing percentage of the Lower Burma population was Indian, absolutely the number of Indians was at most 11 per cent., and if Arakan be omitted, 9·3 per cent. And in 1931, when the area of cultivation had reached its greatest extent and the Indian population of Burma was over a million, Indians provided, as has been seen, only 5·7 per cent. of those engaged in agriculture in the Delta.

It is evident that it was not primarily Indian labour that developed the Delta. Indeed, there is evidence that Indian labour was at least for a long time not available to the degree that the authorities desired.

It was originally the policy of the Government of India to promote the immigration of Indians into the empty lands of Burma with a view not only to extending Burma's cultivation but also to relieving the congestion in the more thickly-populated parts of India. This was combined with a policy of encouraging the growth of the principle of peasant-proprietorship in Burma. In the upshot these two objectives, of encouraging Indian immigration and at the same time developing peasant-proprietorship, were to prove incompatible, though at the time there was no reason to foresee that this situation would develop.

In the 1870's, moreover, the reduction of passenger-rates consequent on improved navigation gave a stimulus to immigration; also in 1873 the British India Steam Navigation Company introduced fortnightly instead of monthly sailings between Rangoon and Madras; and in 1880 the competition set up by the formation of the Asiatic Steam Navigation Company led to a further reduction in fares.

NEVERTHELESS, immigration still did not reach the dimensions hoped for. In 1876 a recruiting agent was appointed at Madras, but with little result, and when the position was reviewed by the Famine Commission in 1888 it was recommended that the matter be left to private enterprise. In pursuance of the Commission's

recommendations two large grants of land were made at favourable rates of land-revenue, one of 27,000 acres at Kyauktaga in Pegu district and another of 15,000 acres at Zeyawaddy in Toungoo district, on the condition that the land should be developed by tenants brought in from certain congested districts of India.

THIS effort was not successful; twenty years later it was found that no special recruitment from the congested districts was taking place but that immigrants who came in by their own arrangement were taken in as need arose.

IN general, moreover, the attractions of work in Rangoon and other towns were greater than those of labour on the land, so that, as has been seen, the number of Indians in Rangoon was out of proportion to the number elsewhere.

THE part played by Indian labour in the development of Burma's agriculture was thus relatively small. It was in ways other than by providing labour that India contributed to the growth of Burma into the principal rice-exporting country of the world.

FOR the transfer from subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture, the whole chain of services between producer and consumer had to be provided. The Burman was unable to provide them for lack of experience of such activities, whereas the Indian, by reason of his centuries-old experience of overseas trading and by reason of his contiguity to Burma, was in a position to do so. So by the 1930's 97 per cent.* of the rice-export trade from Burma to India and Ceylon, valued at over £23,000,000 a year, was handled by Indian merchants.

AGAIN, the Indian, better versed than the Burman in western ways when the development started, was able to secure a predominant part in such activities as transport, postal communications, and shopkeeping. He was still, as before 1852, able to play a large part in the work of government offices. He was, too, willing to take to forms of labour, such as underground mining, which the Burman disliked. In these ways the Indian came to occupy a large and very obvious share in the non-agricultural labour-market of Burma. For, it must be remembered, Burma, from its piece-meal annexation to the East India Company and the Crown until 1937, was a province of the Indian Empire to which every Indian had right of entry. BUT above all it was by the provision of capital that the Indian made his contribution to the economic development of Burma. The Burman necessarily lacked capital; especially the cultivator, who for the most part in Lower Burma was an immigrant from Upper Burma, had not the capital needed even for the purchase of implements for breaking up the ground or for the purchase of seed or for the maintenance of his family between the time of ploughing and the sale of his crop. The deficiency was supplied partly by Burman money-lenders, but more notably by the hereditary caste of money-lenders from South India, the Chettyars.

* Statement by Sir Annamalai Chettyar (*Bombay Chronicle*, 10th July, 1945); other authorities suggest a somewhat lower percentage.

THE Chettyar lent money at what would to many appear to be a high rate of interest. 15 per cent. per annum was a low rate; 25 per cent. was common; and as much as 45 per cent. might be charged on loans secured by standing crops or movable property. The Chettyar was, of course, a business man; his loans were issued accordingly. It has been estimated that by 1930 the loans outstanding to Chettyars during the season of cultivation each year had risen to as much as £55,000,000, of which £37,000,000 had been advanced expressly to finance agriculture.* WITHOUT loans the development of the Irrawaddy Delta would not, so far as can be seen, have occurred. Whatever may be said, the Chettyar played an essential part in the development of modern Burma; it is possible to argue that it would have tended to the greater happiness of Burma's people if this development had not taken place, but in the world of to-day no fertile region will be allowed to lie fallow. If it is not developed by its own people, it will be developed by others.

VII

THE mass of immigrants were, obviously, of the poorer class, who were driven from their homes in India by the pressure of under-employment there and by the hopes of higher pay in Burma. Necessarily they presented a problem. From the time in the later 1870's when the influx began to assume large dimensions, their presence and their way of life caused concern, particularly to authority in Rangoon. For reasons of economy, since most of them were coolies supporting families in India out of their meagre wages, they would crowd together in cheap lodging-houses, where the conditions became a matter of scandal. In its report for the year 1878-79 the Rangoon Municipality noted that the coolies were living in "houses in a very dirty state, with few and small windows and doors, which they are very fond of keeping shut. The ground-floors of most of these pukka buildings are damp and generally soaking with house-slops and dirty water, together with garbage. Many of these houses are much overcrowded, and very little cubit (*sic*) space is allowed for each inmate. In one houses in 29th Street, there were found in one room 23 inmates, the dimensions being only 18 by 14 and ventilation defective". Such complaints were recorded year after year and although as time went on this state of affairs was to some extent remedied by prosecutions under the municipal bye-laws, it remains to this day a serious problem.

AGAIN, there were complaints about the unhygienic habits of the immigrants and fears that they would bring disease into the city. Thus in his report for 1882-83, the Health Officer complained that "the health of the city is at all times of the year threatened by the arrival of thousands of coolies by the steamers from the Madras coast".

THE situation of these unhappy people was utterly miserable. In many cases they

* See *Report of the Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, 1930.*

had come in under some form of contract, without even the means of paying their fares, and on arrival their services were "virtually sold by auction to any person who will release them from their obligations".

CONDITIONS were, of course, not so bad in the rural areas, but in Rangoon the unfortunate immigrant endured a most miserable existence. Moreover, although the agricultural labourer in general lived under better conditions, yet his standard of living was markedly lower than that of the Burman villager, just as much as the standard of living of the Indian in the towns was lower than that of the Burman townsman. Indeed, as has been seen, owing to the seasonal nature of much employment, the Indian townsman and the Indian agricultural labourer were often identical. In addition, out of meagre wages which no Burman would have accepted, the Indian had to remit money to his family in India. Poverty was thus his inevitable lot.

