SOCIAL REFORM OF THE ARMED FORCES; THE INDIANISATION PROBLEM 1920-1932
Scholarship critical of British policy in the 20th century has established that in defence and diplomacy the problems of the British empire in the 1930s also resulted from policies followed in the 1920s.¹ The previous chapter tried to analyse the Indian aspect of this by identifying the objectives and limitations of military reform in India in the 1920s. The agenda of reform influenced the history of the Indian armed forces between the Wars to a large extent and this chapter looks at its dominant social aspect with specific reference to British policy between 1920 and 1932 when an Indian Sandhurst finally opened in Dehradun.

The inter-war period in Indian military history demonstrated that beside finance nationalism was the most important factor reform in India had to contend with. It is well known that Indian nationalists began to pressure the GOI on matters of army reform after 1918. In fact their enthusiastic espousal of the British cause during the Great War was predicated upon their hope of getting more political concessions from the British after the War. The Indian nationalists were also consistent in stressing military reform as part of the Dominion Status promised to India during the War by the British. On the other hand the GOI as the representative of Imperialist rule in India faced the flak on this issue and stood compressed between the rising Indian middle class and the Imperial Government stationed in distant England. In the previous chapter we noticed how the GOI’s hands were tied because it obviously could not declare important policy

decisions in accordance with Indian opinion and the Imperial Govt. was not always easy to satisfy. To make matters worse for a government besieged by growing mass nationalism economic conditions in India militated against hurriedly made promises of sweeping reform. This was the context between the two World Wars in which the concerned Indian leaders, the GOI and the British govt. formed the field of force within which Indianisation, with all its limitations, was contested and executed.

However the issue of Indianisation, or the grant of commissions to Indians as it was called before the 1920s dated back to the pre-Great War days. In 1911 the grant of commissions to elite Indians was discussed in Calcutta at a conference held immediately after the Imperial Durbar where Sir. Horace Smith Dorrien representing the War Office had somewhat arrogantly stated that Indians had to be trained at Sandhurst. It was also stressed at the time that training in India by necessarily producing inferior officers would strengthen racial prejudice in the Army! A stint at Sandhurst would make Indians acceptable to the touchy British officers and Indian subalterns would then start, "their regimental careers with the manners and ideals of English gentlemen". But before this could happen the opposition posed by the War Office, House of Commons and the British officers of the Army to Indianisation had to be overcome by its

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2 Confidential Simla Records-3 No.601/10482/H.A.D. Case No.29147,1927, Nos.333-341 & Appendix Subject: Proposed formation of a well equipped Military College in a suitable locality in India to train Indians for the Commissioned ranks of the Indian Army and Appointment of Indian Sandhurst Committee [HS].
protagonists. The issue was "delicate and risky" and the War Office's view on the subject of giving commissions even to the sons of Indian ruling chiefs was described by Morley as being "hopelessly narrow". Morley further confessed to Hardinge that the War Office did not, "comprehend the nature and content of the demand for a career of useful activity in the Native Army", and therefore its suggestions about the matter were, "sure to be hopelessly wide of the mark."³. It was true that as a token concession to aristocratic Indians in 1905 a secondary and ineffective kind of King's Commission for Indian "gentlemen" had been created in His Majesty's Native Indian Land Forces. This commission permitted command only over Indian troops and could hardly satisfy the Indian demand which arose during and after the Great War.⁴ By 1911 the War Office had very reluctantly agreed in special cases, with the approval of the King and Viceroy, to grant a commission to a Sandhurst returned Indian of "high rank" in the Household Cavalry. Echoing the demand of early Indianisation Hardinge quickly pointed out to Morley that this was not what the Indians wanted: "... what Indians want is that the sons of important people should be allowed to have commissions in the Native Army. They do not in the least want to be in the British Army, and I hope that this will be borne in mind and that you will be able to come to a solution of

³ Morley to Hardinge, 19/5/1911, Morley Collection (Microfilm), Acc.No.1614 [NAI].

this much vexed question on that basis\textsuperscript{5}. The Viceroy also warned that the grant of commissions in the Household Cavalry was "no solution at all" to the problem which was becoming politicised:

\begin{quote}
It is a question that will certainly become acute before very long unless something is done to satisfy the aspirations of these younger men, and I think that the nettle should be grasped at once and the movement held in check before it becomes too powerful.\textsuperscript{6}
\end{quote}

While the War Office opposed the grant of commissions to Indians the British officers were also dead set against the reform. On this the views of Montagu took off from where Morley had left even before the Great War ended. While it was clear that Indianisation would become a major Indian demand after the War the opposition to it put up by the British officers was a serious affair to begin with. British soldiers and officers were against receiving orders from Indians. This militated against the spirit of the times because if Indians could order Britons in the Civil Service, "it was ridiculous to think that soldiers could maintain out of date privileges". The Secretary of State was aware of the several obstacles which stood in the way of granting commissions to Indians but nonetheless asserted a liberal point of view: "However, the experiment must inevitably be tried with a certain atmosphere of prejudice, and soldiers are not the

