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History of Growth of Reforms of British Military Administration in India, 1848-1949

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**HISTORY OF GROWTH AND REFORMS OF BRITISH
MILITARY ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA (1848-1949)**

**By
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Military Administration means proper organization of the army into an efficient one so that it becomes a powerful force and defends the nation at all times of crisis. Therefore the survival of a country depends on its defence. A military or military force is a collective of men, machines and equipment that form an army. While it can refer to an armed force, it generally refers to a permanent, professional force of soldiers or guerrillas – trained exclusively for the purpose of warfare. The doctrine that asserts the primary of a military within a society is called militarism.

Ever since the dawn of history people have fought many wars. Families against families, tribes against tribes, groups against groups. But this kind of skirmishes are not wars. They were called fights. War is a political institution and necessary evil. ¹

The growth of British military power in India has perhaps no parallel in history. Arriving by sea as traders, the Britishers penetrated in the political arena through their institutionalized military forces. Starting from the first ship Hector under Captain William Hawkins which touched Surat in 1607, almost all the English ships which followed were in reality of the type of battleships and brought canon and other warlike stores supplied by the British Board of Ordinance for their security enroute and protection of their factories in India. ²

The first settlements of the English East India Company, professed to be purely mercantile had almost their beginnings in a few European artillerymen who formed a portion of the guard maintained for the protection of these factories. Soon after, with a bolder policy, a number of artillery pieces were kept ready in the fortification built along the coastline. Gradually the East India Company got involved in fighting with European adversaries and the native Chiefs and the problem of

regular supply of arms, transport, food, clothing and other warlike stores to the Company troops aroused. The organization and administration of the expanding army became an urgent important factor for securing victories in the battles. The vital step taken by the Company in this regard was the formation of regular companies of artillery, ordinance service and the establishment of ammunition factories in 1748.

The first Indian sepoy levies employed by the company had meager discipline and were armed with matchlocks, bows and arrows, spears and swords. There was, however, no dearth of good fighting material from amongst the Indians. As the time went on these sepoys were trained on the European lines, disciplined, armed with muskets, equipped with later weapons and interweave into first class fighting units. The men came to acquire and admire idea of drill and discipline and personal military qualities, these impart to the trainees.³

Indian soldiers referred to as 'Native Troops' were badly armed and 'although drilled in the use of the musket were chiefly armed with sword, the spear and the shield, wore their native dress and were commanded by native officers'.

In the Madras Army armed retainers, guard and peons known as Telingas (from Telegana), were disorganized mob who " had no discipline, nor any idea that discipline was required ". They were armed with matchlocks, bows and arrows, spears, swords, bucklers, daggers, or any other weapon they could get. They consisted bodies of various strength, each under the command of its own chief who received from government the pay of the whole body and distributed it to men.⁴

A historical retrospect may be conveniently divided into the following periods .

First Period – The initial phase 1600 – 1708 when the forces of the East India Company were isolated and unorganized body .

Second Period – The Presidency Armies under the company 1709 – 1857.

Third Period – The Presidency Armies under the British Crown 1858 - 1894

Fourth Period - The period of the union, after the abolition of the Presidency Armies 1895 - 1920

Fifth Period – The period of consolidation 1921 to the present day

This dissertation deals with the steps taken by the British authorities to improve the administrative set up in the military field. The aim of this dissertation is to focus some of the important reforms taken in the field of military history. In 1895 the Presidency Armies were merged into one unit and acquired national character.

The study is spread over six chapters. Chapter I is the introduction.

Chapter II gives an insight on the early history of Indian army i.e. from the ancient period to medieval. The source for this chapter is mainly secondary materials such as books and on line websites.

Chapter III focuses on the entry of the British and how they formed the Presidency Armies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay. For this chapter information is mainly collected from the secondary sources that include various books mostly on military history.

Chapter IV gives an insight into the three Presidency Armies under the crown and how they were abolished and formed into the United Indian Army. For this chapter both the primary and secondary sources are used. Primary sources include the Government Orders, various Reports of the Committee etc.

Chapter V deals with reforms of the Lord Kitchener in the field of army and the role-played by the Indian army during the two crucial World Wars. This chapter is mostly covered with the primary sources, which include the Government Proceedings, various reports based on the army committees.

Chapter VI highlights the way in which the Indian Army was Indianized. For Indianising the Indian Army various committees were appointed by the British Government. This chapter also deals with the Partition of the Indian army. Both the primary and secondary sources were useful for completing this chapter.

Chapter VII is the conclusion.

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Chapter II

Historical Background of Indian Army

Military history of India date backs to the Vedic period. The first reference of armies is found in the Vedas. The epics Ramayana and Mahabharata contains information on standing armies and warfare techniques like the Chakravyuha which was used in the Kurukshetra war. The epic contains information on the usage of chariots, war elephants and even flying machines that were used in the wars. There were many dynasties in India who used various techniques in the battle field to win the battle such as the Magadha empire, Shishunaga dynasty, Nanda dynasty, Maurya Dynasty, Satavahana dynasty, Kushan empire, Gupta dynasty, Harsha's empire, Pandiyan and Chola empire, Chera dynasty, Pratiharas, Palas, Rashtrakutas, Rajputs, Yadav Vijayanagar empire, Chalukyas and Pallavas, Mughal Empire etc¹.

The idea of the modern the 'modern Indian army' is rarely associated with the Tamils. The nature or its ethnic composition generates the impression that it is a predominantly north Indian phenomeno. This impression has become so strongly established that the military history of the British empire's rise has been studied in recent times, in connecion with the role of the 'marital peoples' of north India in the British Indian Army ² .

Military History in Ancient India

Vedic period

Indus Valley Civilization was a single state which seems to be large cities which was controlled by small groups of merchants, landowners and priests. Therefore, no standing armies were involved. Very few bronze weapons were found. Fortified cities have been excavated which seems to indicate some defensive capability.

The Rigvedic tribes of Indo- Aryans were led by their tribal chieftain and engaged in wars with each other as well as other tribes. They used Bronze weapons and had horse-drawn spoke-wheeled chariots described prominently in the Rigveda. The main share from the booty obtained during the cattle raids and battles went to the chief of the tribe. The warriors belonged to the Kshatriya Varna. The earliest allusions to a specific battle are those to the Battle of ten kings in Mandala 7 of the Rigveda.

During the post-Rigvedic period (ca. 1100-500 BC), the Vedas and other associated texts contain references to warfare. The earliest known application of war elephants dates to this period, being mentioned in several Vedic Sanskrit hymn. The two great epics of India, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, are centered around conflicts between the emerging Mahajanapadas and refer to military formations, theories of warfare and esoteric weaponry. Valmiki's Ramayana describes Ayodhya's military as defensive rather than aggressive. The city, it says, was strongly fortified and was surrounded by a deep moat. Ramayana describes Ayodhya in following words: "The city abounded in warriors undefeated in battle, fearless and skilled in the use of arms, resembling lions guarding their mountain caves. Mahabharata describes various military techniques like Chakravyuha used in the Kurukshetra War³.

The Army of Magadhan Empire

King Bimbisara of Shishunaga dynasty was an expansionist and he strengthened the military of Magadha's capital, Rajagriha. Ajatshatru built a new fort at Pataliputra. Jain texts tell that he used two new weapons – a catapult and a covered chariot with swinging mace that has been compared to modern tank.

The powerful Mahapadma Nanda of Nanda dynasty defeated Ikshvau, Panchalas, Kasis, Harhayas, Kalingas, Asmakas, Kuru and Vitihotras and assumed the title "the destroyer of the kshathriyas". At the time of Dhana Nanda, the Nandas had an army consisting of 80,000 cavalry, 200,000 infantry, 8,000 armed chariots, and 6,000 war elephants. Many historians hold the view that Alexander confined himself to the plains of Punjab for fear of the mighty Nandas.

Maurya Dynasty

According to Megasthenes, Chandragupta Maurya built an army consisting of 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 war elephants, and 600,000 infantry. Chandragupta conquered almost all the parts of northern India, establishing an empire from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal. He then conquered the regions to the east of the Indus river after defeating the Macedonians and Seleucus Nicator, and then moved southwards, taking over much of what is now Central India. The entire army was administered by six chairs, one for each of the four arms of the army (infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots), one chair for the navy, and one for logistics and supply.

Infantry in the mauryan period was most commonly armed with a longbow made of bamboo, and a double-handed broadsword. The cavalry is not noted especially, but Megasthenese does mention that they were armed with a few spears, of which we can assume most were meant for hurling. Elephants were mounted, either bareback or with a howdah, with archers or javelineers, and with a

mahout around the animal's neck. Chariots by this time were in definite decline, but still managed to stay an arm of the army by sheer virtue of their prestige.

In 185 BC, the last Mauryan king was assassinated by Pushyamitra Shunga, the Commander-in-Chief of the Mauryan armed forces.