THE conditions under which the Indian labourer lived, together with the circumstance that it was Indians who undertook the humblest forms of labour, naturally tended to arouse a feeling of contempt in the minds of the Burmans, who regarded the Indians of the poorer type as natural hewers of wood and drawers of water. The low standard of literacy among Indians, which, as late as 1931 was only 360 per *mille* among Indian males and 102 among Indian females in Burma, as compared with 717 and 165 respectively among Burmans, also tended to give the same impression.

NATURALLY conditions were different among the better-off Indians in Burma; but here again circumstances marked the Indian off very definitely from the Burman. The Muslim and the Hindu alike followed a different religion from the Burman, and their strict adherence to their creeds, together with their own insuperable divisions along lines of religion and caste, which in Rangoon in 1893 led to a Hindu-Muslim communal riot to suppress which the troops had to be called out, produced a position of separatism and unassimilability. The introduction at an early date of the principle of communal representation in the political field, which was established in the elections to the Rangoon Municipal Committee in 1882 and was thereafter perpetuated, further tended to distinguish the Indian from the Burman.

A FURTHER line of demarcation appeared in that a disproportionate degree of the wealth of the country passed into Indian hands. The greater part of Burma's overseas trade, both import and export, lay with India, and Indian merchants naturally played a dominant role in that trade; much of the wholesale and retail trading within the country was in Indian hands. Thus in Rangoon alone over 55 per cent. of municipal taxation came to be paid by Indians, so that more than half the real property of the capital city of Burma was owned by them. The statement of balance of trade is also significant; in the year 1935-36 exports to India were valued at over £20,000,000 while imports from India were valued at roughly

£7,000,000. The statement of the crude figures of exports and imports of course omits a number of factors, but it remains that the balance, which was consistently "favourable" to Burma for many years, can be explained only by large remittances of money to India; thus in an average year postal money-orders to the value of over £2,000,000 would be sent from Burma to India, and this amount does not include any sums remitted through the banks; in fact, these postal remittances would comprise mainly sums remitted by the poorer Indians to their families.

Thus the situation grew up that much of the country's wealth was in alien hands and much of it was being remitted out of the country.

THERE were few Burmans who could compare in wealth with the richer Indians, and this circumstance applied not only in Rangoon but likewise in small towns and villages where the Indian shopkeeper kept the most flourishing shop and the Indian money-lender was notoriously the most wealthy man in the area.

So on the one hand was a large class of poor Indians whom the Burman looked down upon, and on the other a small class of wealthy Indians who seemed in a fair way to monopolising the country's wealth; while in between was a not inconsiderable class of clerks and technicians who occupied a very considerable proportion of places in commercial concerns and government offices. And all of them were clearly marked off from the Burman by their religions and their ways of life, by their language and by their very costume.

A FURTHER complication arose in the marriage problem. Among Burmans marriage is essentially a civil contract, not a religious sacrament. Further, this contract is entered into, under Burman-Buddhist law, with a minimum of formality. While a marriage may be, and if the parents can afford it usually is, celebrated by a wedding party in the presence of members of both families and the elders of the neighbourhood, and even, among the wealthy, by a ceremony conducted by *ponnas* (i.e., Brahmins),* among the villagers there is little of such celebrations, and marriage is established by living and eating together and by the common acceptance among the neighbours of the idea that the couple are husband and wife. There is no doubt that the Burman view of marriage led in many cases to tragedy when unions were effected between Burman women and men of alien race and religion.

For the practice was in Burma, as in India, that in matters of marriage and succession the personal law of the man applied; and by his personal law, no Christian male could effect a lawful marriage with anyone except under the terms of the Indian Christian Marriage Act; no Muslim could effect a lawful marriage except in accordance with Mohamedan law, which precludes marriage with a non-Muslim; and no caste

* The practice of the attendance of *ponnas* on important occasions such as marriages is ancient and probably dates from pre-Buddhist days when the Burmans had come under Hindu influence but Buddhism had not yet become established. The practice derives from the employment of Brahmins as astrologers to indicate the auspicious date for any important ceremony. Thus even after the establishment of Buddhism, Brahmins played a large part in the dedication ceremonies of Buddhist pagodas, as the epigraphs at Pagan show.

Hindu could effect a marriage under any conditions with anyone but a caste Hindu. In the case of non-caste Hindus, although marriage with others than Hindus appears to be possible, again it must be contracted in accordance with Hindu law and custom if it is to be valid.

THESE circumstances undoubtedly led to much hardship. Unions between Burman women and non-caste Hindus seem to have been very few, for the Burman, with his pride of race, would but rarely accept a marriage with Indians of the depressed classes who formed the bulk of the immigrant population of this creed; but marriages with Indian Muslims have been by no means uncommon. Unfortunately the average Burman woman was naturally ignorant of the peculiarities of the law of marriage as applied in British India, and would accept a "marriage" according to Burman-Buddhist principles as being a lawful union, only, perhaps, to find on the death of the "husband" that she had never been married at all in the eyes of the courts and that the relatives of the husband could, and often did, seize his property and dispose of it according to his personal law of succession, leaving the unfortunate woman penniless, herself stigmatised as a mere mistress and her children as bastards. EVEN where by conversion to Mohamedanism the woman had secured her position, she was still not so happily situated as her more fortunate sisters who had married their own countrymen; for Burman-Buddhist law gives powerful protection to the rights of the wife, who succeeds to all her husband's property on his death, whereas Muslim law is less considerate of the interests of the widow.

THUS these marriages which, as already mentioned, occurred more often between Burman women and Indian Muslims than between Burman women and Hindus, had unfortunate results, even when they were lawfully contracted.

MARRIAGES between Burman males and Indian women were very rare; the great excess of males over females among both Muslims and Hindus is the primary explanation.

THE type of marriage referred to had also the effect of producing a large class of Indo-Burmans, generally called *Zerbadis*, who in 1931 numbered as many as 122,705. Though their Indian parentage is usually obvious in their features, most Zerbadis speak Burmese and wear Burmese costume. On the other hand they almost invariably follow the religion of their fathers, Mohamedanism, and since in the Burman view it is scarcely possible to be a Burman without being a Buddhist, the Zerbadi is not generally accepted as being Burman.