\textsuperscript{5} Hardinge to Morley, 23/3/1911, Morley Collection, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid. The cause of concern was also a Resolution of the All India Muslim League passed in its 1911 annual session urging the government to increase commissions for, "sons of Ruling Chiefs and scions of other noble houses", to which Hardinge referred.
most liberal minded of men." Added to all this was the real fear of ragging to be faced by Indians at Sandhurst. Considering all this, and the variance with the British position on the matter in much of the 1920s, the Viceroy was also asked to seek other avenues for granting commissions to Indians in India. This suggestion pointed towards an Indian Sandhurst the acquisition of which was the main aim of the Indians in the inter-war period.

As a promise made with liberal intentions Indianisation fully justified the Indians who began to press the GOI on the question after the Great War in the Legislative Assembly. On 20th August 1917 while Indian regiments raised with the help of Gandhi and Tilak were busy fighting for Britain the Secretary of State announced in the Commons that the, "gradual development of self governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible Government in India", would be encouraged by all means after the War. The mood of enthusiasm carried on with the Montagu-Chelmsford report which in 1919

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7 Montagu to Viceroy, 3/8/1917, Montagu Papers (Microfilm) Acc.No.1930 [NAI]. Opposition to the Indians gaining commissions in the Indian Army continued despite the services rendered to the British cause by the Indians during the Great War. In his letters to Chelmsford dated 16 May and 3 July 1918 (Acc.No.1930) Montagu touched upon the subject again saying that while the War Office was opposed to the grant of commissions to Indians the Military members of the Army Council also expressed their, "grave displeasure" on the issue. Taking the fear of racial discrimination into account Montagu also advised posting Indian Commissioned Officers to units where they could find some of their own people. Later they could be transferred to other units. The matter had to be handled very carefully because early failures would retard the scheme for many years and British officers of at least one unit were not liking the appointments.

discerned in India "an ever growing discontent with [administrative] measures which were resented as evidence of racial discrimination". Prominent among these was the exclusion of Indians from the commissioned ranks in the Army. The charter of 1919 was categorical on the subject:

Indian officers form a separate establishment from the British officers, and the highest and the most experienced of the former rank lower than the most junior of the latter.... The services of the Indian army in the war, and the great increase in its numbers make it necessary that a considerable number of commissions should now be given. 9

In 1918 Sandhurst, a British preserve and an Imperial bastion, was the sine qua non for getting the King's Commission in the Imperial armed forces including the Indian army despite the realisation that "eventually a military training school in India", might, "be desirable". Under the influence of the Montagu-Chelmsford assertions on the subject for the first time ten vacancies were reserved for Indians at Sandhurst annually though really this was, "more a gesture than the inauguration of a policy". 10 However in 1919-21 several factors created an atmosphere conducive to the official contemplation of Indianisation as an important policy matter. By 1921 the Indian nationalists, now backed by a mass uprising against the Raj, were insisting that the time had come to pass from

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gestures to more practical steps and due to their vehemence in March 1921 the Legislative Assembly adopted a crucial resolution un-opposed by the government. This committed the GOI on the front foot rather prematurely from the British point of view on Indianisation.\textsuperscript{11} According to this resolution all arms of the Indian services were to be thrown open to Indian Commissioned officers in the near future. Unofficial Indians were to be associated with the authority which would nominate Indians to an entrance exam for admission to a training school producing Indian Commissioned officers in India. To begin with not less than 25\% of all the commissions granted per year were to be given to Indians and the pay of all commissioned ranks was to be set on an Indian basis to counter the serious charge of racial discrimination. Adequate facilities were also to be created soon for preliminary training befitting Indians for the course at Sandhurst and steps were to be taken to finally establish in India a military college on the lines of Sandhurst. While the demand for an Indian Sandhurst grew the stand on reform taken by the Military Requirements Committee in 1921 added weight to the nationalist arguments. It was held that since other dominions like Australia and Canada had their own military colleges it was only logical and fair that India with a large standing army should ultimately develop its own college to produce

\textsuperscript{11} 601/10482/H, op.cit., appendix; Indianisation Committee Report 1938-39, pp.5-6. The Prince of Wales Royal Military College was opened in Dehradun in March 1922 to provide 70 cadets with public school education. A cogent nationalist position on military reform soon after the Great War was presented in the famous Sivaswamy Aiyer Resolutions accepted by the GOI in March 1921 - Ref. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1, 11, Official Report, 1921, NMML, pp.1683-1762 - Debate (28.3.1921) on 15 seminal resolutions on the Esher Committee Report. Aiyer had formulated these resolutions in a "critical but constructive" vein.
officers economically. Furthermore since professional and largely middle class Indians were to be admitted to all arms of the Indian services Indianisation appeared as the "natural corollary" of gradually evolving self-government in India.\textsuperscript{12} It would have been extremely embarrassing for the GOI to back out of the situation accepted in the Assembly in 1921 and pushed on to the defensive it had no choice but to forward some tentative plan of Indianisation in a bid to satisfy the vociferous Indians.