Army in the Early Middle Kingdoms (the golden age)

Simuka, the founder of the Satavahana dynasty, conquered Maharashtra, Malwa and part of Madhya Pradesh. His successor and brother Krishna further extended his kingdom to the west and the south. He was succeeded by Satakarni I, who defeated the Sunga dynasty of North India. Gautmiputra Satakarni defeated the Western Kshatrapas ruler Nahapana. His brother Vashistiputra Satakarni, was defeated by his Western Kshatrapa father-in-law in a battle.

Vima Takto, of Kushan empire conquered Gandhara and northern India in 68 AD. The Kushan warriors were assimilated into Indian society as Kshatriyas. Most of the Kushan nobles fought from horse back, supported by the heavier parts of the army, cataphracts. The coins of Kujula, Vima Takto, Vima Kadphises and Kanishka show the king usually unarmored, lightly armored than the later Kushan kings. In many coins Kanishka appears to have a bow, but this interpretation is debatable. Some Buddhist texts indicate the use of Indian influences like elephants leading the attacks and the use of chariots. The elephants first appeared on the coins of Vima Kadphises and probably went on to become the mount of the kings. The elephants are depicted with towers and a covering. It is not clear whether these were armor or just padding. Buddhist texts mention that the infantry were used to support these elephants. The historian Nikonorov suggests that the elephants used were provided by the Satraps. However, the main strength of the Kushan army came from its unarmored horses. The use

of heavy cavalry increased later. Apart from the original Kushans and Indians, the Greeks, various mountain tribes, Sacas from northern India and Iranian mercenaries were also added to Kushan army. The Kidarites and Sassnuids predominantly used cavalry. The Satraps provided them with additional Indian forces including elephants⁴.

Gupta dynasty

Siva-Dhanur-veda, considered a contemporary military classic gives information about the military system of the Guptas. The Guptas used war elephants, supplemented by additional armor. The use of horses, was very limited. At the time of Guptas the use of chariots started declining, as they had not proved very useful against the Ancient Macedonians, Scythians, and other invaders. Guptas utilised heavy cavalry clad in mail armor and equipped with maces and lances. They also heavily relied on infantry archers, and the bow was one of the dominant weapons of their army. Their longbow was composed of metal, or more typically bamboo, and fired a long bamboo cane arrow with a metal head. Iron shafts were used against armored elephants, and fire arrows were also part of the bowmen's arsenal. Archers were frequently protected by infantry equipped with shields, javelins, and longswords. Guptas also maintained a navy, allowing them to control regional waters.

Late Middle Kingdoms (the classical age)

Emperor Harshavardhana (606-648) ruled northern India for over forty years. His father, a king of Thanesar had gained prominence by successful wars against the Huns. Harsha had plans to conquer the whole of India, and carried on wars for thirty years with considerable success. By 612 he had built up a vast army with which he conquered nearly all North India up to the Narmada river. But, in 620 Harsha lost to Pulakesin II, when he attempted to invade Deccan.

The South Indian Army in the early period

In South India, the Chalukyas and the Pallavas gained prominence. Chalukya king Pulakesi's expansionism started with minor campaign against the Gangas and others. He defeated the Pallava king Mahendravarman, and also conquered the Cheras and the Pandyas . His most successful military campaign was his defeat of Harshavardhana (c. 615).

The Pallava king Narsimhavarman had vowed to avenge Mahendravarman's defeat against Pulakesi II. He invaded Vatapi with an army headed by his general Paranjothi. He successfully defeated Chalukyas, killing Pulakesi II in 642. The clashes between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas continued. In south India the army was mainly divided into infantry, cavalry and war elephants.

The Cholas were the first rulers in the Indian subcontinent to maintain a fleet and use it to expand their dominion overseas. The Chola king Vijayalaya defeated the Pallavas and captured Thanjavur. In the early 10th century the Chola king Parantaka I defeated the Pandyan king Rajasimha and also invaded ceylon (Sri Lanka). It is known through inscriptions that at least from Uttama's time, Chola warriors were provided with waist coats of armor. Hence, one regiment was called Niyayam-Uttama-Chola-tterinda-andalakattalar. Rajaraja Chola began his military career with the conquest of the Cheras. He defeated the Chera King Bhaskara Ravivarman, destroying his fleet at the port of Kandalur. This clearly show that the cholas had well maintained and powerful fleet.

Military History of Medievel India

The Hindu Age died out because of defective employment of assets and the curious habit of allowing an invader a free run. No battles were waged on the enemy right from the frontiers or even during his retreat. The natives lacked in tactics and technologies were not imbibed

With the beginning of the seventh century, that Hindustan surrendered itself to conquest, plunder, and dominion. India's early history is therefore, the story of its conquest and subjugation by adventurous like Arabs, Afghans, and Turks who marched into Hindustan to try their luck

Between Ghori and Ghazni of Afghanistan, expeditionary looting was developed into a fine art. Desire for loot was changed into desire to rule, leading to the first Sultanate in Delhi in 1206 AD.

The Delhi Sultanate, established over time (1206-1526), by decisive campaigning brought in fresh war fighting norms. Firearms were introduced in the early fourteenth century, and cavalry formed the major part in defending the forces. The pivot was still provided by a large group of war elephants and infantry.

The Mughal conquest of India is an object lesson in the superiority of technology and tactics over mere numbers. In 1526, a small army under Babur, invaded India. The small force, served by an artillery force was protected by infantry, with free ranging cavalry under decentralized command, defeated a much larger force of Lodhi's sultanate. The kill power of the artillery combined with mobile multi-directional attacks, brought victory to Babur.

In the Mughals' military scheme of things, cavalry and artillery got the pride of place followed by the infantry wielding muskets and bows. Logistical trains consisting of carts drawn by camels, oxen and even donkeys were streamlined such that a field army was ensured freedom of action. Elephants, again, were used at the firm base, or as 'command vehicles'.

The mansabdari system of obtaining a large army for campaigns, with minimal expenditure being incurred by the central authority, was refined and reintroduced under the Mughals. The Delhi Sultans had coined this name for a system long prevalent in the subcontinent. The military peerage, the

only aristocracy, was graded according to mansab (or military rank). Princely state contributions flowed in according to the mansab grade, commencing at upkeep and command of 10 to 40,000 troops for blood relatives. Inevitably, such a system bred a wide variation in training standards, loyalty, and morale, and uneven leadership caliber of the mansabdar..

Even under Aurangzeb, the mansabdari system was fully stretched by an outstanding leader and military genius - the Maratha chieftain, Chhatrapati Shivaji. He had thoroughly studied, the strengths of the Mughals as well as their weaknesses, and tempered his diplomacy, military doctrine, organization, and tactics to capitalize on the latter. The rugged terrain of the Western Ghats, where he operated, could be counted on to slow down large conventional columns. His cavalry, swift and decisive in battle, had great stamina, dedication, and skill. It used the raid, hit and run tactics, hounding and harrying but never offering set piece battle. Shivaji's famous Gorilla warfare was very useful for him to win various battles against the Mughals . A commander of incomparable pluck and acumen, he exploited every facet of the military art including deception, to appear where he was least expected and in sufficient strength to carry the day.

From this chapter we can say that even before the advent of the English the native Kings and Emperor had a well maintained and well administered large army force from the ancient period onwards. Our traditional army was mainly divided into infantry, cavalry, chariots, elephant and naval fleet.

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CHAPTER III

ENTRY OF BRITISH AND FORMATION OF PRESIDENCY ARMIES

On 31st December 1600, Queen Elizabeth I granted a charter to an association, the Governor and Company of Merchants trading into the East Indies, having assessed the prospects of advantageous trade. This company, more commonly known as the English East India Company, was granted exclusive rights to trade across the world, ‘ beyond the Cape of Bona Esperanza (Good Hope) to the Straights of Magellan ‘. The Portuguese and Dutch had preceded the English, and the French followed. Much of the history of this Company, during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was struggle too assert these rights, using arms when required. ¹

The Military history of British India dates back to the year 1607 when the English ship Hector and militarized men of the East India Company under Captain Hawkins, first arrived at Surat and commenced their trade. Generally this history falls into four periods – under the East India Company 1607 – 1708 A.D., the Presidency Armies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay 1709 – 1894, United Indian Army 1895 – 1920, and finally till 1947 when India gained independence.

The foundation of the Indian Army was laid with the ‘ ensign and thirty men ’ of Bengal, the ‘peons ’ of Madras factories commencing 1624 and the small holding force of Bombay in 1662. In the early years of Company’s trade and until the factories were fortified, the armouries were located in the vessels. The peons and other native guards wore their own dress, and had their own weapons. ²

The Indian Army originated in small establishments of undisciplined and indifferently arm guards of peons. The Indian army enrolled with the dual object of protecting the factories of the East India Company and ending dignity of its principle functionaries. These peons were hardly being regarded as soldiers. As the factories grew in size and importance, the peons were given semi –

military organization. In time, they were formed into levies. Fort St. George was built in Madras in 1644 to house the Company's property securely. It was manned in 1645 by a body of Englishmen , French and Dutch deserters , Portuguese half – breeds , and Negroes , who totaled about hundred men . This was the nucleus of what till 1895 was called Madras Army.