THUS the presence in Burma of so large a number of Indians brought racial complexities into what was once a homogeneous population. And not only the immigrant but also the children of those who settled in the country failed to assimilate themselves. At one time, it would appear, Indians, even Hindus of pure blood, were tending in the second and third generations to become assimilated to the Burmans; the children and grandchildren of the original immigrant would adopt

the Burmese language and costume, and perhaps would adopt Buddhism, and would be accepted by Burmans as being Burman. Some of the best-known figures in Burman life and politics to-day are of Indian descent, but because their ancestors and themselves have adopted the Burman way of life and, above all, Buddhism, they are accepted as Burman. But for the last forty years it has been unusual for Indians to take this course. The rapid growth of Indian nationalism from the first decade of the twentieth century onwards has reversed the process; Indians ceased to be ready to lay aside their Indianism; conscious of their nationality, they adhered instead to their national traditions. So, for the last forty years, the prospect that Indians in Burma might become assimilated has disappeared; instead, the Indian proudly maintains his separate identity.*

VIII

THE situation in Arakan displays certain marked variations from that in Burma at large. By reason of the ease of the land-route between Arakan and Bengal there has always been a flow of population between the two areas. Not only do people from Bengal come into Arakan, but also Arakanese go to settle in Bengal. So far as the former movement is concerned, the Akyab district, being contiguous to the Chittagong district of Bengal, has always had a larger Indian population than other parts of Arakan.

IN 1931 the total population of Arakan was 1,008,535, of whom 217,801 were Indians, i.e., roughly 21 per cent.; and of the Indians 210,990 or 97 per cent. were in the Akyab district, where they formed 33 per cent. of the total population. A very considerable proportion of them were born in the country; in Akyab district 79 per cent. of Indians were country-born. It is thus evident that the greater part of the Indian population of Akyab was settled in the country and did not consist of immigrant and temporary labour. This is borne out by the circumstances that of the 192,647 Indian Muslims in Akyab district, 84,850 were women.

MUSLIMS predominated among the Indians of Arakan; of the total of 217,801, there were only 18,307 Hindus. The Hindus were to a greater degree than the Muslims immigrants; there were only 1,828 women among them.

THE Muslim predominance among Indians in Arakan is due to the circumstance that the vast majority came from Chittagong, where Mohammedanism prevails; over 186,000 claimed to be of Chittagonian origin.

THE greater part of the Indians in the area were engaged in agriculture; they formed 21 per cent. of the male earners engaged in agricultural pursuits in Arakan in 1931; they were 11.7 per cent. of the non-cultivating land-owners, 15.1 per cent. of the cultivating owners, 22.4 per cent. of the tenant-cultivators, and 24.6 per cent. of the agricultural labourers.

* This point is suggested by my old friend, U Khin Maung, the veteran journalist of Burma.—B.R.P.

IN addition to the settled Indian population, a considerable number of Chittagonians were in the habit of coming to Akyab district for seasonal labour in the harvest season, for Akyab district is, after the Irrawaddy Delta, the principal rice-producing area of Burma. It appears that a large part of this seasonal labour was not included in the Census returns for 1931, but it is estimated that normally some 20,000 labourers came annually from Chittagong. Their practice, unlike that of Indians in the Irrawaddy Delta, was to come for one season only, not for two or three; the proximity of their homes to Akyab made this feasible.

It is interesting to note that even the Chittagonians settled in Arakan complained that the seasonal labour from Chittagong had a lower standard of living and could undercut the settled population in securing employment*

IX

THE political consequences of Indian immigration did not appear till about 1920. When the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were introduced into India under the Government of India Act, 1919, the province of Burma was at first omitted. This circumstance, which in itself emphasised the differences between India and Burma, produced a new factor in Burman life, *viz.*, political agitation, as a result of which in 1923 the Reforms were extended to the province. So for the first time the Burman entered into politics; he had now the opportunity for expressing his views, and at once the problem of Burma's connection with India arose. The plain fact, moreover, that the Indian was not a Burman received additional emphasis from the adoption of the principle of communal representation in the new constitution, in both the Legislative Council and the District Councils as earlier in the Municipal Committees.

It was commonly held that Burma had suffered from her inclusion in the Indian Empire. Racially and culturally there was nothing in common; it was only for administrative convenience that Burma had been made an Indian province, and there was more than a suspicion that Burma's interests had been sacrificed for India's benefit. Burma was an agricultural country, and the protective tariffs which India imposed for the benefit of her nascent industries brought no advantage to Burma but on the contrary were a disadvantage. Again the major items of revenue—*income-tax*, *customs dues*, and the *excise* on Burma's only big industry, *petroleum*—went to the central government of India.

A DEMAND that Burma be separated from India and become a distinct territory of the Crown grew up; and, once the question of political separation had been raised, the position of the individual Indian was necessarily called into question. There was a growing fear that Burma was being denationalised. The fear was not altogether new, though previously it had not often been expressed; at an earlier

* *Report on Indian Immigration*, Chap. VII.

date, indeed, it had not been the Indian who was feared but the Chinese. In 1886 Sir George Scott, in writing his book *Burma as it was, as it is, and as it will be*, was able to head one of his chapters *The Ascendency of the Chinaman*, and while noting the presence of the Indian in Burma had written, "It seems almost certain that, in no very long time, Burma, or at any rate the large trading towns of Burma, will be for all practical purposes absorbed by the Chinese traders, just as Singapore and Penang are virtually Chinese. . . . Unless some marvellous upheaval of energy takes place in the Burmese character, the plodding, unwearying Chinaman is almost certainly destined to overrun the country to the exclusion of the native race"* SCOTT had been wrong in his forecast; forty years later the Chinese population of Burma had grown but little; it was the Indian who in Burman eyes seemed likely to overrun the country.

In 1929 a committee of the Burma Legislative Council affirmed that "Burma's political connection with India is wholly arbitrary and unnatural. It was established by the British rulers of India by force of arms and is being maintained for the sake of administrative convenience. It is not an association of two peoples having natural affinities tending towards union. It is neither a combination of two willing partners. In all essential features of corporate life Burma widely differs from India . . . Besides, Burma's political subservience to India has seriously jeopardised her financial and economic interests and even threatens to denationalise her".

THIS last point, the danger of denationalisation, received much emphasis. In a debate in the Council in the same year a Member declared, "I do not know how long Burma as a nation will last. Burmese women have been taken by foreigners and half-caste children are increasing every year", while another said, "If we are to remain longer with India, in about a quarter of a century, if I am not putting it too long, there will be no Burman left worthy of the name of the race. As the hon'ble members are aware, the Indians have come into all sorts of corners and wherever they have colonised themselves they have taken unto themselves Burmese wives and the race is impaired".

A MOTION in favour of separation from India was then carried without a division. The principle of separation was accepted by the Simon Commission and was embodied in the Government of Burma Act, 1935, which came into operation on the 1st April, 1937.† From that date Burma ceased to be part of the Indian Empire.