It is doubtful whether the GOI on its own would have taken Indianisation beyond the gestures of 1919. The credit for firmly establishing Indianisation on the post-Great War reform agenda goes to those Indians who relentlessly campaigned for it in the 1920s. Once the resolutions of 1921 were accepted by the GOI two almost identical plans were drafted by army men whereas the third plan was produced by the Shea Committee appointed by the GOI for the purpose of examining a possible scheme of Indianisation.\textsuperscript{13} Let us first look at Gail Wigram's paper on Indianisation placed before the GOI in 1921.

According to Wigram the Indianisation of the Indian Army was the most vital part of British policy in India after the Great War and upon its resolution

\textsuperscript{12} 601/10482/H & 12810/H, \textit{op.cit.}

\textsuperscript{13} The Committee appointed by the Commander in Chief was headed by Lt.Gen.Shea, acting Chief of General Staff, and is referred to as the Shea Committee hereafter - Ref: SECRET Indianisation of the Indian Army, Report of a Committee appointed by His Excellency the Commander in Chief in India, Delhi, 1922 in the Army Dep. Progs., 1923, Nos.85-112 Sub: Indianisation of the Army.
depended the trust between the GOI and vast sections of the Indian public. The appeasement of Indian opinion on the subject was also necessary at a time when an unprecedented nationalist movement was threatening the foundations of the Raj. Wigram also assumed that military reform would also enable the Indian tax payer to, "shoulder the burden of high military expenditure more cheerfully and willingly". But admittedly it was not easy to grant significant social concessions to Indians in an army addicted to traditions and favoured classes. Indianisation also raised the problem of finding suitably educated Indians to be trained as commissioned officers according to British standards. The question was bigger because Indian politicians were demanding an Indian Sandhurst in the near future. Indians were also expecting that the rate of granting commissions to Indians would accelerate. Commissions were being demanded in all the services including the artillery which even in 1920 was a British preserve. The problem was certainly delicate because it was thought that the social transformation of the Indian armed forces in the era of growing mass nationalism would have most probably meant the likely dissolution of British rule in India but nonetheless the contradiction had to be managed in the best British interest.

However faced with this dilemma it was not easy for the official view to escape the stereotypes guiding it since the nineteenth century. While Wigram

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14 Our account of Wigram's paper is based on a printed copy of it in the Army Dep. Progs., 1923: General Rawlinson cited by Wigram.

15 Wigram's paper, op.cit., p.4.
believed that during the Great War the subedars and jamadars, usually peasant seniors, had shown their dependence on British officers for initiative and leadership it was forgotten that the British officers were equally dependent on these men for running the army. According to the official view the British officer possessed the vital public school attributes. He knew how to "play for the side" with a particular "sense of duty". Indians were found "noticeably deficient" in this public spirit.\textsuperscript{16} Therefore large scale Indianisation carried with it the threat of inefficiency. The army could only be Indianised unit by unit with the proven Indianised units forming a separate Dominion Army. Indians in this would be given a Dominion Commission and gradually with rising efficiency this dominion force would expand into the national army of India. Since Indianisation itself, "would do more to drive India out of the Empire than anything else...." maintaining a sober grip over the reform process was essential.\textsuperscript{17} It is needless to add that the Indians desirous of economically replacing the British with Indians in the existing army would have rejected such a scheme out of hand.

In 1921 another scheme based on Wigram's paper was prepared by Lt. Gen. Cobbe, Secretary, Military Department, India Office, Whitehall. Cobbe agreed with Wigram that the basic problem of Indianisation could not be overlooked. British officers and men would not willingly serve under Indians and this could

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p.10.
  \item\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
be interpreted by the protagonists of Indianisation as a problem of racial discrimination! The British, for their part, were presumably justified in doing so because in the army as elsewhere Indians were considered inferior to them. Cobbe held that with progressive Indianisation the supply of British officers to the Indian army would dry up and the fear of inefficiency would grow. The likelihood of friction between the Indian and British officers also made their amalgamation in units a bad idea. Such schemes would only weaken the army and undermine the security of British rule in India. Faced with such prospects British statesmanship would lie in a policy which would satisfy Indian opinion without unduly disturbing the British officers. And this could be done by splitting the Indian army into a dominion and an Indian army. In the beginning one full brigade would be Indianised with the number of British officers in it gradually decreasing. Finally Indianised brigade after brigade would make up the Dominion Army which would probably replace the Indian army at a projected date later. 18

While the Dominion Army plan lay before the Sub-Committee of the Imperial Defence Committee the Shea Committee delved into the details of Indianisation. 19 Criticising the Dominion Army concept on economic and moral grounds it favoured a careful gradual transition within the Indian army.