The next English enter pot was the company's factory at Hugely . It was formed in 1652 under an agent who was authorized by a firman of the Mughal Emperor to have an “ ensign and thirty men ” for his personal guard of honour . To this was added a small party of artillery men , called the “ gunner and his crew ” . Such was the origin of the celebrated Bengal Army . In 1681 Bengal became independent of Madras and was placed under an “ Agent and Governor in the Bay of Bengal and factories subordinate ” . In 1689 Calcutta became the focus of the company's commercial activity in Bengal , and the Agent's guard was increased to hundred . Bengal was raised to the status of Presidency in 1699 , and Sir Charles Eyer was appointed its President . The Fort at Calcutta was named Fort William , in honour of King William III . The military force here amounted in 1708 to some 130 men , apart from a small body on artillery men .

Bombay was the next foothold acquired by the British in India in their chronological order of possession . The small force sent out in 1662 to hold it for King Charles II , whose dowry formed on his marriage with Catherine of Braganza , became the embryo of what in course of time grew to be the Bombay Army . Around 1668 the garrison of Bombay consisted of 5 officers, 139 non – commissioned officers and men 54 Topasses , apart from two gunners and their 21 pieces of canon . All the men were Europeans , except the Topasses , who were half castes claiming descent from the Portuguese , and were so called from the form of the head gear they used . This was the largest of the military bodies at that time in India , the forces in Bengal being then limited to an ensign and 30 European soldiers .³

In 1675 orders were sent out to Surat , the seat of Company's government , that the civil servants were to apply themselves to acquiring a knowledge of military discipline so that if there was any sudden attack , or if they were found better qualified for military duties than for mercantile works, they might receive commissions and have the pay of military officers.

In 1698 a new Company of Merchants known as English Company received its Charter . The two company became bitter rivals but in 1708 they were merged into the “ United Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies ” better known as the East India Company .⁴

Each Presidency was separated for at least for two hundred years , from the other by hundreds of miles of trackless jungles or of independent states , and for many years had even no common Governor – General and therefore no , coordinated policy . For all practical purposes , they were entirely separate countries dealing with widely different people . Their armies , therefore , were in many ways different , though from time to time, the company issued regulations governing the main organization with a view to making them similar in their broad lines .⁵

PRESIDENCY ARMIES

One of the measures taken in 1708 by the new United Company was definite formation of three Presidencies of Bengal , Madras and Bombay , each absolute within its own limits . The President of each was also the Commander – in – Chief of the military forces of the Presidency and was responsible only to the directors at home . Consequently the armies of the three Presidencies became distinct and separate from each other .

By then the English had established themselves in three chief fortified places , the Island of Bombay , Fort St. George , Madras and Fort William at Calcutta . In the course nearly 100 years , the mere unorganized handful of miscellaneous and ill – disciplined Europeans have been converted into a force consisting of small but organized military units . The Presidential Armies of those days were composed of Europeans recruited from England or collected locally , of half caste Goanese Topasses and of Indian sepoy . The latter were mainly armed with their own native weapons , wore their own native dress and were commanded by their native officers .⁶

ARMY OF BENGAL PRESIDENCY

The first battalion raised in Bengal were 10 companies of 100 men each , commanded by a captain , with one lieutenant , one ensign and one or two sergeants . the company's colours , with the union in one corner , were carried by the grenadiers . The first battalion were known by the name of the captain by whom they were commanded .⁷

COMPOSITION OF BENGAL ARMY

It is necessary to offer note some observations on the composition of the army of Bengal Presidency . The cavalry is comparatively young . Their conduct , however , in the severe service that ensued has justly raised their reputation , and they at present form a most efficient and distinguished branch of the army to which they belong . In the native infantry of Bengal , the Hindus are in full proportion of three – fourths to mahomedans . They consist chiefly of Rajputs , who are a distinguished race among the khiteer or military tribe . The Rajput is born a soldier . The frame of the Rajput is almost always improved by martial exercises , he is from habit temperate in his diet , of a generous , though warm temper , and of good moral conduct , he is when well – treated , zealous , and faithful .

In the year 1783 the artillery , consisted of regiment of ten companies, each of hundred men , non – commissioned and privates , commanded by one colonel , two lieutenant colonel , two major , ten captains , ten captain – lieutenants , twenty lieutenants, and twenty lieutenants fire workers , now called second lieutenants . The European infantry consisted of three regiments , each of ten companies , each company of 100 men , non – commissioned and privates , commanded by one lieutenant – colonel , one major , seven captain , one captain – lieutenants twelve lieutenants and eight ensigns. Neither the artillery nor European infantry were ever completed in men .

The staff of the army at that time consisted of an adjutant – general and his deputy, a quartermaster – general and his deputy , six majors of brigade , six barrack masters , and one commissary general , whose function were then limited to the audit of accounts .⁸

ARMY OF MADRAS PRESIDENCY

The general history of the native army of Fort St George is short . Sepoys were first disciplined on the establishment in 1748 , they were at that period , and for some time afterwards , in independent companies , under subedars or native captains . As the numbers of the native army increased , the form changed . In A.D. 1766 we find the battalions of 1000 men each , and three European officers to each corps . In 1770 there were eighteen battalions of similar strength , and in 1784 the number of this army had increased to 2000 native cavalry and 28000 infantry , a considerable reduction was made at this period ,, but subsequent wars and conquest have caused great increase⁹ .

CONSTITUTION OF COMPANY'S ARMY

Previously to 1783 all company's officers were commanded by the King's officers of the same rank , an old captain of the companies service , for instance , was commanded on duty by the youngest captain of the King's. From 1783 to 1796 , the companies armies had an independent constitution and system of promotion , that was altogether unconnected with the King's service , that

produced a high military spirit and an efficient state of discipline . The infantry consisted in 1796 of four regiments of Europeans, having each one colonel , one lieutenant – colonel , one major , ten captains , twelve lieutenant , eight ensigns , and of thirty – six battalions of sepoys , having each one captain – commandant , six lieutenant , four ensigns . The infantry was formed into six brigades , having each a lieutenant – colonel and a major ¹⁰.

ARMY OF BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

It was at Bombay that the first native corps were disciplined by the English . The sepoys at Bombay continued long in independent companies , commanded by subedars or native captains . The companies were formed battalions under the European officers .

BOMBAY ARMY COMPOSED OF ALL CLASSES

This army has , from origin to the present day , been indiscriminately composed of all classes , Mohamedans , Hindus , Jews and some few Christians . Among the Hindus , those of the lowest tribes of Maratha and the Purwarrie , Soortee and Frost sects, are much more numerous than the Rajputs and higher castes . Jews attained the rank of commissioned officers.

In 1797 , the Bombay army consisted of the following corps , viz one European regiment , eight native infantry regiments of two battalions each a native marine battalions , available for general service , with battalion of artillery and corps of engineers amounting in the whole of 18,000 men and upwards ¹¹.

THE ORGANISATION OF 1796

During the constant war with the French , Mysore and the Marathas , the Presidency armies grew and developed . In 1793 , the fall of Pondichery ended the power of the French in India ¹² . By 1796 when the general reorganization of these armies was carried out for the first time , the company had about 13,000 white soldiers and 57,000 native troops . Of the latter , Bengal and Madras had

24,000 each and Bombay 9,000 , By this reorganization , the strength of the native forces was reduced , though the number of British officers in the units was augmented . Formerly a battalion had 12 British officers , which comprised a commandant , an adjutant and 10 subalterns commanding companies . This number was now increased to 23 made up of the colonel commandant , a lieutenant colonel , a major , 4 captains , 11 lieutenants and 5 ensigns . This had the effect of further decreasing the authority and dignity of the Indian officers ¹³

The infantry was generally formed into regiments of two battalions each . The establishment of each such regiment was one colonel commandant , 2 lieutenant colonel , 2 majors , 8 captain , 22 lieutenants , 10 ensigns , 2 European non – commissioned officers , 40 native officers , 200 native non – commissioned officers , 40 drummers and fifers and 1600 sepoy . Each battalion had 200 grenadier and eight battalion companies¹⁴ .

A cavalry regiment consisted of a field officer in command , 15 officers , including the regimental staff , 4 European non commissioned officers , 12 native officers, 39 native non – commissioned officers , and 426 troopers .

Artillery battalions were created. Bengal was allotted three and Madras two battalions of artillery while Bombay got six companies of this arm ¹⁵ . This organization had many glaring defects . No doubt it improved the prospects of British officers . Up to this time they had been on one general list for promotion . As the proportion of senior to junior ranks was low , promotions were slow . Under the new arrangements , officers up to the rank of major were placed on separate lists for each Presidency , and an establishment of general officers was instituted ¹⁶ .

THE REORGANISATION OF 1824

Between the first reorganization of the army in 1796 and its second reorganization in 1824 , the great Maratha Wars of 1803 and 1817 intervened ¹⁷ .