AT about the time when the argument relating to political separation was occupying the public mind, the economic problem came to the fore also. The development of Burma's agriculture from self-sufficiency to a basis of commercial agriculture

* Pp. 142, 143.

† Opinion in Burma was actually divided; some wanted immediate separation, others were willing to enter the new Indian federation but only on condition that the right of secession at will was recognised. The ultimate decision of His Majesty's Government to adopt the policy of separation in respect of Burma commanded, when it was announced, general support.

had the effect that Burma's economy was inextricably linked with that of the rest of the world, and Burma could not escape the effects of the depression which began in 1929.

THE process of annual loans by means of which the cultivator had financed his cultivation had answered well enough for many years; so long as there was an expanding market, no one had been any the worse off and the light-hearted Burman, taking no thought for the morrow, made no attempt to accumulate funds against the future. There had, however, already been symptoms of what was to come. The financial stringency which affected the world from about 1908 made the situation less easy for the Burman cultivator, and as early as 1910 official attention was drawn to the danger that the Burman might be driven from the land. The annual *Season and Crop Report* for that year noted an increase in the number of Indian tenants; and the *Report* for 1914 stated that "in and near Rangoon the steady pressure of the Indian immigrant is slowly but surely ousting the Burman".

THE reason for this process was that, with a falling market, the cultivator found himself at harvest-time unable to repay his loans and, in very bad years, unable to meet even the interest; further loans would be contracted to pay the interest on the original loans, until finally foreclosure took place; and when the Indian money-lender had thus come into ownership of the land, he naturally preferred Indian to Burman tenants.

THE Chettyar had no desire to become a land-owner; he was a business man, not a farmer; but circumstances prevailed, and he had either to foreclose or to lose his investment; and when he had foreclosed, he had to retain the ownership of the land because there was no one with the capital to purchase it from him. This process did not take place to any marked extent, however, until after 1929; on the contrary, Burma had prospered during the war of 1914 and had shared in the post-war boom. But from 1930 onwards foreclosures occurred to an alarming extent. In 1931 non-agriculturalists owned 3,231,561 acres of land in Lower Burma and 797,105 in Upper Burma; in 1937 they owned 5,306,017 acres in Lower Burma and 1,136,016 in Upper Burma. So, by 1937, roughly half the cultivated land in Lower Burma was owned by landlords, not by peasant-proprietors. And much of this land was in the hands of Chettyars. In the thirteen principal rice-growing districts of Lower Burma the Chettyars had held in 1930 only 6 per cent. of the land; in 1931 they held 9 per cent.; in 1932 15 per cent.; in 1933 19 per cent.; in 1934 22½ per cent.; in 1935 24 per cent.; in 1936 25½ per cent.; in 1937 25½ per cent.; and in 1938 25 per cent. In some of the districts the percentage was much higher than the average; thus in 1934 no less than 36 per cent. of the land in Pegu district was owned by Chettyars. Apart, moreover, from the land which had come into their hands, there were also mortgages, amounting in 1938 to about £7,500,000, still outstanding.

Thus much of the best land of Lower Burma (for Upper Burma with its older established economy was less affected) had passed into alien hands through, it was felt, the misfortune and not the fault of its original owners. Moreover, there was much dissatisfaction among Burman tenants to whom Chettyars rented their land; it was complained that rents were altogether excessive.

It should be observed that Burman money-lenders and landlords were not, so far as can be seen, any more considerate than the Chettyars; but they lacked the disadvantage of being aliens and so could safely act in ways which, adopted by foreigners, were likely to arouse resentment.

The policy of encouraging peasant proprietorship had thus broken down, and the instrument, an unwilling enough instrument to be sure, by means of which the breakdown had occurred, was largely the Indian money-lender. And the Burman cultivator suffered not merely the disaster of losing his land but also, in many cases, the unwelcome experience of becoming either a hired labourer or the tenant of a rack-renting landlord of another race.

"THE history of other countries has shown," says the *Land and Agricultural Committee's Report*, in May, 1938, "that the ownership of considerable land by the foreigner is followed sooner or later by political troubles arising from the natural demand of the nationals of the country for the ownership of the land. We think that conditions in Lower Burma are nearing the danger point and that the continued transfer of land from the agriculturalist to the non-agriculturalist is likely to result in violent agitation for the ousting of the foreign owner".

X

It was not only in the agrarian sphere that the problem of the Indian was becoming serious. Formerly there had been room for all in Burma. Burma, with a steadily expanding cultivation, had prospered and there had been work for any who came. In the 1930's the situation was very different. The limit of expansion of cultivation in Lower Burma was being reached; yet the indigenous population was still increasing. So, whereas formerly it had been easy enough to live in the rural parts without want, it was now becoming difficult, and this would have been the case even apart from the depression. Formerly, if other employment had not been available, the young men of the family had stayed quietly at home, able to live on their families, and without any compulsion to look for uncongenial or ill-paid forms of work. But with the cessation of expansion of the cultivated area and the collapse of the rice-market and the transformation of the peasant-proprietor into a tenant or a hired labourer, it became necessary for the young men, and older men too, to find other means of livelihood. The Burman was, in fact, being driven off the land, and he had to seek employment in the towns. But, with the depression, employment was no longer easy to find. Hence the Burman found himself in competition with

the Indian for employment, and also found himself taking, if he could get them, forms of employment and rates of pay that formerly he would not have dreamt of undertaking or accepting.

THE effect showed itself as early as 1930. The work of the port of Rangoon had so far been monopolised by Indian labour; in 1930 the stevedores' coolies went on strike and Burmans took their place. This led to a riot, and the disturbances continued until the military were called out four days later; the official report placed the number of deaths in the rioting at 120 but this was generally regarded as an underestimate. So, in 1930, a new factor was introduced into the Burman scene, the factor of Indo-Burman communal disturbances.

SUCH outbreaks did not at once recur, and though in Saya San's rebellion in 1931 some Indians were attacked, this was only incidental to the general lawlessness of the rebellion. Nevertheless, the situation was far from healthy. The Burman was now demanding employment in forms of occupation which had so far been monopolised by Indians. It does not appear to be the case that in these years, or at any time indeed, the Indian was ousting the Burman from employment; the process was the exact converse. The Burman was now seeking to replace the Indian. But it was not easy for the Burman to obtain employment at the expense of the Indian.

