

**PEOPLES AND
PROBLEMS
OF INDIA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649149292

Peoples and problems of India by Sir T. W. Holderness

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SIR T. W. HOLDERNESS

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NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
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WILLIAMS AND NORGATE

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE following pages were printed off before the announcement at the Delhi Coronation Durbar (December 12, 1911) of the decision of His Majesty's Government to transfer the seat of the Government of India from Calcutta to the ancient capital of Delhi, and simultaneously to make, in modification of the partition of 1905, extensive changes in the government of Bengal. The declared object of these measures is to give greater autonomy to provincial governments, to recognise provincial sentiment and aspirations, and to relieve the central government of direct responsibility for provincial affairs. These principles are discussed and their importance recognised in the present work.

PEOPLES AND PROBLEMS OF INDIA

CHAPTER I

THE COUNTRY

A COUNTRY makes its inhabitants in more senses than one. This is true of India.

In the first place a country must be able to sustain inhabitants, or they will not exist. There is a natural limit to its population. At one extreme is the Sahara desert, at the other the Nile valley. In India both extremes are found. The native state of Jaisalmir in western Rajputana can barely support a population of under five persons to the square mile. In the Gangetic plain 500 to the square mile is of common occurrence. We are speaking of course of purely agricultural tracts. Where manufactures exist which can be exchanged for food, the case is different.

Again, a country may be said to make its inhabitants in that their faculties and dispositions are largely influenced by

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its physical and climatic conditions. The statement that man is the product of his surroundings is qualified by the fact that race has a great resisting power. The qualities of race will often persist in the face of adverse circumstances. The many races that make up the population of India maintain their distinctive characters, though for centuries they have lived side by side. None the less India has stamped them with a common seal, and has wrought out a recognisable type amid a great profusion of species.

Lastly, a country makes its inhabitants so far as it determines their political history. The fertility of a country may prove its ruin, if accompanied by a soft and languid climate which saps the energies and weakens the combative instincts of the inhabitants. Of this Egypt is an instructive example. It has passed from one conqueror to another until it has lost the consciousness of national life. India, like Egypt, has been the coveted prize of the strong. But unlike Egypt it has in the long run absorbed its invaders and maintained its own civilisation. It has been able to do this because its natural frontiers have protected it from invasion except at one or two points. These points are so distant from the centre that invasions of India always lost something of their first impetus before they could be pressed home.