

# BRITISH INDIA AND ITS TRADE.

## CHAPTER I.

### PHYSICAL FEATURES AND POPULATION.

Boundaries—Three regions of India proper—Burma—Meteorology—Area—Population—Race, Caste, and Religion—Occupations—Languages.

**Boundaries.**—India proper has the shape of an irregular triangle, bounded on the west by the Arabian Sea, on the east by the Bay of Bengal, and on the north by the mountain mass of the Himalayas and its southern offshoots. It extends from 8° to 37° north latitude, and is, therefore, partly within the tropics, and partly within the temperate zone. Included under India administratively is the large strip of territory called Burma, lying on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal, and bounded on the east by China, French Indo-China, and Siam. The coast-line of India and Burma stretches for more than 4,000 miles, but, as will be seen later, the number of important sea-ports is small.

**Three Regions.**—India proper falls into three clearly-defined regions, possessing great varieties of soil and climate. The first of these comprises the southern part of the stupendous Himalayan system, most of which is beyond the British frontier. Through this great barrier merchandise finds its way over high passes, which have for centuries served as trade routes into Eastern Turkestan and Tibet on the north, into Afghanistan on the west, and into China and Siam on the east. The Himalayas perform a valuable function physically by collecting and storing up rain-water for distribution over the tropical plains below. The upper parts of the mountains are of course barren, but lower down are forest-lands and rich soil.

Of far more importance economically is the second region, comprising the wide plains watered by the great Himalayan rivers, the Indus, the Ganges, and the Brahmaputra, with their tributaries. The Indo-Gangetic plain, which extends 1,700 miles across Northern India, hardly anywhere rises more than 1,000 feet above sea-level. Within this region lie Bengal, Assam, the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, the Punjab, and Sind, together with certain Native States. This vast unbroken alluvial tract includes the richest and most populous parts of India. But a portion of Rajputana and Sind consists of desert tracts.

The third region includes the peninsula commonly called the Deccan. Within it are the Central Provinces, Bombay, Madras, and Berar, as well as the great Native States of Mysore and Hyderabad, and the Mahratta and other feudatory States of Central and Southern India. This region is enclosed on all sides by mountains. On the north are the Aravalli and Satpura Mountains, and the Vindhya, which range from 1,500 to 4,000 feet, and form the northern wall of the irregular Deccan tableland. The Vindhya are broken up by cultivated valleys and broad plains, and are covered in many parts by forests. The peninsular plateau is bounded by the Eastern and Western Ghats, the former with an average elevation of 1,500 feet, and the latter of 3,000 feet. The rainfall of the southern slopes of the Vindhya is carried by the Nerbudda and Tapti into the Arabian Sea, while the drainage of the central plateau, prevented by the Western Ghats from flowing westwards, is borne by the Mahanadi, the Godavari, the Kistna, and the Cauvery through openings in the Eastern Ghats into the Bay of Bengal. The southwest or Malabar coast, shut in by mountains, is more primitive and less progressive than the south-east or Coromandel coast, which is easily accessible by land and sea, and has rapidly advanced in commerce.

**Burma.**—Burma is a region apart, and essentially different, from India proper. It slopes southward from the Himalayan system, and is traversed by great rivers, of which the Irrawaddy, navigable beyond Bhamo, is most important commercially. Upper Burma is mountainous, with a few alluvial plains. Lower Burma is traversed by mountain chains, but the flat delta of the Irrawaddy is very productive.

**Meteorology.**—Climatic conditions are commercially important

in relation to the requirements of the natives. Meteorologically, India proper falls into two main divisions—the area of the Indo-Gangetic plain, outside the tropics, and the Deccan, within the tropics. The special and dominant feature of Indian weather is the alternation of the monsoons. The north-east monsoon period includes a cold-weather season in January and February, and a hot-weather season in March, April, and May. The south-west monsoon, which sets in from the south on the Bombay and Bengal coasts in June, bears northwards vast quantities of water evaporated from the Indian Ocean. The clouds discharge a large part of their moisture in passing over the hot plains from June to October, and this period constitutes the rainy season, on which the success or failure of agriculture primarily depends. The south-west retreating monsoon prevails during November and December. The monsoons affect differently different parts of India. In January and February Southern India has fine weather, while in Northern India there is heavy rain in the Punjab and the submontane tracts, and very light rain in the plains. The influence of the extensive snow-clad Himalayas and of the plateau of Baluchistan and Persia, chiefly felt during the north-east monsoon, produces land-winds, great dryness of the air, and a large diurnal range of temperature during the dry season, December to May. During the hot weather the interior of the peninsula and Northern India is greatly heated compared with Assam and the coast districts, and, while intense heat prevails everywhere, the southern provinces are cooler than those in the river plains, owing to the elevation of the southern plateau. In Southern India, indeed, the temperature is almost uniform throughout the year. The winter rainfall is less than one inch over the whole peninsula. During the hot season it is small over the interior, but exceeds five inches in Bengal and the west coast districts, and is greatest in Assam. The rainy season—June to October—is marked by great uniformity, but small diurnal range, of temperature, the variation throughout India being only from 80° to 90° Fahr. November and December are usually dry, cool, and cloudless in Northern India, but more or less cloudy and wet in Southern India.