THE Burman has natural mechanical aptitude and also he works hard at any matter which interests him; but it is generally held that he is not so good as the Indian at work which has little interest and which requires nothing but physical strength. Also he is less docile than the Indian and more insistent on his rights. Further, in some occupations it had always been normal to employ Indians and the idea of employing Burmans, who were not used to such work, was a new one. In consequence there was a certain prejudice among employers in favour of employing Indians, especially for unskilled and semi-skilled forms of work; and naturally Indian employers in particular preferred to utilise Indian labour while there were scarcely any Burman capitalists to employ Burman labour. Moreover, where already numbers of Indians were engaged it was difficult for the Burman to be introduced; this applied not merely to manual labour: in an office where Indian clerks were employed a Burman, if appointed, might not have too happy a time.

THE problem of finding employment was one which faced not only the Burman of the poorer class; it had to be solved by the educated Burman also. Restriction of recruitment to government services in the various economy campaigns which from time to time were indulged in during the 1930's by the authorities, came at the very time when the effect of the development of higher education in Burma was beginning to be felt in the production of a not inconsiderable number of men with a university training. These young men had perforce to seek types of employment which their less numerous predecessors would not have considered for a

moment—as clerks in the Secretariat, for example; but they found that the Secretariat offices were nearly full of Indians, and that entry for the Burman was extremely difficult, while commercial openings for Burmans seemed also to be non-existent since commerce was nearly all in alien hands.

So a sense of frustration grew up among the younger Burmans, who saw the Indian firmly entrenched in almost every form of occupation and steadily increasing his grip on the land of Burma. Bitter resentment was the inevitable result.

In the industrial field it would appear that in fact Burmans did tend in the years after 1930 to play a somewhat larger part than heretofore* ; but, even so, it was still a minor part and the Burman was always in the position that the Indian, with his lower standard of living, could undercut him.

It has been held by competent authority† that in actuality Indian immigration was not of such a volume as to swamp the country, that immigration had consistently adapted itself to the economic condition of Burma, and that the number of Indians in Burma was even tending to decline in the 1930's. But even if so, Burman opinion did not accept this point of view. "There existed in the minds of responsible and intelligent Burmans, particularly in Lower Burma, a real uneasiness as to the future course of Indian immigration and of its effect upon the future of the Burmese nation and the economic and social life of Burma Their fears may, or may not, be well founded. . . . But, whether they are well founded or not, we are convinced that the views they hold, and the apprehensions they feel, are genuine views and genuine apprehensions."‡ So, by 1938, Indian immigration had become a subject on which Burman opinion had very strong feelings; and since Burma was now politically independent of India, Burman opinion was in a position to express itself as it would. The Indian, not surprisingly, was profoundly unpopular; he was, it seemed, depriving the Burman of employment, depriving him of his land, denationalising him by illegal marriages. And it must be admitted that in some cases the behaviour of Indians was far from wise. For example, at Toungoo in 1935 a Moulvi§ from Rangoon gave an address in which he was alleged to have spoken disrespectfully of the Buddhist religion; there was considerable ill-feeling between Buddhists and Muslims in Toungoo over this incident. Again, in one town of Burma a certain Muslim was "a rich and influential inhabitant of the town who owns, not only the shop in question . . . but also paddy lands and a paddy mill. He is, moreover, exceedingly unpopular. According to the Burmese version we received, some two and a half years ago he made some observation in a tea-shop which was thought to be insulting to the Burmese. There has been trouble within the last year in respect of a proposal to extend the municipal boundaries so as to embrace his rice mill and thereby to expose it to increased rates and taxes for the benefit of the Municipality. This

* *Report on Indian Immigration, 1940.*

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Interim Report of the Riot Enquiry Committee, 1939, p. 21.*

§ *Moulvi*—one learned in the Muslim law.

proposal is said to have been defeated by Mr. . . . by certain manœuvres in his capacity as a member of the Municipality. Finally, he seems recently to have built a Mosque and Madrasa near the police station in the face of considerable opposition from the townsfolk".* Such conduct, though doubtless not unknown in matters of local government among other communities and in other countries, was at the least somewhat unwise in the case of an alien.

PROBABLY it had not really dawned on the consciousness of Indians in Burma that Burma was since 1937 no longer part of India and that the Government of India could no longer protect them; to them it still seemed that Burma was a happy hunting-ground where plenty of money could be made.

BUT already the discontent of the Burman had expressed itself in the Rangoon riots of 1930; on subsequent occasions leading politicians had delivered violent speeches representing Indian immigration as a menace to Burma; and the economic situation had grown a good deal worse after 1930.

THE materials for an explosion were ready and in 1938 the explosion occurred.

XI

In 1931 a controversy had arisen between a Moulvi named Hassan Shah, of Mandalay, and Maung Pan Nyo of Myitkyina district, the former attacking and the latter defending the Buddhist religion. One Abdulla, *alias* Maung Sin, of Hsagaing village, Myedu†, joined in the argument with a book retorting to Maung Pan Nyo, and, soon after, Maung Shwe Hpi, a Muslim schoolmaster of Myedu, also issued a pamphlet on the subject. Only 1,000 copies of Shwe Hpi's book were printed and little interest was aroused. In 1936 a second edition of Shwe Hpi's book, of 2,500 copies was issued. Again little interest was aroused, until, in 1938, a minor Burman novelist published a novel in an appendix to which he gave certain passages from Shwe Hpi's book. Those passages were deplorably offensive to Buddhism. THE Burman newspapers now took the matter up. Then a public meeting was held at the Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon in July to denounce the book; a procession was formed, which marched into the town; Indians and Indian shops were attacked, and general rioting ensued which in a few days spread throughout the country.

THE riots lasted, sporadically, for eight or nine months. Indians were attacked in nearly every town and in some villages throughout the country; in some places, notably Mandalay, Indian shops were picketed and anyone patronising them was severely beaten. There were numerous deaths; the chief sufferers were Indian Muslims, for it was against them that feeling at the time was directed, but Zerbadis

* *Final Report of the Riot Enquiry Committee, 1939, p. 95.*

† The Riot Enquiry Committee described him as a Zerbadi, but in view of his place of residence he was probably a Myedu; so also in all probability was Shwe Hpi.

shared the ill-fortune of the Indian Muslims, and inevitably some Hindus were attacked. By the 24th September 139 Muslims had been killed and 512 injured in the rioting; 25 Hindus had been killed and 199 injured. In addition, 11 Indians were killed by the forces of the Crown in restoring order, for on occasion the Indians retaliated against the Burmans. 17 Burmans were killed and 145 injured in the rioting, and 56 were killed and 99 injured by the forces of law and order in repressing the disturbances. There were further casualties of smaller numbers in the succeeding months. It was claimed by the Indian communities that their total losses of property amounted to over £4,000,000, though the official valuation was only £1,300,000. ONE remarkable feature of this episode was the speed with which the rioting spread; as soon as the newspapers carrying the news from Rangoon reached places elsewhere, the trouble commenced—evidence in itself of the feeling which already existed. Wild rumours, as that the Indians had attacked the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, the most venerated Buddhist shrine in Burma, were accepted for truth, and retaliation for such imaginary outrages ensued.