18 SECRET PAPER - Indianisation of the Indian Army by A.S. Cobbe, sent to the Chamberlain Committee from Whitehall, 14/9/1921, Army Dep. Progs., 1923.

19 Telegram from the Secretary of State to Viceroy, No.5960,21/22 Nov. 1921, Army Dep. Progs., 1923.
Indianisation had to begin slowly but ultimately Indian officers would have to be appointed to units irrespective of class while experience gave direction to the scheme. First Indianisation was to be attempted in the fighting units of the army thus subjecting the newcomers to the toughest conditions and also gaining some confidence of the advocates of the scheme. At a later date the ancillary services were to be Indianised. In the interest of British rule in India the number of Indian officers in proportion to British officers was to increase very slowly. In sum Indianisation was being conceived by the Shea Committee as an imperial tutorial for "ensuring the steady organic growth of units in which capacity for command by and of subordination to members of their own race shall become inherent in Indian officers and soldiers". It is clear that the premise of the Shea Committee was not very different from the ones guiding Wigram and Cobbe though it was not averse to Indians serving alongside the British officers for a certain period of time.

Probably taking a cue from the Esher recommendations on the subject the Shea Committee projected the VCOs as the Indian bulwark against the encroaching middle class. Since there was no proof of educated Indians becoming good officers commanding the loyalty of the VCOs Indianisation had to secure,

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20 *Shea Committee Report*, p.4. On p.11 the familiar moral argument of British superiority followed: "In the absence of a conscious, mature and homogeneous national spirit in India the moral factor most essential to the creation of a "Dominion Army" does not exist, and only in units of the regular army are to be found those moral influences arising from a history of service and achievement in war which are a most valuable reinforcement to the national spirit".
"the good-will and interests", of the , "fine body of Indian officers of the existing type". The Shea recommendations, in line with the Esher view regarding the social source of future Indian officers, were, "framed with a view to securing to the Army a continuance of the services of Indian officers already serving and of ensuring an adequate future supply of officers from the same sources".\(^{21}\) The Shea projection of complete Indianisation was spread over 42 years in three stages of 14 years each. In the meantime an Indian military college would open producing Indian officers. By the end of the 42 years stipulated 21 Cavalry regiments, 4 Pioneer and 94 Infantry Battalions, 20 Artillery Batteries and 33 Engineering units would be Indianised requiring 5,464 officers at a rate of 3.5\% wastage per annum throughout the period. Beginning in 1925 the scheme would end in 1967! The annual desired output from the Indian military college would be 111 officers from 1925 to 1938. In the third period the number of cadets enrolled at the college, which would obviously replace Sandhurst, would reach its peak. On reconsideration, since 1967 appeared too remote even by cautious official standards, a revised 30 year schedule was suggested by the Committee.\(^{22}\) The recommendations of the Shea Committee to which the nationalists continuously referred in the late 1920s and early 1930s at least offered a time frame and rate of Indianisation to the Indians for the first time. These recommendations also implied that a military college on the lines of Sandhurst

\(^{21}\) Shea Committee Report, p.9.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.
would open in India in 1925.

While the Shea Committee worked on the details of proposed Indianisation the Viceroy sent a resume of its lines of inquiry to the Secretary of State suggesting that since the matter was of "great importance and perplexity" the Viceroy wanted the Sub-Committee of the Imperial defence Committee to consider the direction which Shea was taking. Cobbe's scheme was not acceptable to the GOI because of the serious alarm the military budget was raising in India after the Great War. An interesting and revealing correspondence, like the one over the Esher proposals, between the GOI and London soon followed.

As usual Whitehall was not satisfied with the GOI’s objections to Cobbe and desired more knowledge of its position on the matter. Even the economic arguments failed to convince the British government. By November 1921, and clearly bending to accommodate the Home Government, Rawlinson had formulated a sort of watered down Unit Scheme on the basis of the Shea findings. Now the Secretary of State wanted to know why the Unit Scheme was being considered economical by the GOI. The Viceroy in turn explained the Indian position further. Cobbe sponsored a brigade which could not be trusted for active service and from a "military point of view" this was "useless". Indian public opinion and the budget would definitely oppose such a measure. Compared to

this or a Dominion Army Rawlinson's scheme appeared practical and gave Indians a chance to serve under British officers without harming the interests of the British officers in a big way. Furthermore the Unit scheme had the probable advantage of satisfying the Indians in some way because it offered a time frame desired by the Indians in the first place. In practice however the Unit Scheme did not escape the charge of segregation and the Viceroy forgot to add that even as early as 1921 Indian opinion was not necessarily reconciled to the Unit Scheme.

