

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ANCIENT INDIA

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Local government in ancient India by Radhakumud Mookerji

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BY

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WITH FOREWORD BY
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TO
HIS HIGHNESS
SRI KRISHNA RAJA WADIYAR BAHADUR
G.C.S.I., G.B.E.,
MAHARAJA OF MYSORE
FOUNDER AND CHANCELLOR OF MYSORE UNIVERSITY
CHANCELLOR OF BENARES UNIVERSITY
WHO REPRESENTS THE BEST IDEALS OF A HINDU KING
AND
WHOSE NAME IS A HOUSEHOLD WORD THROUGHOUT INDIA
FOR HIS
MATCHLESS MUNIFICENCE IN THE CAUSE OF LEARNING

FOREWORD

IT is reasonable to hope that this important work by Dr. Mookerji, while appealing specially to professed students of Indian institutions, may also attract the attention of a wider circle of readers. The advancing steps of Indian government, aided as time goes on by the guiding hand rather than by the all-sustaining arm of Britain, are a matter of concern to millions of Britons who will never see India. It is our duty, therefore, to admit into the recesses of an obscure and difficult inquiry all the light which can be thrown upon them by comparative study of past annals. India, as Dr. Mookerji reminds us, enjoyed from the earliest dawn of her history a singularly complete system of local government; and he points a moral, not to be ignored by ourselves, that in the absence of modern facilities of communication, and consequently of direction, this fact offers the main explanation of the early existence of great Indian empires, comparable in area to our own. So it may well be that the successive applications to transport of power produced by coal, electricity, and oil, and the free interchange

of ideas have not entirely neutralized the virtues of decentralized administration. One is therefore glad to know that the Decentralization Commission of 1908-9 devoted close attention to this branch of their inquiry, while the recent Report by Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford appears to recognize, in a somewhat brief statement of its authors' hopes and intentions in this regard, that it forms in fact an integral part of their wider plan.

Dr. Mookerji's frank expression of opinion that since local institutions most nearly concern most people, self-government should logically start in that sphere, is moderately couched, but will no doubt be strongly controverted. He may be asked to examine the experience of the United Kingdom on the one hand, and of Russia on the other, in opposition to this thesis. But, be this as it may, there is perhaps in some minds a tendency to dwell on the grander and more showy aspects of progressive self-government rather than on the humbler practical results which may revive and brighten the lives of the unknown millions of India. To such extravagances the study of Dr. Mookerji's work will be a useful corrective.

Of the epigraphic portion of the monograph I cannot speak with any technical knowledge; but the care and industry which have produced so complete a composition demand a word of recognition.