IT was suspected by the Committee which enquired into the origin of the riots that the disturbances were by no means spontaneous but had been deliberately engineered by political interests anxious to embarrass the Ministry of the day. This may have been so, but that it should have been possible to do so in Burma, with its tradition of tolerance, is significant in itself of the deep-seated resentment which the average Burman felt towards the Indian. For many years, leaving aside the isolated occurrences of 1930 and 1931, Indians had lived in peace in Burma, but this happy situation had ceased. "We have seen Indians of seventy and eighty years of age who have lived for fifty years in the district and now go in fear of their lives," noted the Committee of Enquiry.*

THE Committee noted also that the marriage question figured largely in people's minds; wherever meetings were held to denounce Shwe Hpi's book, resolutions condemning marriages between Burman women and Muslims were passed. The privileged position of Indians, with their special representation in the Legislature and in local governing bodies, was also found by the Committee to have been a source of irritation.

IT is apparent that the agitation about Shwe Hpi's book, manufactured as it may have been, was only the occasion and not the cause of this regrettable episode. THE depth of feeling which prevailed is revealed by other circumstances. "There is no doubt," reported the Enquiry Committee† "that the sympathies of the vast majority of even respectable men and women lay, and still lie, with the rioters and not with their victims or the police." There was, in the view of the Committee, evidence of "the readiness, indeed the anxiety, of Burmans

* *Final Report*, p. 161, referring to Shwebo district.

† *Final Report*, p. 269.

on every hand to do whatever lay in their power to exculpate those who have transgressed in these riots, no matter what their crimes have been ”*

THE Committee found, also, that in some cases the police had shown reluctance to do their duty in protecting Indian lives and property and that the action of the Ministry in “advising” the withdrawal in some cases of prosecutions of rioters had given rise to the belief that the Government of Burma was not interested in protecting Indians.

It is certainly a strange reflection on human nature that, even before the riots were really over, Hindus and Muslims should have engaged in a communal riot between themselves in Rangoon with a loss of over twenty lives.

XII

As a result of the riots, an official enquiry was held into the extent and effects of Indian immigration. The *Report* of the commission was issued in 1940, and among its recommendations was one that an agreement should be negotiated between the Governments of Burma and of India on the control of immigration. The Imperial Conference of 1918 had asserted the right of each territory within the British Empire to control the composition of its own population by imposing restrictions on immigration, even on immigration from other Empire territories, and the Imperial Conference of 1921 had reaffirmed this principle with special reference to the position of Indians. The Government of Burma Act, 1935, and the Government of Burma (Immigration) Order, 1937, had prescribed that there should be no restriction on immigration from India into Burma for three years from the date of separation, but that the imposition of any such restriction might subsequently be effected if twelve months’ notice had been or should be given by the Governor of Burma to the Governor-General of India; any such restriction was to be embodied in a further Order in Council. The effect of this last proviso was that in event of a disagreement between the two Governments the Secretary of State would have the last word.

NEGOTIATIONS were begun in 1941, when Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai, Member of the Governor-General’s Council for Overseas Indian affairs, was deputed to Rangoon for the purpose. The principal provisions of the agreement so made were as follows: (1) In future Indians other than casual visitors and students should secure immigration permits from the Government of Burma. These permits were to be of two kinds: ‘A’ permits, intended apparently for the clerical and professional classes, would allow the holder to remain in Burma indefinitely, and ‘B’ permits, intended presumably for unskilled and semi-skilled labourers, would specify a period of residence which in no case should be extended beyond nine years. (2) The number of ‘B’ permits would be determined by the advice of an Immigration Board. (3) A literacy test might be imposed on applicants for ‘A’ permits, provided such test should

* *Ibid.*

not be made in Burmese or any other indigenous language of Burma.. (4) Marriage or cohabitation with a Burman woman would be grounds for cancellation of an 'A' permit, but marriage might be permitted by Government if adequate provision for the maintenance of the woman were made. (5) Indians born and bred in Burma would be regarded as of Burma domicile; an Indian who had lived for a total of seven years in Burma between 1932 and 1941 would be entitled to unlimited further residence in Burma provided that he at no time spent more than one year out of the country; any other Indian resident in Burma in 1941 could remain, but if he were to leave Burma his return would be regulated by the conditions laid down for new entrants, except that he would be regarded as having a preferential claim to a 'B' permit over other new entrants.

WHEN this agreement, ratified by the two Governments, was published it aroused a storm of anger in India. In particular the provisions relating to marriage were regarded as insulting, and the provision as to literacy caused almost equal annoyance. In November, 1941, the Indian Legislative Assembly resolved:—

“That this Assembly, being of the opinion that the provisions of the Indo-Burma Immigration Agreement are a violation of the assurances given in Parliament with regard to the status of Indians in Burma and their right of entry into Burma after its separation from India, inasmuch as they render nugatory the protection which Parliament undoubtedly undertook to give in these matters in Part V of the Government of Burma Act and the Instrument of Instructions to the Governor of Burma, recommends to the Governor-General in Council to request the Secretary of State not to implement the Agreement by Order in Council unless and until satisfactory modifications are secured which will carry out, to the full, the Parliamentary assurances and remove such provisions as are discriminatory and humiliating to the people of India.”

THE argument for this resolution was based on the provisions in the Government of Burma Act and in the Governor's Instrument of Instructions designed to prevent discrimination against Indians in Burma and also on certain somewhat vague statements made in the Imperial Parliament during the debates on the Act. The terms of the Act, however, leave no doubt of the legal competence of the Burma Legislature to legislate on the subject of Indian immigration, and the Immigration Order leaves no doubt of the competence of the executive government of Burma to negotiate on the subject, subject to the provision that twelve months' notice be given and that any restrictions be embodied in an Order in Council.

THE whole issue was still under debate between the two Governments and the Secretary of State when the Japanese invasion of Burma caused a suspension of the argument.

MEANWHILE, in Burma steps were being taken to cope with the difficulties of the

situation which had arisen. These measures were of two kinds, agrarian reform and social and political reform.