By 1824 the Presidency armies had regiments of European and Indian infantry , regiments of Indian cavalry , brigades of horse artillery , European and Indian foot artillery , corps of engineer , corps of sappers and miners , and corps of pioneers . Another significant development was formation of irregular cavalry regiment in imitation of the system followed by Indian rulers who had levies of horse attached to their armies . These horsemen were not clothed or armed by the British , but were on the sildar system under which the horsemen furnished his own horse and equipment . Only two or three European officers were attached to each of this regiment . These units (abolished in 1921) were quite apart from the regular cavalry units which were officered on the full European scale ¹⁸ .

The year (1824) was next important milestone in the evolution of the system of the Indian army . The defects of the organization of 1796 were sought to be remedied in that year . Double battalion regiments were broken up into single battalion regiments and were numbered according to the date of their raising ¹⁹ . However , the high proportion of British officers in the infantry and cavalry units persisted . The Bengal army was organized in 3 brigades of horse artillery , 5 battalions of foot artillery , 2 regiments of European and 68 native infantry , and 5 regiments of irregular and 8 of regular armies were constituted on similar lines²⁰ .

THE GREAT REVOLT OF 1857

It was in 1757 that Robert Clive scored one of the greatest victories at the Battle of Plassey and thus were laid the foundation of the British Empire in India . But the authority of the English was challenged by the Sepoy Mutiny of the 1857 .

According to Bacon ‘ the causes and motives for sedition were innovations in religion , taxes , alterations in law and customs , breaking of privileges , general oppression , advancement of unworthy persons . Strangers , death grown desperate , and what so ever in offending people joineth and knitteth

them in a common cause'. Not all these basic impulses to mutiny were strong in India but certainly many were and the two acts, above all others operative were, the abolition of suttee and the annexation of Oudh. Among other causes operative to a lesser extent were, the forced participation in the Afghan War and the Burma Wars of the sepoys, who considered journey across the dark seas contrary to the terms of agreement and religious usage²¹.

Commentary and historians have not found it easy to compute the exact strength of the mutineers. Roughly speaking, some 30,000 are claimed to have remained loyal up to the end, a like number are claimed to have disarmed or deserted. Some 70,000 are claimed to have joined the revolt at different times. The storm centers of the revolt were Meerut, Delhi, Kanpur, Banaras, Allahabad, Oudh, Gwalior, Bithur, Fategarh, Lucknow, Patna, Jhansi, Ajmer, Nasirabad, Nimach, Aligarh, Lahore, Govindgarh, Jallundur, Kangra, Peshawar and Ferozpur.

Every city had to suffer untold miseries twice. First, when the mutineers murdered, looted, plundered and pillaged and when English repeated the process with vengeance. With an iron hand the English put an end to the revolt of 1857.

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CHAPTER IV

PRESIDENCY ARMIES UNDER THE CROWN AND THEIR AMALGAMATION (1858-1895)

The Great revolt was completely crushed . By virtue of the Royal Proclamation of August , 1858 , the Government of the Honourable East India Company was terminated and India was declared as a 'Colony of the Crown'. By virtue of the same declaration , the troops in the service of the company were also transferred into the service of the crown and so was born the Army in India , the first truly modern Army that India ever had.¹

PEEL COMMISSION

The Royal, or Peel Commission was appointed in July 1858 and presided over by Major General Jonathan Peel , then Secretary of State for War.² It was an official body appointed to examine the military in India after the Mutiny . Although it was not instructed to examine the role of caste , it soon became aware that caste and the structure of Indian Society would be a central problem.

Roughly three positions on reorganization emerged in the oral and written testimony of those examined by the commission. The first , generally advocated by officers and civilians more familiar with the Madras and Bombay system , envisioned a balanced pattern of recruitment , drawing from all sections of a regions society . Sir Bartle Frere argued that only soldierly ability , and not caste counted.³ This guaranteed a natural heterogeneity in recruitment as some castes declined in soldierly ability . The important quality was not birth or origin but the ability to act independently and to be self reliant.⁴

The second position , diametrically opposed to the first , stated that some castes and classes should be eliminated from the Indian Army . Major General J.B. Hearsey , one of the first Britishers to take

note of the original uprising in Barrackpore in 1857 , urged that the recruitment of all Brahmins and Muslims from “Hindustan ” cease.⁵ He further wanted to blacklist Oudh, the Doab of the Ganges , Jamuna , Shahbad , Bojhpur , and Rohilkhand . Harsey and others who advocated selective recruitment were hardly less emphatic over the need to refuse to cater to caste than those such as Frere . They were concerned with breaking down caste interest even among the selectively recruited groups.⁶ Out of a desire to smash the feelings and limitation of caste within the army , the idea of recruiting Christians was revived , and was popular at the time . In his written statement , for example, Harsey urged the employment of Christians from foreign countries in the Indian Army: Nestorians , Koreans , Malays , Christian Chinese , Christian from the Philippines and South America , “ all , all ; but they must be Christians, and then TRUST can be reposed in them”.⁷

According to a third , intermediate , position on the recruitment problem , no class should on principle be excluded from military service unless it was clearly unfit . Even recruitment in Bengal should use good available material ; it would appear like a weakness in the government to exclude one caste (Brahmins) or one religion (Muslims) from the military.⁸ Lawrence , Chamberlain and Edwardes of the Punjab Committee urged extensive recruitment from their region , to counterbalance the soldiers from the United Provinces .⁹ The three officials wanted Christians , Eurasians , Santals , Bhills , and other groups as well as Punjabis drawn into the army on the theory that these groups would counterbalance each other in religion and caste.¹⁰ The Punjab trio placed more emphasis on the need to balance and separate caste within the army than did the Bombay and Madras spokesman ; this disparity in attitudes was made especially clear when the problem of untouchables and low caste troops was raised.¹¹

The Peel Commission eventually recommended that “ the Native Army should be composed of different nationalities and castes , and as a general rule , mixed promiscuously through each regiment

,” although it based the latter suggestion on little official testimony.¹² In effect it evaded the task of specifying in detail the future composition of the army . Most of its recommendations dealt with army organization ; how to strengthen control, and increase the number of qualified officers.

The commission followed the suggestions of the Punjab Committee and established a set of principles which became the guidelines for a whole generation of army reformers. These principles were confirmed twenty years later in another major examination of the army in India.¹³

The recommendations applied primarily to the Bengal Army , because armies of Madras and Bombay already fulfilled the recommendation for mixed composition as well as most of other recommendations . The armies of Madras and Bombay were organized on a “plum pudding” basis down to the company and squad level . The composition advocated by the Punjab Committee was adopted in the Bengal Army (which included the Punjab Frontier Force) . In 1864 it consisted of twenty “ mixed ” regiments, sixteen regiments with ethnically homogeneous companies , and seven pure ethnic regiments (mostly Sikhs and Gurkhas) . Recruiting in all three presidencies were localized and troops rarely served outside of the home presidency . The latter development had serious repercussions : without prospect of active duty , service in Bombay and Madras became increasingly unattractive to the able officer , and the quality of their units slowly declined.¹⁴

EDEN COMMISSION

The principles laid down in 1859 were reaffirmed in 1879 by the high level Eden Commission appointed to reexamine the problems of the army in India .¹⁵

The Commission recommended that the three presidency armies be divided into four regional commands. But, this recommendation was not carried out for several years .

This division was designed to retain the geographic composition of the military and strengthen the hand of the central government in its efforts to prevent the Madras and Bombay armies from poaching

recruits from the Punjab and Northwest India . The Commission recommended strict recruiting by each presidency army only from its own area.

Although the Eden Commission tightened up the recruiting areas of the Bombay and Madras armies , it permitted the Bengal army and the Punjab units to maintain their pure caste regiments . Officers from these units appearing before the commission stressed the effectiveness of the homogeneous ethnic regiment , and the commission agreed , but not to the extent that they became more numerous than mixed regiments .¹⁶

The growing illegal recruitment of northern Indians in the Bombay and Madras presidencies , could be dealt with in two ways . First , it could be legalized (a suggestion the commission rejected because it interfered with the principle of divide and rule) , or second , the size of those two armies could be reduced , making it easier to recruit soldiers from their own areas . The commission chose the latter course for the Madras Army and authorized small but important reductions . The commission argued that the internal security problem was considerably eased in Madras and that Madras soldiers were not effective enough to justify extensive recruitment . The decline of the Madras Army dates from this time , although this decline was slow because of the large number of officers , and because of protests from the presidency .¹⁷

Both the Peel Commission in 1859 and the Eden Commission in 1879 based their recommendations on the premise that no major foreign expeditions were likely , and that the main problem was internal security . Army policy was not altered even after the second Afghan War , and only after the Russian scare of 1885 was the Eden Commission's assumption shattered that 60,000 men were the maximum necessary under any circumstances.¹⁸ The Burma War of 1887-1889 , followed the Russian scare and was used by many to prove the low fighting value of various classes , especially those from Madras .