The south-west monsoon currents distribute their rain to every part of India, though very unequally. The southern spurs of the Himalayas, overlooking the Assam Valley, receive more than 500

inches a year, the highest measured rainfall in the world. Excessive rainfall also occurs in the Western Ghats. There is an area of constant rainfall, which may be said to include roughly Eastern Bengal, Assam, part of the Central Provinces, and the coast of the Western Ghats, while there is also an area of constant drought, including Sind, West Rajputana, and the West Punjab, where the annual rainfall is five inches or less, and crops can be secured only by irrigation. In the rest of India the rainfall is uncertain and drought is possible. Hence may arise violent fluctuations in the annual produce of agriculture and more or less widespread famine. These meteorological features have a very important bearing on the exporting and purchasing powers of the people. When the monsoon is deficient generally, the failure of rainfall is most marked through the belt where the rainfall averages from 10 to 30 inches. The recent famines (1897-8, and 1900-1) embraced a very extensive area, comprising the Bombay Deccan and the Central Provinces—both of which were ravaged each time—the North-Western Provinces, part of the Punjab, Bengal, and Madras, and the Native States of Rajputana and Central India, Baroda and Gujarat.

Burma falls within the torrid zone. Lower Burma and the north of Upper Burma have regular seasons, but the centre is liable to drought. In Rangoon December and January are cool; February, March, April, and November, dry and hot; May to October, rainy. The Irrawaddy Delta and the Pegu Plain have a rainfall of 190 inches, while the rainfall on the Arakan coast is even heavier.

**Area.**—The area of India (including Native States) is usually given as 1,560,000 square miles, a territory larger than the European Continent, excluding Russia. But if territories more or less under British influence be included, the area may be taken roughly as 1,700,000 square miles.

**Population.**—According to the census of 1901 the population of India (including Native States) was 294,000,000, as against 287,000,000 in 1891, and 254,000,000 in 1881, prior to which date there was no synchronous census. It will be seen that 1891 showed an increase of 33,000,000 over 1881, but Upper Burma, annexed in 1886, accounts for 3,000,000 of this total. The increase of 1901 over 1891 was 7,000,000, or only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.; but this slight rate of growth was probably due in some degree to the disastrous consequences of the extremely severe famines which afflicted India

during the last five years of the decennial period. Taking into account the areas beyond the frontier of India, we may safely say that a population of over 300,000,000 has to be supplied with foreign goods. India has few large towns, and only about 5 per cent. of the people live in towns of more than 20,000 inhabitants. In some regions, as in the Lower Ganges Valley, the pressure on the soil is very severe. In other regions, however, there are large tracts of cultivable, but uncultivated, soil. Government irrigation works are opening up new fields to cultivators in the Punjab and elsewhere.

**Race, Caste, and Religion.**—The people of India belong to different races. They form, not one nation, but a group of nations. On the joint basis of race, religion, and occupation has arisen that striking characteristic of Indian life, the caste system, which, originating among the Hindus, has spread to other religious bodies. The two great religious bodies of India are the Hindus and the Mohammedans, the former of whom constituted in 1891 about 72 per cent., and the latter 20 per cent., of the total population. These differences are not without commercial importance, for in India religion and caste largely govern the food and dress of the people. A small sect, the Parsees, numbering under 100,000, is noteworthy as including the most enterprising commercial people in India. The number of Europeans in India is about 170,000, most of whom are natives of the United Kingdom in the civil and military employment of the Government.