The Viceroy's arguments did not convince the Secretary of State who somewhat paradoxically asserted that the Dominion army would engender esprit de corps among Indians due to the sense of nationalism and patriotism which Cobbe wrote of. Rising efficiency of the Dominion Army in time would eliminate the greatest risk of having Indian officers commanding Britons. In response the viceroy remained categorical about the military budget and retrenchment. It was also pointed that a mass movement and the legislature were not in favour of increases in military spending. At the same time the demand for Indianisation was growing and the press also opposed the heaviness of the military budget. In these trying times a besieged satrap could only refer to the "grave embarrassment" a deficit of 40 crore rupees was causing to his government.

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24 Secretary of State to Viceroy, 29/30 Nov.1921, Telegram No.6088 & Viceroy in reply, 8/12/1922, Telegram No.48c, Army Dep.Progs., 1923.

25 Secretary of State to Viceroy, 8/10 Dec. 1921, Telegram No.6219, Viceroy in reply, Tel. No.43, 11/1/1921 and Viceroy to Secretary of State, 5/2/1922, Tel. No.19, Army Dep.Progs., 1923.
Although the GOI had decided to maintain peace with Afghanistan and some troops were being retrenched on the advice of the Military Requirements Committee widespread civil disobedience in India militated against large scale retrenchment in 1921. The GOI was hopeful of "seriously weakening" the "pernicious agitation" to win a period of respite without serious outbreaks in future. In the immediate future the Raj would be forced to deliver a "severe blow" to a long movement threatening the roots of British rule in India. Indianisation had to be politically expedient, socially safe and economical at the same time. The intention of reform, made seriously public during and after the Great War, could only be abandoned with the gravest possible consequences in such turbulent times.

If the Viceroy was looking for sympathy he had approached the wrong quarter because in response from London came terse lessons in the interpretation of reform. The outpost was asked to remain vigilant for the announcement of reforms did not mean at all that the British were even remotely thinking of retreating from India. "Such an idea, if it exists, is a complete fallacy and its continuous existence can only lead to intensified challenges to our authority and to a decline in morale among the services." The Raj had to prevail at all costs for only a peaceful, loyal and successful working of reforms would lead to self-

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26 Viceroy to Secretary of State, 5/12/1992, _op.cit._
government and even Indianisation had to be promised keeping all this in mind. Caution and fidelity to tradition, the touch-stones of British military policy in India since the beginning could not be disregarded in a fit of enthusiasm for the cause of political India. At best a compromise between schemes could be tolerated and about four battalions could be selected for an experiment to begin with.27

The Viceroy was quick to rally. The British Government had grossly misconstrued the intentions of the GOI which were actually based on Imperial declarations of policy. To survive the Raj had to be benevolent. "We find ourselves therefore entirely unable either to comprehend or subscribe to the position that the acceptance of a practicable programme, which has been prepared by our own military advisers, can be interpreted as implying a concession to a suggested policy of retreat from India", wrote back the Viceroy to London.28 Indian opinion on army reform had to be placated. In March 1921 the assembly had already passed a resolution saying that in future 25% of all officer recruits per year would be Indians. A year later the Indians were demanding more substantial concessions and an extremely limited four unit scheme would severely compromise government credibility at a moment when danger was pressing from below. The GOI needed all possible friends in the face of Non-Cooperation and hence permission was sought to urgently proclaim a broader scheme as soon as

27 Secretary of State to Viceroy, 14/15 Feb.1922, Tel.No.674, Army Dep.Progs., 1923.

28 Viceroy to Secretary of State, 18/2/1922, Tel.No.262, Army Dep.Progs., 1923.
Whitehall remained unmoved. "If pressed, your argument would be that policy would be dictated by dissent", answered the secretary of State. The Imperial Government was, "not prepared to commit", itself, "to a particular programme of Indianisation", until the loyalty and efficiency of Indian officers was a proven fact. Experiments could be sanctioned but further Indianisation would depend only on their results. For training in India experiments were welcome and even the number of Indianising units could be re-considered but Indians were not to be commissioned just because they were Indians. The nationalist position too was misinterpreted by the Secretary of State:

It is, we are convinced, just as wrong in the interests of Indian development to give inefficient Indians opportunities the results of use of which will discredit their country as it is to deny efficient Indians the opportunity of serving their country with credit.\(^29\)