In a series of major reforms the entire base of recruitment was transformed from a territorial to a racial and caste basis . First , the system of linked battalions was revived . One battalion of a group was equipped for war , while other battalions supplied it with recruits . This system expanded the base of recruiting in Bengal from one to three battalions and spread the recruiting area for the other battalions as well .In 1887 each group of three battalions was given a regimental center , further stabilizing the system . But in 1892 this system was superseded by another one belonging to a different school of thought : the “class” recruiting center .¹⁹ The earlier reforms of 1859 , 1879 , and even afterwards , were based on territorial recruiting with the few exception of Sikh and Gurkha regiments , fixed depots , and periodical tours of local service for internal security purposes . The measures of 1892 introduced the long epoch of recruitment based on class and eliminated most territorial connections .²⁰

SEPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE REORGANIZATION OF MADRAS PRESIDENCY

Great care was taken that a proper equilibrium was maintained between the three armies . This is exemplified in the proceedings of the Military Department for 1869-70 . In 1869 the Government of India , which was then hard pressed for economy in expenditure , wanted to effect the reduction of 10,000 men in the Native forces of India as follows:-

Bengal- 48,289

Madras-23,017

Bombay-19,112

The Secretary of State for India pointed out the impolicy of such a measure otherwise than by a proportionate reduction in the Native Army of each Presidency .²¹ He also emphasised the principle that “the amount of Native forces required for India should be looked at as a whole without reference to the wants of this or that presidency as if they were separate and independent states”. “Any reduction

contemplated in the Native Army was , therefore , to be distributed ” to an extent in each presidency somewhat proportioned to the entire Native force in each . This signified that no signal portion of the army in India was to be subjected to reduction even though its requirements justified the step . The needs of the individual presidencies were no longer important in view of the improved communications . The three armies were kept up in such proportion that the combined strength of Madras and Bombay Armies might be equal to that of Bengal so that they might act as a standing check to it as they did in 1857.

The whole Indian cavalry except four regiments of Native light cavalry was organized on Sillader system . Under this system the individual soldier brought their own horses , clothing and equipments , so received higher pay than non –silladar soldiers who were housed and equipped by the Government . Another notable feature of 1861 was the introduction of three Presidency Staffs Corps.²²

A Military Department was created to look after the supply , pay accounts and pension of all forces of the crown . The three presidency departments of military accounts and audit were consolidated under Accounted General attached to the Military Department (1864) .²³ The three Remount Department were placed under one head (1876).²⁴

The long period that followed the mutiny was disturbed only by the Afghan War of 1878-80 . The construction of 8000 miles of railways and the Development of Road and Water communications before the second Afghan War , greatly increased the power of the Government of India of concentrating troops , thus altered the strategical conditions .²⁵ Service beyond the Presidency limits of their Presidency was looked upon by the Madras soldiers as foreign service . It involved heavy expenditure of public money in payment of extra allowances to troops serving beyond the limits of their Presidency.²⁶

In 1878 , Khaki uniform was introduced to replace the Red Coats of East India Company.²⁷ In 1884 three Ordinance departments were united .²⁸ In 1885 , the word 'Native' was deleted from the regiments . The designation of the Indian Infantry Regiments came to be known as 'Bengal Infantry' , 'Madras Infantry' and 'Bombay Infantry'.²⁹

In 1886 , Link regiments of 2 or 3 battalions were reorganized . Indian Infantry Regiments were (battalions) linked together in groups of 3 sometimes 2 battalions and were given permanent regimentsal centers at which it was intended that one battalion of the group should always be located .He was liable to be called upon to transfer to any other battalion of the group . In the year 1891 , one Army list for all British officers in the three Presidency Armies was created .³⁰

The year 1892 saw the introduction of Class Regiments system . In the subsequent year , the British Parliament passed the Madras and Bombay Armies Act according to which the offices of the Commander- in Chief of those armies were abolished and the power of military control exercised by Governor's-in- Council of Presidencies were withdrawn . The Commander-in -Chief in India was the only executive head of all the three Presidency Armies and Governor of India exercised full and complete supreme control.³¹

ABOLITION OF PRESIDENCY ARMY AND ITS AMALGAMATION

A Commission of Enquiry (Eden Commission) , set up after the Afghan War of 1878-80 , recommended the abolition of the Presidency Armies . In 1886 , a further step was taken when, the Punjab Frontier Force , then under the control of the civil authority , was transferred into the Commander- in -Chief . Also in the same year , infantry battalions were grouped in pairs and were given permanent centers at which one of the two could be located as Draft Finding Unit for other in war , Recruits were thenceforth enlisted for the group , though the battalions were not made the components of a regiment.³² A certain bond of mutual interest was thus created . The defect , however

, was that one battalion could reinforced only at the expense of the other . At the same time , a reserve for the fighting units was created , service their in being voluntary . At last in 1895 , after many alternatives had been considered , the Presidency Armies , with their separate organization , were abolished and geographical areas commands were established.³³

General order of the Government of India in the Army Department No.981 of October 26 , 1894 abolished the Presidency Armies and created instead , four Commands, each under a Lieutenant General ‘Commanding the force of the Punjab , Bengal , Madras and Bombay,’ and all directly subordinate to the Commander-in Chief in India .³⁴ The Presidency Armies were abolished with effect from April , 1895 , ending a long chapter of 150 years . The Army was divided into four Commands – the old Bengal Army forming the Bengal and Punjab Commands , and the erstwhile Madras and Bombay Commands . Each Command was placed under a Lt. General who was provided with adequate powers and the requisite army and departmental staff . The Army Commander came under the control of the Commander – in Chief in India .³⁵

Each of the Commands was divided into two or three ‘First Class Districts’ and verifying number of ‘Second Class Districts’ . Apart from the said troops , the General Headquarters retained under its control , the Hyderabad Contingent , two regiments of Central India Horse; six battalions of Malwa Bhil Corps , Mewar Bhil corps , Bhopal battalion , Marwara battalion, Deoli Irregular Force and Erinpura Irregular Force . An year later (1896) the three Presidency Medical Services were amalgamated under a Director- General .³⁶

A total of 206,236 troops – 33,663 Indian and 72,573 British were distributed in the four commands with Punjab Command having 15 cavalry regiments , 5 artillery battalions (61,493 troops) ; Bengal Command having 9 cavalry regiments , 2 artillery battalions , one sapper and miner corps and 22 infantry battalions (54,058 troops) ; Madras Command having 3 cavalry regiments , one sapper

and miner corps and 32 infantry battalions (45,074 troops) ; and the Bombay Command having 7 cavalry regiments , 2 artillery battalions and one sapper and miner corps and 26 infantry battalions (45,611 troops) .

For the first time a Unified Indian Army was officially created with effect from 1st April 1895 , by ending a long chapter of two years of Presidency Armies since 1708.³⁷

The designation of Indian Army came into use on 1st January 1903 , when the Indian Staff Corps was abolished and the British Officers belonging to that corps were redesignated as “Officers of Indian Army” . In the same year was published the memorandum for the reorganization and redistribution of Army in India .³⁸ The system Command was slightly modified later but in 1921 , the system of four Command was re-established.

IMPORTANT CAMPAIGNS UNDER THE BRITISH CROWN

Immediately after passing under the crown , the Army in India , without having fully settled after the struggle and reorganization , was once again committed to Imperial role.³⁹ Following were the campaigns in which Army in India participated-

- 1) The War in China , that had been patched up in 1857 , once again broke out and a strong force from India was hurried in off from the campaigning ground of the mutiny to the celestial capital , in co-operation with French force in the advance of Peking .
- 2) Even during the Mutiny itself , the usual frontier operations were taking place in Peshawar District and on the Assam frontier while, while in 1860 an expedition was sent against Mahsud Waziris .
- 3) In 1864-65 , operations against Bhutan became necessary and in the autum of 1864 , the operations in Peshawar valley brought in their train the rising of the whole tribes in Swat and desperate fighting in the Ambeyla Pass .⁴⁰

- 4) In 1867-68, the expedition to Abyssinia was undertaken in which the Bombay Army and a strong Bengal Brigade took a considerable part.
- 5) In 1868, there was an expedition against the raiding tribes of the Black Mountains and several other operations.
- 6) In 1878, trouble again broke out with Afghanistan. This war is memorable for the famous action at Ali Masjid, the Peiwar Kotal and Charasiab and heavy fighting around Kabul; later on came Ahmed Khel, the disastrous defeat of Maiwand and Lord Roberts' march from Kabul to Kandahar with the successful battle under the walls of that city.
- 7) Just before this war, an Indian force was sent to Malta in readiness.
- 8) In 1882, a strong contingent joined Sir Garnet Wolseley in Egypt and shared in the decisive fight at Tel-el-Kabir.
- 9) In 1885, Indian troops were again sent towards Egypt, this time to the Sudan, while in the same year, broke out the Third Burmese War in which representative corps of all the three armies took part.
- 10) During the eighties, in addition to the overseas expeditions, there were several small frontier operations including the Sikkim expedition, which brought the British regularly in touch with Tibet.
- 11) In 1894, the fierce fanatical attack on the escort to the Boundary Commission in Waziristan led to an expedition against the Masud Wasiris for the third time.
- 12) In 1895, took place the Chitral Relief Expedition
- 13) In 1897, there was a crop of simultaneous frontier risings. In all there were four campaigns of more than usual dimensions.⁴¹

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CHAPTER V

KITCHENER REFORMS AND THE INDIAN ARMY DURING THE WORLD WARS

Of all the reforms introduced in the Army in India in the initial stages, the most important were those introduced by Lord Kitchener, because the main consideration before him was that the Army in India must answer the needs of the major foreign war. He, therefore, assumed that the main task of the Army in India would be to defeat of any invasion coming from across the North – West Frontier, and on this hypothesis he based all his schemes.¹

Lord Kitchener enumerated four principles on which his army reforms were to be based :

- 1) That the main function of army was to defend the North – West Frontier against an aggressive enemy .
- 2) That the army in peace should be organized , distributed and trained , in units of command similar to those in which it would take the field in war .
- 3) That the maintenance of internal security was a means to an end , namely to set free the field army to carry out its functions .
- 4) That all fighting units in their several spheres , should be equally capable of carrying of out all the roles of the army in field and that they should be given equal chances inexperience , training and bearing of these roles .²

Lord Kitchener assumed the office of the Commander – in –Chief in November 1902 and put the following to changes in effect immediately :

- 1) On 1st January , 1903 , the designation ‘ Indian Staff Corps ’ was abolished and officers belonging to that corps were designated “ officers of the Indian Army” .