THE successive Ministries made a determined endeavour to solve the agrarian problem by a Land Alienation Act, which was to prevent the passing of land into the permanent occupancy of non-agriculturalists; a Land Purchase Act to provide for the compulsory acquisition of land from landlords and its distribution among landless cultivators; and a Tenancy Act which made provision for the fixing of fair rents and for security of tenure. None of these Acts had reached the stage of being actually in full operation when war with Japan began in December, 1941. ON the social and political side, the Buddhist Women's Special Marriage and Succession Act, originally introduced into the Legislature in 1937, was passed. This Act provided that when a Burman woman and a non-Burman man lived together under conditions which would have established presumption of marriage had they both been Burman-Buddhists, then a contract to marry should be regarded as entered into; if the man thereafter should refuse to enter into a legal marriage when requested by the woman to do so, he might be proceeded against for breach of promise or for seduction; if he agreed to marry, the marriage should be effected by registration with the village headman, and then the Burman-Buddhist law of succession should apply. Thus the former situation in which the personal law of the man applied in matters of marriage and succession was set aside. The Indian Members of the Legislature admitted the necessity for protecting the position of Burman women in such cases, but were reluctant to abandon the principle of the man's personal law. They were, however, unable to carry their point.

ANOTHER measure, regarded as anti-Indian in its inspiration, was the City of Rangoon Municipal (Amendment) Bill, which reconstituted the City Corporation so as to secure that not less than one half of its members should be Burmans; Indians formed more than half the population and paid more than half the municipal taxes, but Burman opinion was that a situation in which the capital city of their country was controlled by non-Burmans could not be allowed to continue.

A FURTHER bill introduced into the Legislature, in 1939, was designed to place Indians legally in the position of foreigners. The Indian Legislature had passed a measure which made it possible to treat Burmans as foreigners for the purposes of registration, though a notification issued under the Act exempted them from having to register. The corresponding bill introduced into the Burma House of Representatives was, however, ruled *ultra vires* by the Speaker under the Government of Burma Act, 1935.

THUS by 1939 the Indian population of Burma was becoming subject to encroachments on its position which it had never previously experienced. Growing nationalism and economic stringency had in a few years produced this remarkable change in the attitude of the formerly tolerant, easy-going Burman.

XIII

WHEN war with Japan broke out in December, 1941, the Indian in Burma was thus already made to regard himself as an alien. It is scarcely surprising that under the impact of war he should feel little enthusiasm for staying in the country. The poor had nothing to lose by going; the rich had the means to start life afresh elsewhere. Thus there was no incentive to remain in the country if to remain involved risk of sudden death.

THE first air-raids on Rangoon caused an exodus of the Indian population, and although, so that the work of the port might be kept going, efforts were made, with some success, to persuade the departing labour to return, before long the continuance of air-raids and the advance of the Japanese land forces caused the exodus to be renewed; and as the enemy progressed through the country northwards, a flood of Indian evacuees was pushed before him, drawn not only from Rangoon but also from the towns and villages towards which the enemy was progressing. SOME had escaped by sea before the fall of Rangoon, some few were fortunate to escape by air, but for the vast majority there was no way out except on foot across the mountains to India—a journey involving suffering for most, and death for not a few. So by one means or another over 400,000 attained their goal. It thus appears that between 40 and 50 per cent. of the Indians in Burma left the country in the early months of 1942.

THE attitude of the Burman population towards the evacuees has been a subject of controversy. Many stories have been told of the ill-treatment meted out to some unfortunates, and in some cases at least these accounts are true. But a careful examination of the evidence indicates that such occurrences were exceptional. The worst area was Arakan, where the breakdown of the civil administration at a surprisingly early date gave opportunity for serious communal trouble, amounting to something like civil war. Attacks on Indians also occurred in other areas, but only, it would seem, when the near approach of the enemy had caused the termination of civil administration. That there should be crime when the civil administration collapses is not remarkable; such conditions give an opportunity to the criminal element which is not likely to be missed.

ON the other hand cases can be quoted in which Burmans displayed very great kindness to Indian evacuees; and in the early days of evacuation, when endeavours were being made to dissuade Indians from continuing their journey on the ground that there would be shortage of food along the route, the reply was made by the Indians that so far the Burmans had been very good to them and had supplied them with food for little or no payment.

THERE certainly was a disposition to take advantage of the circumstances to force up the price of commodities, and especially the rates of hire for vehicles; and there was extortion on the part of subordinate civil and military officers who would hold

up refugees on some pretext until money had been paid ; but in these matters racial antipathy did not enter, for Indians were at least as much offenders in extracting money from the refugees as were the Burmans.

THAT there were some painful examples of real savagery no one who has examined the evidence, assuredly no one who participated in that harrowing journey, would deny ; but equally no one can honestly deny that there was much kindness displayed.

ONE factor which is often overlooked in this matter is that the habits of some Indians are far from hygienic, and that the Burman quite reasonably disapproves of having his water-supply befouled. Examination in detail of the evidence might disclose a notable number of cases in which trouble originated from this conflict of manners. THE Indians who remained in Burma were in some cases very badly treated by the disorderly elements who followed the Japanese flag under the name of the "Burma Independence Army" ; but as soon as the Japanese had secured effective command of the country these disorders were at once stopped. It was essential, if Japanese propaganda to India was to be at all effective, to ensure that no ill-treatment of Indians occurred in any area under Japanese control. In consequence, during the Japanese occupation the Indian in Burma received adequate protection, provided he joined the "Indian Independence League", the civil counterpart of S. C. Bose's "Indian National Army". It is claimed by many of those concerned, that the protection so offered was the sole reason for the entry into the Independence League of the majority of its adherents.

XIV

WHILE the enemy was in occupation of most of Burma, negotiations were in progress in India between the Government of that country and the exiled Government of Burma. It was clear that the problem of the future of Indian interests in Burma must be dealt with if any plans at all were to be formulated for the rehabilitation of Burma after the war, and ultimately formal discussions were opened.

THE most powerful interest involved was that of the Chettyars, but other commercial interests also had their own views, and Indian nationalists in general were not uninterested.

IN 1943 the President of the Burma-Indian Chamber of Commerce, addressing Dr. N. B. Khare, Member of the Governor-General's Council for Commonwealth Relations, said, "The very large interests which Indians have in Burma, the vital relations existing between the two countries in several directions, the tremendous efforts which this country has been putting forth in the reconquest of Burma, justify, we hope you will agree with us, the demand of the Indians that they should be fully consulted in all plans for the reconstruction of Burma in regard to all matters which may affect their rights, status, position, trade interests, etc., in that country in the future. . . . In view of what Indians did in Burma, both before and after it

ceased to be a part of the Indian Empire, and what they are doing to-day in assisting its reconquest, my Committee are of opinion that Indians can justly claim better rights and privileges in that land than the Britishers”.