For much of 1922 discussions carried on between Delhi and London on features of the scheme to be finally announced to the Indian public. In Feb-March 1922 as the GOI dithered on Indianisation and a reduction in defence expenditure

\(^29\) Secretary of State to Viceroy, 22/23 Feb.1922, Tel.No.807 & Viceroy in reply, 25/2/1922, Tel.No.300, *Army dep. Progs.*, 1923. On foreign policy and Indianisation the reservations and advice of the Home Government were accepted by Delhi "with great regret". Even in Waziristan the Imperial government was very regretfully allowing the GOI to abandon the unfavourable forward policy.
opposition to it in the Assembly continued. In the summer of 1922 the Viceroy dispatched the summary of the Eight Unit Scheme to India Office stating that four units would be "nugatory" and even eight units was a "narrow basis" to begin with. Permission was now needed to announce the Eight Unit Scheme in the Assembly session as a beginning to the ultimate Indianisation of the whole army.\(^{30}\)

The salient features of the Eight Unit Scheme were provided by the Commander in Chief Gen. Rawlinson. From 1923 Indian King's Commissioned Officers (KCOs) would be appointed to the selected Eight Units as squadron or company officers on par with British officers of the same age and rank. From 1926 only Indian officers would be appointed to these units thus leaving them wide open to the charge of segregation later on. It was thought that in the beginning of 1927 the situation would be such that all squadron or company officers of these Eight Units would be Indians. After this promotions would be based on tests for the still very young Indian officers and then these men would begin replacing the senior British officers of these units. In the final stages the Indian officers would also start replacing the VCOs. The GOI planned to wait till the Eight Units were completely Indianised before assessing the scheme but the scheme was designed to carefully preserve British interests and Rawlinson, a firm opponent of the idea of an Indian Sandhurst, had made this clear to the Shea Committee on 25 Jan.

\(^{30}\) Viceroy to Secretary of State, 16/3/1922, Tel.No.835-F and Secretary of State in reply, 20/21 March, 1922, Tel.No.1213, Army Dep.Progs., 1923.
1922: "However the experiment must be made and all we can do is to give it every possible assistance whilst at the same time preserving the vested interests of the British officers in the Indian Army" [emphasis added].

An extremely limited programme of Indianisation would have discouraged Indians from preparing for an army career to begin with. And ten vacancies at Sandhurst meant effectively for a select Indian elite were in any case not too many. There was every possibility that the VCOs as a group would be threatened when the Indian officers started replacing them as the Eight Unit scheme suggested. There was every chance that this would cause discontent both in the loyal VCOs as well as the new officers. If this problem did not arise in future it was because the Indian officers got along quite well with the peasant seniors and Indianisation was very slow. By and large the scheme was unpopular with the Indian officers and nationalists both though the units chosen for it represented a cross section of the Indian Army. The pace of Indianisation in these units determined was so slow that it would have taken them about 22 years to become totally Indianised and that too after the replacement of the VCOs by Indian KCOs

31 SECRET 1922 Simla Army Dep. Separate No.45, 3/8/1922: Dispatch to His Majesty's Secretary of State for India, Sub: Indianisation of the Indian Army. The Viceroy sent the summary of the Eight Unit Scheme to the secretary of State on 28/7/1922 ref. Tel.No.999 (Simla) Army Dep.Progs., 1923.

32 Army Dep. Separate 45, op.cit., p.5, warned against a communal combination of Indian officers and men even though the nationalists had never raised the issue: "It is conceivable that a demand might be made under any scheme of Indianisation for officers to be distributed to units on a communal basis. We should, in anticipation, for reasons which it is hardly necessary to specify, definitely exclude this possibility".
starting their careers lower down compared to other British officers being posted in other units. By 1926-27 the Eight Unit scheme began to reach a saturation point as the supply of Indian officers to the Army grew and this combined with the rising nationalist allegations of "segregation" led to a review.\(^33\) Though singled out for a justified criticism then and now the Eight Unit Scheme had some purely incidental effect on the officering of the Indian army between the wars. As the first breach into the commissioned ranks by the Indians it opened up visions of further success besides providing India her first batch of post-Second World War generals. By concentrating Indian officers in a few units and not dispersing them into obscurity the Scheme also gave the Indian troops a visible chance to judge them. It is probably true, and also because the chosen eight units were mixed that working within it the Indian officers got the, "chance to show their worth to a cross section of the Indian fighting classes", and thereby gain repute all over the country.\(^34\)

The Indian nationalists had always stressed that widespread Indianisation would have to be ultimately based upon the development of military education