- 2) On 9th January , 1903 , the Burma 1st Class District was separated from the Madras Command and constituted a separate independent command designated “The Burma Command ”.
- 3) With effect from 1st April , 1903 , the Hyderabad Contingent was broken up and delocalised . One cavalry regiment , the 3rd Lancers , Hyderabad Contingent , was absorbed into the other three , which were transferred to the Bombay Command , while the infantry regiments were transferred to the Madras Command .
- 4) On the same date , the Punjab Frontier Force and Frontier District and its territorial areas were distributed between the Peshawar , Kohat and Derajat District . ³

For historical reasons , the Presidency forces of Bombay and Madras has come to be regarded as of inferior value in war , largely because they had enjoyed so few opportunities of gaining distinction on active service . Kitchener , therefore , did away with all regimental titles and designation that contributed , by past association or otherwise to cast any derogatory imputation as to regiments fitness for war . On November 2 , 1903 , orders were issued renumbering and redesignating all units for the Army in India . This measure was combined with another important step calculated to improve the fighting efficiency of the army , namely , complete elimination of units raised from unwarlike race and substituting them with new regiments recruited from among hardier population . Here in was the origin of martial classes and use of these classes especially suited to warlike activities , which continued through out the first and part of the second World War . This entailed conversion of line Madras into Punjab regiments and five others into Gurkhas . ⁴

In the same year was published the memorandum dealing with ‘The Re-organisation and Re-distribution of Army in India’ . This was supplemented in January , 1904 , by the sister memorandum ‘ The Preparation of the Army In India for War ’ . These two memoranda contained Kitcheners

proposals to do away with the four existing Commands and their substitution by two 'armies' . By a revision of the garrisons and duties of troops employed on tasks of internal security , it was found possible to increase the number of divisions available for service in the field from four to nine . Of these , five constituted in 'Northern Army ' and four the 'Southern Army' . Outside this scheme were the three independent frontiers brigades.... the Kohat , Bannu and Derajat Brigades... the Burma Division and certain army troops .⁵

The effects of administration and training proved considerable . Divisional and Brigade Commanders were better able to supervise the training of their troops , while they could be invested with greater powers and more responsibility . Moreover , as several military stations could be abandoned as unnecessary in the new conception of internal security , troops were brought into more healthy garrisons that were better adapted to the needs of modern training . The Total strength of the regular army in 1907-08 was 2,27,714 including 73,947 British troops .

FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE INDIAN ARMY

The system of military administration broke down during the First World War . Reduced literally to a one – man system , the Commander –in – Chief could not maintain personal touch with the various constituents of army administration . The Viceroy and his Council were entirely dependent on the views of the Commander – in –Chief who was their sole military adviser . The Commander –in- Chief , on his part , was practically unable to absent himself from the headquarters of the Government , with consequent loss of personal touch with army .⁶

It was decided in 1917 to reconstitute the Southern Army , then in abeyance , and strengthen staffs of the Commanders of the both Northern and Southern Armies . The Southern Army Commander was reappointed , so that close and constant inspection of administrative and technical staffs and services demanded by the prevailing conditions might be ensured .⁷

This measure effected from 1st February 1918 , helped in the disposal of questions in relations to hospitals , convalescents , medical equipment , barrack and camp accommodation , prisoners camps , water supply , etc , not only at the bases of Karachi and Bombay but wherever in Southern and Western India sick , invalid , and young soldiers were accommodated . As a temporary war measure , additional staffs were sanctioned to enable both army commanders to carry pout these and similar inspectional duties .⁸

In 1917 , as a measure due to war , the Government of India sanctioned the organization of the Supply and Transport Corps in India , in order to ensure better control Of contract and purchasing operations , and of distribution of stock of Supply and Transport Corps , equipments , stores and supply and also to facilitate the mobilization of field formations in respect of Supply and Transport Corps Units.⁹

The exigencies of the Great War had pressed India hard and forced it to devise measures to increase its armed forces to the utmost possible extent “ in order to enable the country to exert its whole strength in the cause of the Empire ”. The development of manpower was at the time a paramount consideration . The first and foremost requirement was for fighting men , so no suitable man was rejected . Only non-martial castes were not taken into companies or regiments of martial castes owing to caste difficulties . The Government of India wanted to make a very large increase in the strength of the Indian army and at the same time obtain additional numbers of British officers and subordinates proportionate to the increase contemplated in the Indian ranks.¹⁰

The Government of India wrote to all the Local Governments and Administrations in India on 1st June 1918 telling them that there were still many Europeans of military age in India employed in commercial firms and other business concerns . There were others who were earning their living as journalists , brokers , lawyers , etc . These occupations could not be classed as essential war

industries and , therefore many gentlemen of these classes should be enrolled as officers or subordinates in the combatant or non-combatant branches of the Indian army . Commercial interests , not directly or immediately essential for the prosecution of the war , were to be regarded as of secondary importance . The Local Governments were urged to enlist the support and assistance of Chambers of Commerce , Trader's organizations and Provincial Controllers of Munitions . They were asked to look for European British subjects who were not already enrolled in the Indian defence forces . Thus as many European gentlemen as possible were to be obtained for service . From these men were to be strengthen the Indian Army Reserve of officers as well British subordinates .¹¹

As for the recruitment of Indians , quotas were fixed by the Central Recruiting Board for each Presidency . That for the Bombay Presidency , for example , was a total of over 4000 men monthly . A conference was held at Delhi in early 1918 . A call for a larger number of men was made , and quotas assigned to the provinces were re-alloted , that for Bombay being increased to a monthly total of over 6000 .¹²

ESHER COMMITTEE

The Army in India Committee 1919-1920 , also known as Esher Committee after the name of its President , gave the following recommendations

1) India Office

The relations between the India Office and the Government of India are presumably based upon the importance of keeping the control of Parliament as far as possible intact over the Indian expenditure . The control of the India Office has been merely the control of one bureaucracy over another .¹³

The working of this system undoubtedly causes delay in dealing with military questions that frequently require rapid settlement , both in the interests of efficiency and of the contentment of the Army in India . Therefore recommendation was made that greater latitude should be allowed to the Governor General in Council in deciding questions of the military character provided they do not influence by reflex action the administration of the British Army at home .¹⁴

2) That the Commander –in- Chief in India shall be appointed with the concurrence of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff , and that the Commander-in-Chief shall be the sole military adviser of the Government of India .¹⁵

3) Defence Committee

That the Secretary of the Indian Defence Committee should be placed in direct touch with the Secretary of the Imperial Defence Committee in London , so that as far as they are appropriate , to local conditions .¹⁶

4) High Command

The Army Department and the Headquarters Staff should be consolidated under one head , and with a single Secretariat and that the Commander-in- Chief should be in that capacity considered to be administrative , as well as the executive head of the Army , subject only to the Governor General in Council , in whom the supreme control of the Army is vested by statute.¹⁷

5) That a Military Council should be established , composed of high staff officers and other to assist the Commander –in-Chief in the performance of his administrative functions .¹⁸

6) That the Commander-in-Chief in India should be more directly in touch with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff , with a view to obtaining increased efficiency as regards the organizations , equipment and training of the Army in India , so as to develop the military resources of India in a manner suited to Imperial necessities.¹⁹

7) Production and Provision

Recommended the creation of a new department of Government to deal with the supply of the Army , and they consider it essential that the member in charge should be a civilian , in order that there may be no danger of a second military opinion on the executive council .²⁰

REACTION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The Government of India agreed with recommendations of the Army in India Committee regarding the consolidation under the Commander-in-Chief of the Army Department and the Headquarters Staff . They also agreed with the Committee regarding the formation and composition of the proposed Military Council , with one of its main functions being to watch the progress of military expenditure .