On the other hand the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce in January of the same year observed that there could “ be no justification for India being made to pay for reconquering a country which for all practical purposes has come to be regarded as a foreign country, having no political, cultural or social contact with India ”. The Chettyars advanced the claim that it was Indian money and largely Indian labour that had produced the development of Burma. The late Mr. Vellayan Chettyar is reported to have asserted that “ in 1902 there were not even two million acres under cultivation in Burma. In 1942 more than twenty million were brought under cultivation. This result was achieved not by Government or British finances or by Burmese labour alone. The world knows that it was largely due to Indian labour and finance ”. But, he claimed, Indians wanted no more than their dues ; “ so long as there is no discrimination in the purchase of land from the non-cultivating class and the compensation offered is fair and reasonable, the erstwhile Indian landlord will be ready to help reconstruction of Burma. . . The development of Burma must be by the joint efforts of British Indian and Burmese people ”.*

In the following year Sir Annamalai Chettyar drew attention to the part played by Indian troops in the liberation of Burma from the Japanese and proclaimed that the record of the Indian Army showed that “ India was ready and eager to rush to the rescue of that stricken land in her hour of trial ”. That being so, Indian property-rights in Burma were entitled to protection. The return of the property-holders and the entry of Indian labour would be “ in the best interests of Burma herself ”; once the *status quo* had been restored, Indian interests would be willing to co-operate in any reforms which Burman opinion regarded as necessary. Sir Annamalai’s remarks led a correspondent in one of the Indian newspapers to complain that no indication had been given of any willingness to co-operate with the Burmans in business or to welcome Burmese capital in Indian concerns; and that nothing had been said about any intention of offering good wages and conditions of employment to either Burman or Indian labour.†

In regard to immigration, Dr. Khare declared that “ the Indo-Burman Agreement of 1941 is as dead as a door mat ”. No labour, he said, would be allowed to go to Burma before a satisfactory agreement securing the rights of Indians had been arrived at. “ I am,” he asserted, “ second to none in my anxiety for restoring all that belongs to Indians in Burma such as citizenship rights, rights of property, commerce and trade and every other interest ”. He also stated, “ I give you a categorical assurance that no evacee who wants to go back to Burma will be restrained, none whatsoever ”.‡

* *Hindustan Times Weekly*, 18th December, 1944.

† *Bombay Chronicle*, 9th August, 1945.

‡ *National Call*, 14th September, 1945.

THE general attitude in India in regard to this question of entry into Burma appears to be that any Indian who lived in Burma before the evacuation in 1942 should be permitted to return, whether he wishes to make Burma his permanent home or not; that whatever may be decided about unskilled and semi-skilled labour, other Indians should not be restricted from entering and working in Burma; and that there should be no discriminatory legislation or administrative action against Indians in Burma. In brief, Indian opinion appears to demand that Indians, other than those of the labouring class, shall exercise much the same rights as they enjoyed in Burma when Burma was a province of the Indian Empire. It is, in fact, a claim for dual nationality.

THE matter being still under discussion between the two Governments, a provisional agreement has been made covering the return of those who evacuated in 1942. In view of present post-war conditions in Burma, which make it impossible to accommodate a flood of returning evacuees, facilities to return have been given only to those who possess interests in Burma which they wish to revive or to protect, and to such personnel as are needed by the Government of Burma or by commercial concerns which are in a position to accommodate and look after them. Other evacuees have been advised not to press for return until conditions improve. The Government of India, however, has made it clear that any restrictions involved in this agreement are in its view without prejudice to the claims of all evacuees ultimately to return. The question of the entry into Burma of Indians who were not previously resident there remains to be determined.

THUS not only Indian employers but also Indian employees of the Burma Government and of commercial concerns have been allowed to return to Burma, and this they have done with alacrity, for the position of the Indian long resident in Burma who evacuated to India was often unhappy. Not wanted in Burma, he found himself equally unwanted in India. In the past, if he had returned to India, he went with money in his pocket; in 1942 he arrived having perhaps lost all that he possessed. To be wanted nowhere is his unhappy lot.

INDIAN casual labour, on the other hand, has not to any extent returned.

POLITICALLY also the Indian attitude is of interest. In February, 1943, the Delhi correspondent of the *Times* reported that "responsible Indian circles . . . regard Burma as a country incapable of helping itself . . . Either the British must remain in force in which case it is certain, if past experience is any guide, that there will be friction between Britain and India over the treatment of the Indian population by the Burmese; or if Britain is not there in force, Burma would be exposed to invasion by any power or powers. . . . The obvious solution, according to these circles, is the return of Burma to India".

THIS view was repudiated by Indian newspapers, but it is interesting to observe that so far-sighted a statesman and scholar as Mr. K. M. Pannikar, in his book

The Future of South-East Asia published in 1943, suggested the establishment of "a triune Commonwealth—a reconstituted Indian Empire, on the basis of the freedom of the three areas" Hindustan, Pakistan and Burma. He also remarks that "Burma will require considerable Indian capital in the future also, especially if her rural economy is to be developed". Mr. Pannikar suggests that apart from matters of defence Burma within the "triune Commonwealth" would be completely free; but it is difficult to envisage a situation in which Burma, with her small population and with, in Mr. Pannikar's view, large investments of Indian capital, could long remain free from the domination of her powerful partners. Burma, indeed, has to face in the future the threat of the new Indian imperialism which has of late years appeared.

BURMAN opinion does not appear to have changed since 1938. Thinking Burmans agree that Burma needs some supply of Indian labour, especially in the agricultural sphere; Burma needs also the sweepers or scavengers from India; some Indian technicians, such as engineers for rice-mills, are admitted to be necessary until such time as Burma has an adequate supply of locally-trained men. But Burmans do not want, and most emphatically do not propose to have, any more money-lenders, traders, or clerks from India. Such Indians as the country needs will be made welcome, provided, however, that they are prepared to make Burma their home. They must Burmanise themselves, and in particular they must abandon their insistence on caste and similar prejudices which are a bar to social intercourse and are abhorrent to the egalitarian Burman; they must adopt the liberal attitude of the Burman in these matters.

THE Burman attitude, that Burma is prepared to accept Indians according to the country's need and on condition that they cease to claim dual nationality but identify themselves with Burma and her interests, is far from unreasonable, and should provide a basis for an amicable settlement of this very difficult problem. A solution of the problem is indeed necessary; in Burma the average density of population is only 63 per square mile; in Madras it is 328 and in Bengal 616. In Burma the density of population of the most thickly populated district is 226; both Madras and Bengal have districts with over 900 to the square mile; yet there is no reason to suppose that the Irrawaddy Delta could not support as thickly concentrated a population as, for example, the Ganges Delta.

BURMA, in this matter, is faced with the same problem as faces all the lands on the fringe of the Indian Ocean; Natal, East Africa, Ceylon, Malaya, Netherlands India, all in greater or lesser degree share with Burma the problem of coping with an overflow of population from India; and in Burma contiguity and the recollection of a hundred years of political identity render the problem perhaps even more difficult of solution than in any other of these territories.