**Occupations.**—At least 61 per cent. of the people depend directly for a living on agriculture. The cultivator is the unit of the social system. The ryots (rai-yats) or peasant farmers are hardworking, but the returns to their labour are small. Their subsistence is meagre, and they spend little on their scanty clothing. Complicated and expensive agricultural machinery is not needed for a system of *petite culture*, and in any case it would be beyond the cultivator's present purchasing power. Besides those directly engaged in agriculture, there are the artisans and menials of the villages who depend at least in part on the produce of the fields—smiths, shoemakers, weavers, potters, and others. Only in a few large towns are considerable numbers engaged in factories and kindred industries. The table on p. 6 shows the occupations of the people according to the census of 1891, when a new classification was adopted.

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY PROVINCES AND STATES, AND  
INTO URBAN AND RURAL, ACCORDING TO OCCUPATION  
OR MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD.\*

Order of Occupation or Means of Livelihood.	India.	Number of Persons supported by each Order.			
		By Territory.		By Constitution.	
		British Provinces.	Native States.	Urban.	Rural.
I. Administration by State or by local bodies .. ..	5,600,153	3,839,643	1,760,510	1,434,356	4,165,797
II. Defence, military and naval .. ..	604,422	334,193	330,229	470,950	193,472
III. Service of Foreign States .. ..	500,030	38,179	401,851	226,437	273,593
IV. Provision and care of cattle .. ..	3,645,849	2,472,872	1,172,977	223,302	3,422,457
V. Agriculture .. ..	171,735,390	135,504,696	36,280,694	4,607,663	167,067,727
VI. Personal, household, or sanitary services .. ..	11,220,072	8,505,420	2,714,652	2,556,334	8,668,738
VII. Provision of food and drink .. ..	14,575,593	12,120,660	2,454,924	2,906,597	11,668,996
VIII. Provision of light, firing, and forage .. ..	3,522,257	2,837,525	684,732	572,801	2,949,456
IX. Construction of buildings .. ..	1,437,739	1,113,633	324,106	509,999	927,740
X. Construction of vehicles and vessels .. ..	146,508	135,627	10,881	55,258	91,250
XI. Provision of supplementary requirements .. ..	1,155,267	991,334	163,933	417,205	737,972
XII. Provision of textile fabrics and dress .. ..	12,611,267	9,655,213	2,956,054	2,857,413	9,753,854
XIII. Provision of metals and precious stones .. ..	3,821,433	2,897,046	924,387	896,586	2,924,847
XIV. Provision of glass, pottery, and stoneware .. ..	2,360,623	1,669,019	691,604	250,098	2,110,525
XV. Provision of wood, cane, matting, &c. .. ..	4,293,012	3,319,170	973,842	651,371	3,641,641
XVI. Provision of drugs, dyes, and gums .. ..	391,575	319,081	71,594	97,510	294,065
XVII. Provision of leather, hides, and horns .. ..	3,235,307	2,224,604	1,060,703	459,051	2,826,256
XVIII. Commerce .. ..	4,685,579	3,093,056	1,592,523	1,425,179	3,260,400
XIX. Transport and storage .. ..	3,952,993	3,242,231	710,712	1,192,456	2,760,537
XX. Learned and artistic professions .. ..	5,072,191	4,386,725	1,235,466	1,506,318	4,165,873
XXI. Sport and amusements .. ..	141,180	98,485	42,695	25,684	115,496
XXII. Earth work and general labour .. ..	25,468,017	18,414,315	7,053,702	2,666,241	22,801,776
XXIII. Undefined and disreputable means of livelihood .. ..	1,562,981	704,801	858,180	242,097	1,320,884
XXIV. Means of livelihood independent of work .. ..	4,773,993	3,204,465	1,569,528	940,090	3,833,903
Total .. ..	287,223,431	221,172,952	68,050,479	27,251,176	250,972,255

\* In this return no distinction is drawn between those who work and those whom they support by their work. The whole population depending upon the occupation is included, in order to indicate the respective sustaining power of the different orders.

**Languages.**—The number of languages and dialects is extremely great. By far the most important, from the standpoint of numbers, are Hindi and Bengali and their varieties, while Telugu, Marathi, Punjabi, Tamil, Gujarati, Kanarese, Uriya, and Burmese, come next. Gujarati is the great commercial language of Western India, and is used by Parsees and Mussulman traders. Urdu, or Hindustani, a Hindi language with an admixture of Persian and Arabic, is the most widely-spoken language and the most generally useful. It is spoken through the greater part of India by educated people. Marwari is the tongue of the Marwaris of Rajputana, who trade all over India, and have extensive banking connections and brokerage dealings in both Calcutta and Bombay, but they do business in other languages. English is taught everywhere, and is widely understood in the chief cities.