The Government of India agreed with the Esher Committee that the Army Department and Army Headquarters should be consolidated and that the Secretary of such a Department should be a civilian .²¹

INDIAN ARMY AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

At the outbreak of war in 1939 , the role of the Army in India was :

- a) To maintain law and order in India and , to suppress any possible rebellion ;
- b) To maintain the status quo viz-a-viz the tribes on the North- West Frontier ;
- c) To defend India against the attacks of the minor power like Afghanistan ;and
- d) To defend the Imperial outposts in the Middle East and the Far East area , as bastions of India's external defence .²²

On October 1, 1939 , shortly after the war had begun in Europe , the total strength of the Indian armed forces was only 3,52,213 in India and overseas . This included the regular troops of the Indian Army , 2,05,038 : British troops 63,469 and miscellaneous troops , including Indian stage's forces etc., 83,706 .²³

In 1941 , a new programme of expansion , designed to bring the total strength of the Army in India , including the forces serving in overseas , to the half a million strength , was initiated . This involved an effort by the Ordnance and Supply Services unparalleled in the history of the country . At the end of 1941 , India had about 9,00,000 men under arms.

Considering the problem of defence of India in 1942 , it was found that the organization of the Army in India into three Commands, Northern , Eastern and Southern and the Western Independent District was unsuitable at a time , when the country was open to invasion . ‘ India Command’ was , therefore , reorganized , with the main object of freeing the senior officers , in threatened areas , of the mass of administrative details , which prevented them from giving their full attention to the urgent task of preparing to repel a possible invasion . ‘Central Command ’ , with headquarters at Agra , covering, as far as geographical and political conditions permitted , the central areas of India , in which most of the training establishments and depots were situated , was formed . Three armies , North Western responsible for the security of the North West Frontier with headquarters at Rawalpindi ; Eastern responsible for the defence of Assam , Bengal , Bihar and Orissa with headquarters at Ranchi ; and Southern , responsible for the defence of Southern India and the administration of the many training centers , hospitals and depots , already in the area , with operational headquarters at Poona were also formed . The original military districts in Eastern and Southern Armies were converted into ‘Line of Communication areas and sub- areas ’. Eastern Army was disposed so as to meet any enemy force attempting to land on the coast of Eastern Bengal in the Calcutta area or in Bihar and Orissa . Southern Army was disposed so as to protect Vishakapatanam , Madras and Trichinopoly.²⁴

India’s contribution to the Allied cause during 1944 reflected the greatest material effort in the nations history . In the beginning of the year , the Eastern Army was divided into Eastern Command (India) and the 14th Army of S.E.A.C India Command was relieved of the responsibility of the conduct

of operations on the Eastern Frontiers and it consolidated its efforts as a training base for offensive action against Japanese by forces operating under the S.E.A.C.

The last two years of the war saw the Indian Army emerge finally as a well equipped force which could be compared , not unfavourably , with other well founded and up – to- date forces . Weapons and vehicles were no longer in short supply . On 1st October , 1945 total strength of the Army in India and overseas was ; British Army 2,40,613 : Indian Army 20,18,196 . There were also the Indian Infantry , the Army Veterinary Service , the Army Corps of Clerks (this was militarized in 1942) , the Indian Pioneer Corps , the Indian General Service Corps and the Indian Observer Corps .²⁵

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CHAPTER VI

INDIANIZATION AND PARTITION OF THE ARMY IN INDIA

A special form of King's Commission in the army of India was instituted in 1905 for such Indians as had qualified through the Imperial Cadet Corps . This Commission , however , carried only the power of command over the Indian troops . Nor could the holders of this Commission rise beyond the appointment of squadron or company officer . The Government took no further steps to respond to the demands of Indians for an effective military career being thrown open to Indians .

However , before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 the exponents of Indian political and national aspirations began to demand that the same opportunities of service in the Indian army be given to Indians as were enjoyed by the British military officers¹.

THE MILITARY REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE (1921)

The Government had , not yet evolved any definitive policy on Indianization . A policy of gradual Indianization of the Indian Army first took definite shape in a recommendation of the Military Requirements Committee , assembled under the presidency of Lord Rawlinson , Commander – in – Chief in India , in 1921 . The Committee made the following recommendations .²

- a) An announcement of policy in respect of the Indianization of the army be made by the Government at an early date .
- b) As a natural corollary of self –government , a policy should be adopted which would render India more and more self – supporting in matters of defence , and so far as officers were concerned , the British element be gradually eliminated by substitution of Indians .
- c) With this object in view Indians should be freely admitted to commissions in all branches of the Indian Army at once .

- d) The field of selection should be widened with a view to the inclusion of the professional and middle classes .
- e) For the time being these candidates should go through a course at Sandhurst prior to obtaining a commission .

The Committee also recommended that in order to assist Indian youths to qualify for the entrance examinations to the Royal Military Academy and the Royal Military College , it was first necessary to establish residential preparatory schools immediately , preferably at Dehra Dun and Bangalore . The Committee recommended the acceptance of the proposal for the establishment of a Military College in India where Indian Cadets would receive training for admission as officers to all branches of the Indian army and to the Imperial Service Troops .³

INDIANIZATION OF THE INDIAN ARMY COMMITTEE (SHEA COMMITTEE) (1922)

A Committee of Staff Officers , presided over by Lieut .General Sir John Shea , then officiating Chief of the General Staff , had been appointed by the Commander -in – Chief to draw up a scheme for the progressive Indianization of the Indian Army .

The Shea Committeee made the following recommendations , viz .:⁴

- a) The complete Indianization of all arms and services of the Indian army (excluding Gurkhas) should be carried out in three stages , each of 14 years , commencing from the year 1925 . If the experiment in the first period proved unsuccessful , the second period might be reduced from 14 to 9 years . Similarly , in the third period there would be a reduction from 14 years to 7 years .
- b) From the beginning of the second period recruitment of British officers from Sandhurst should cease . Any British officers required subsequently should be required from secondment from the British army .

- c) Indianization should proceed progressively upward . In place of equal number of British officers , Indian officers be posted in lowest ranks .
- d) The establishment of Indianized units should be based on the British army system , and there should be no Viceroy's Commissioned Officers .
- e) There should be no such thing as Viceroy's Commissioned Officers , and the existing Viceroy's Commissioned Officers should be raised to the status of King's Commissioned Officers .
- f) The Committee held that it was essential to the success of Indianization of the Indian army that an Indian Military College be established early . The college would have two wings . One wing would take in for a two year course selected holders of Viceroy's Commission , until this class continued to be available , and thereafter selected Indian non – commissioned officers . The other wing would take for a three year course entrants from Prince of Wale's Royal Indian Military College , Chief Colleges , Universities , High Schools , etc . Indian Cadets would cease to proceed to Sandhurst from the date of the opening of the Indian College .⁵

The Government of India communicated its views regarding this scheme to the British Government and informed the Secretary of State , Viscount Peel , that while it was not prepared to recommend the wholesale adoption of the scheme without further examination of details , it was satisfied that it offered a 'hopeful' basis for Indianization .

Refusal by the British Government

The Secretary of State replied that reports were being received in England that there was a widely held belief not only among Indians but among Englishmen that the British Government was preparing to retreat from India as it considered its mission in India to be drawing to be close . He declared that it was impossible for the British Government to make a reduction in the size of the army or to accept a programme of Indianization , because such proposals were bound to prejudice its

efficiency , and would not only themselves “ lend colour to the dangerous belief in the policy of retreat but must directly hamper us in the exercise of functions with which we are entrusted ”⁶

The Government of India had been genuinely earnest in its desire to reduce British troops and to Indianise the Indian army and even wanted to publish some of the conclusions of the Military Requirements Committee and also make an announcement regarding the Indianization of Indian army .

The British Government was telling the Government of India to make an experiment with four battalions only . But the Government of India had already accepted a recommendation of the Legislative Assembly that 25 per cent of future recruits for the Indian army should be Indians .⁷

INTRODUCTION OF THE EIGHT UNIT SCHEME (1923)

In 1923 , discussions had been going in between the Government of India and His Majesty’s Government regarding the policy of Indianization to be adopted . Certain principles enunciated during this discussion formed the basis for the policy of Indianization . These briefly were .⁸

- i. The Government , while it was anxious to assist Indians to defend their own country and to offer employments in all ranks of the army to Indians , was not prepared to commit itself to a particular programme of Indianization until it was proved that there existed the supply of loyal and efficient Indian officers who could with confidence be employed , and who would respond to emergency and fulfill vital responsibilities entrusted to them .
- ii. The Government was willing to sanction a limited experiment and would abide by the results , but further Indianization would have to depend on its success and would only be contemplated it were successful .