\(^{33}\) This aspect of Indianisation was noticed by the Indianisation Committee of 1938-39. The units chosen were: 7th Light Cavalry, 16th Light Cavairy, 2/1st Madras Pioneers, 4/19th Hyderabad Regiment, 5th marathas (MLI), 1/7th Rajput Regiment, 1/14th Punjab Regiment and the 2/1st Punjab Regiment. Byron Farwell. *Armies of the Raj*, Viking, 1989, p.298, mentions that the scheme "was not a success"; Cohen, *The Indian Army*, p.84 draws attention to the fact that the scheme only temporarily satisfied the Indians; Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green*, p.199, points out the extremely limited benefits of the scheme to the army.

in India. Consequently after the announcement of the Eight Unit Scheme with all its limitations Indian opinion in the mid 1920s came to be focussed increasingly on an Indian Sandhurst. While the eight Unit Scheme was in practice in Dec. 1924 the Assembly accepted a resolution proposing an Indian Sandhurst formulated by a leading non-official member Mr. Venkatapatiraju.\(^{35}\) This once again pushed the government to the defensive on the Indianisation question. Having conceded the Eight Units rather helplessly the GOI wanted to stall further reform in the army. It resolutely stuck to the belief that since an Indian Sandhurst would almost certainly dampen efficiency in the army it was better to give the Indians the KC with command over British troops as well than risk an Indian commission unacceptable to the British officers and soldiers. Furthermore it was held that it would be "monstrously uneconomical" to start a military college in India as long as only ten cadetships were being allotted to Indians each year. Rawlinson's position was also unambiguous in 1925: "If I wanted to ensure the failure of the scheme for Indianisation I would create an Indian Sandhurst tomorrow."\(^{36}\) In fact the Commander in Chief's remarks on Indianisation in the Assembly left the members of the Vieroy's council "rather disturbed" and he had categorically stated his views on the subject in the following words:


\(^{36}\) ADP 1927, section on loci classici of Indianisation.
One of the first difficulties with which we are confronted is that it is no simple matter to create a national army in India, because India is not a nation.\footnote{Viceroy Reading to Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, 12/3/1925 in the Birkenhead Collection (Microfilm), Acc.No.1948, NAI.}

Since the British realised that the matter was "quasi-political quasi-military" some of them favoured the formation of a committee to examine the possibility of setting up a military college in India. Several officials also thought that objectivity regarding the question was absent in the highly politicised Assembly and it was the government's duty to combat the "ignorance" as well as "prejudice" about the subject. Furthermore since the GOI had never rejected the Assembly resolution of March 1921 backing out in 1925 would only lower the credibility of the Raj further. In the meantime the Auxiliary and Territorial Force Committee set up on the advice of the Indian members stood out as an example of Indian initiative in military matters. There was every danger for the GOI of totally losing the initiative in the debate and process of Indianisation. But as events bore out the government still had fight left in it.

To postpone more development in Indianisation the GOI opposed the Indian stand in the Assembly in Feb. 1925. All Indian non-official members were unitedly pressing for an Indian Sandhurst though some of them were beginning to realise that more information about the matter was needed before a decision was arrived at. This only helped the government which was pleased to know that
some of these men were forced, "to acknowledge, in their minds at any rate, that further enquiry and careful constructive work by an expert committee would be required", before a decision on setting up an Indian military college was taken. But this did not mean that the nationalists were in general watering down their demand for a very substantial Indianisation of the army. Men like Jinnah, for instance, were quite sure of the fact that serious constitutional advance in India on the lines suggested by the immediate post-Great War developments was impossible unless accompanied by a practicable scheme to Indianise the whole army.

Towards March 1925 the Indians in the Assembly began to grow impatient and matters reached a head on 3 March when Jinnah threatened a vote of censure on the government because its policy on Indianisation had been, "disingenuous, dilatory and inadequate." Such a severe indictment led the cautious authorities to believe that a political agitation was "boiling up" on the issue. The GOI was left with no alternative in the face of such attacks but to say that an Indian Sandhurst was a cabinet affair even though the majority of the Viceroy's council supported the idea of forming at least a Committee to examine the problem. Pockets of resistance remained despite the growing nationalist pressure with the die hard Rawlinson desiring a committee of "limited scope" to collect "evidence regarding the supply of young officers to the army and the best means of giving them their

38 ADP 1927; M.M. Malviya & M.L. Nehru were among such men.
military education". The militant among the Indians were however not willing to wait and as the GOI dithered Jinnah's "guillotine" fell on it. On 14 March he forced the Home Member to admit that soon the GOI would appoint a Committee of inquiry to speed up the process of Indianisation. Pushed into another corner, and as Army Secretary E. Burdon noticed, it became necessary for the GOI, "to put the matter in train". We must note that it was primarily due to Indian pressure that the Skeen Committee was publicly announced in July 1925 and that the British fears of an agitation boiling up on the issue were not baseless. The way Jinnah had attacked the Commander in Chief in the Assembly in Feb. 1925 was an indicator of the seriousness with which the Indians were pursuing the matter. At the time Jinnah had voiced the Indian opinion in the following terms:

You come here with one excuse or another, and you tell us that there is this difficulty and that, that there is this to be done and that to be done... Has there ever been a proposal which we have suggested which was not rash... when have you Englishmen ever agreed with us and said that any proposal we make is not rash? You say, "It is rash, be cautious". We have been 150 years under this government. You have deprived the people of India of arms. What have you done? 