To carry out the proposed experiment , it was decided to Indianize completely eight units of cavalry and infantry .⁹ When army units were selected for Indianization , recruitment for the officer ranks in those units was closed to British officers in order that the unit might be trained in course of time to

function under the sole control of Indian officers , the nucleus of the truly national army might thus be formed .¹⁰

THE INDIAN SANDHURST COMMITTEE (SKEEN COMMITTEE) (1926)

The Indian Sandhurst Committee assembled in August 1926 . Lt. Gen. Sir Andrew Skeen , Chief of the General Staff was the Chairman of the Sandhurst Committee . Except for E. Burdon , Secretary to the Government of India in the Army Department , its other twelve members were Indian . Some of them were M.A.Jinnah , Sardar Jogendar Singh , Sir Pheroze Mehta, Pandit Motilal Nehru etc . Its report was published in 1927 .¹¹

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SKEEN COMMITTEE

The Committee recommended , that a substantial and progressive scheme for the Indianization of the Indian army be adopted with out delay . The main features of this scheme were as follows :

- a) An immediate increase of 10 vacancies at Sandhurst making a total of 20 vacancies reserved for Indians , assuming that it would become effective in 1928 .
- b) A further increase of 4 vacancies at Sandhurst per annum up to 1933 , making the total number of vacancies in that year 38 .
- c) The establishment in 1933 of an Indian Sandhurst with capacity for 100 Cadets , to which in that year and each of the two following years , 33 Cadets should be admitted for a 3 year's course of training .
- d) When the Indian Sandhurst was established , Indian boys , who preferred it , might continue to be eligible for admission to Sandhurst , but the number of vacancies at Sandhurst reserved for Indians were than to be reduced to 20 per annum .
- e) The number of Indian boys admitted annually to Indian Sandhurst should increase by 12 every 3 years , and on the assumption that all cadets were successful , both at Sandhurst

and Indian Sandhurst , the number of Indians commissioned should increase correspondingly until , in 1945 , half the number of officers recruited annually for the Indian army would consist of Indians .

INDIANIZATION IN OTHER ARMS

The Committee also recommended that Indians should be made eligible for employment as King's Commissioned Officers in the Artillery , Engineer , Signal , Tank and Air arms of the army in India , and that for this purpose they should be admitted to Royal Military Academy , Woolwich and Royal Air Force College , Cranwell until corresponding facilities were created in India .¹²

Decisions on the Report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee (1928)

The decisions of the Government of India on the Report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee were announced in the Legislative Assembly , in March 1928 , by the Commandar – in –Chief , Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood . He said : “ Government contemplates that , as India progresses towards full self – government within the Empire , there may be in process of development in Army of the same character as the Dominion armies , organized on a national basis and officered by Indians holding their own distinctive national form of commission . That is our policy of Indianization. The process of development will naturally be contingent on the success achieved in the various stages of the experiment . ”¹³

INDIAN ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE (1931)

The Indian Round Table Conference assembled in England in the winter of 1930 –31 . The Report of Sub – Committee No .VII (Defence) included the following recommendations :

- 1) “ The Sub – Committee consider that with the development of the new political structure in India , the Defence of India must to an increasing extent be the concern of the Indian people and not of the British Government alone .

2) In order to give practical effect to this principle , they recommended :

- a) That immediate steps be taken to increase substantially the rate of Indianization in the Indian Army . . .
- b) That in order to give effect to (a) a training college in India be established at the earliest possible moment , in order to train candidates for commissions in all arms of the Indian Defence Services , This college would also train prospective officers of the Indian States Forces . Indian cadets should , however , continue to be eligible for admission as at present to Sandhurst , Woolwich , and Grandwell .
- c) That in order to avoid delay , the Government of India be instructed to set up a Committee of Experts ,both British and Indian to work out the details of the establishment of such a college .’’

Following the resolution of the Sub – Committee of the Round Table Conference , a Committee of Experts was assembled at Simla in May , 1931, under the Chairmanship of General Sir Philip Chetwode , Commander - in -Chief in India , in order to work out the details of the establishment of a Military College in India where candidates could be trained for commissions in all arms of the Indian Defence Services .¹⁴

INDIANIZATION IN THE PERIOD 1932-1939

The Indian Military Academy was inaugurated at Dehra Dun in the autumn of 1932 . From that time Indians ceased to be eligible for admission to Sandhurst and Woolwich since India had now her own national institution.

The maximum age limit for boys entering the Indian Military Academy by open competition was fixed at 20 years . The corresponding age limit for Army Cadets was 25 years . Entry to the officers

ranks of the army was by open competition and without any communal considerations , or preference to martial over non – martial classes .

At the end of 1934 , there were 60,000 British troops in India and 120,000 Indian troops in His Majesty's Indian army , i.e. 180,000 soldiers . Allowing one officer for 50 men , India needed 3,600 Indian officers for the army alone , and 4,000 if reserves , staff , etc. were included .¹⁵

In spite of the fact that great prominence had been given to Indianization of the Defence Services in the Press and in the Legislatures , these services until 1939 , did not attract the youth of India much , and the response remained unsatisfactory . Linlithgow wrote to Zetland in 1938 that there was considerable falling of both in the number and quality of the candidates . He observed that while thousands applied to Public Service Commission for ill – paid clerkships , there were , in 1938 , only 63 candidates for 18 vacancies in the Indian Military Academy and Indian Air Force and just 9 for 3 vacancies in the Royal Indian Navy .Only 15 suitable entrants could be obtained for the Indian Military Academy and for filling up the Air Force vacancies . For the Royal Indian Navy only three of those who competed qualified . One of them qualified also for the Indian Military Academy , and preferred it to Navy .

The highest rank that any Indian had reached in the Indian army till 1939 was the Major . That year 11 officers were holding that rank . They were Majors of the line , not of the Indian Medical Service . No Major was in charge of an infantry or cavalry unit , for which they had to wait to become Lieutent – Colonels .¹⁶

PARTITION OF THE INDIAN ARMY

On 20th February 1947 , the British Government announced their intention of transferring power to Indians hand by June 1948 . Events however moved faster and on 3rd June 1947 His Majesty's

Government announced that power would be transferred to two successor States , India and Pakistan .¹⁷

On 30th June the procedure for the division of the Indian Armed Forces was agreed upon a meeting of the Partition Council , with the Viceroy in the chair . This meeting was also attended by the Mohammed Ali Jinnah . The frame work of the division had been provided by Lord Ismay , Chief of Staff to the Viceroy , and Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck , the Commander – in – Chief in India .¹⁸

DIVISION OF ARMY UNITS

The Infantry regiments were divided between India and Pakistan in the ratio of 15:8, excluding Gurkha Units . Since a regiment could consist of three to six battalions , this ratio would not reflect the proportion of active battalions . In the first stage of partition , the actual number of battalions was 64 India and 45 Pakistan . But since all the Pakistan battalions contained some proportion of Hindus and Sikhs , the actual numerical strength was equivalent to 64 India to 33 Pakistan . When the Sikh and Hindu elements were ultimately moved out from Pakistan battalions , the final equipment strength of battalions belonging to Union of India was 76 and adding to it the 12 Gurkha battalions , the final proportion worked out to 88 India to 33 Pakistan . Companies transferred from one Dominion to the other were permitted to take their personal weapons and equipment with them , as also the appropriate portion of the unit equipment .¹⁹

The Armoured Corps regiments were divided in the proportion of 12 India to 6 Pakistan . Artillery and Engineers units had been constituted earlier largely on a communal basis as a result of the organization which had been going on for some time before the partition . The Artillery units were apportioned in the ratio of 18 ½ India to 8 ½ Pakistan and the Engineer units in the proportion of 61

to 34 . Certain units of the Indian army were serving in Burma and Malaya at the time of partition . At the request of the British Government and the Government of Burma , the partition Council agreed to the continuance of these units in these areas after the 15th August 1947 till 31st March , 1948 but the absence of these units overseas did not interfere with the reconstitution of the Indian Army .²⁰

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CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The origin of the Indian Army goes back to the ancient, medieval and to the beginning of the British rule over India. During all this period it has undergone many changes, accomplished many feats and fought countless battles at home and abroad on different continents. It has been a unique organization, vastly different in its ethos and traditions from the other armies of the world. The Army in India infact though not in name existed for nearly 300 years. To began with it consisted of European troops only, it increased until it was divided into three separate and individual bodies called Presidency Armies (besides localized troops) each army was further sub – divided into Royal Troops Company's European Troops and Company's Native Troops and how in 1860, one of this sub – division's was obliterated by the absorption of the King's and the Company's European troops into the British Army in India, the Indian Troops became a part of Her Majesty's Forces , and how , from that date measures were taken to undermine the sovereignty of the Presidency Armies until by their abolition in name and thus a United Army was formed .

The designation of Indian Army came into use on 1st January 1903, when the Indian Staff Corps was abolished and the British officers belonging to that corps was redesignated as “ Officers of Indian Army “.

And finally, through a few more reforms and revisions in the administration such as reforms of Lord Kitchener, the Indian Army emerged as a powerful fighting force through World War I. So was born the Army in India the first truly Modern Army that India ever had. This reorganization served as a guideline for all future military reforms. This transfer of Indian Army from the hands of East India Company to the British Crown bettered the service conditions of the Indian soldiers. It formed a strong

foundation for the development of the present day Indian Army which was proved to be one of the great warrior forces ever raised.

Thus, the proper administration of the army will give better security to the nation and its people .
Britishers gave highly scientific and technological outlook to the Indian Army.

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