The setting up of the Skeen Committee can be interpreted as a significant victory of the Indians in the Indianisation debate and between 1925 and 1927 when the Skeen Committee submitted its report the dispute on Indianisation remained somewhat subdued.

The Skeen Committee (also known as the Indian Sandhurst Committee) was set up to answer the three most important questions confronting Indianisation in 1925. How could the supply of Indians for the King’s Commission be improved and increased? Was an Indian Sandhurst desirable and practicable? If an Indian Sandhurst was set up would it replace the existing arrangement of providing Commissioned Officers to the Indian army?

In pursuing these questions the Skeen Committee Report became a critique of the Eight Unit Scheme and the level of military education in India in the late 1920s. Though the result of its submission was in no way spectacular and the time frame for Indianisation it suggested was not very different from the one suggested by the Shea Committee it is important to study its findings to see the influence of nationalist thought on it. The Skeen Committee, in agreement with the nationalist position, opined that the Eight Unit Scheme had neither produced socially significant results nor generated popular enthusiasm for Indianisation in India. It was also stressed that given education on public school lines Indians could provide excellent officers to the services. An Indian Sandhurst would only
provide the finishing touches to a system based on the widespread utilisation of public schools. Importantly enough the Committee wanted the GOI to shoulder the responsibility of developing military education in India as part of general education because in the first place British policy had discouraged the growth of military traditions in India. Since a widespread "disarmament of the people" had diminished the military impulse among the educated Indians it was the government's duty to undo all this by building a "more comprehensive and widely diffused" military tradition in India. Indeed so strong was the Indian opinion within it that the Committee called British policy the "general root cause" of the ills which plagued military recruitment in India.  

In a sweeping review of education in colonial India the Skeen Committee found it extremely defective compared to the organised system prevalent in Britain where the public boarding schools were found to develop the spirit of initiative and independence in young boys. European praise of these model English schools also lent weight to this argument. Combined with this was the lack of publicity about military affairs and opportunities in India and the prohibitive cost of being trained as an officer abroad. The selection of candidates for training as Commissioned Officers was so "rigidly official" that it was found "seriously objectionable" by many witnesses before the Skeen Committee. Furthermore in England special arrangements had been made to encourage

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promotions to the Commissioned ranks from the lower ranks such as the NCOs but in India nothing of the sort had been done. Since Indianisation would also depend upon the "co-operation and good will" of the VCOs it was necessary to keep their interests in mind as well while introducing the middle class to the armed forces.41

The Skeen Committee, like many people in the 1920s, held that the Eight Unit Scheme made Indianisation unpopular amongst the Indians by encouraging an "invidious form of segregation" in the Army. It noticed that a lecture given at Sandhurst in 1925 claiming that Indianisation under the Eight Unit Scheme was a slow process un-harmful to British interests in the Indian Army had been widely misinterpreted in some popular works on India. Some British officers had also expressed the fear of losing control over the Indian troops in the event of effective Indianisation. The Committee over-ruled these unjustified fears and recommended a substantial and progressive scheme of Indianisation. According to it vacancies for Indians at Sandhurst had to be doubled in 1928 and increased thereafter. Other arms like the artillery, air, engineer, signal and tank had to be Indianised and for this vacancies were demanded for Indians at Woolwich and Cranwell. In 1933 an Indian Sandhurst would open but to maintain the Imperial connection 20 seats for Indians would remain reserved at Sandhurst. On the whole, according to the calculations of the Skeen Committee, 50% of all offices in

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41 Ibid, pp.14-16.
the Indian armed forces would be Indian by the year 1952.\footnote{Extracts of the Sandhurst Lecture are present as appendix III of the Skeen Report.}

The submission of the Skeen Committee Report in 1927 was followed by a policy pronouncement in March 1928 when the Commander in Chief Field Marshall Sir William Birdwood reiterated the official policy of Indianisation incorporating some of the recommendations made by the Skeen Committee. Twenty vacancies were now reserved at Sandhurst for Indians and five were specially kept open for selected VCOs. Six vacancies were reserved for Indians at the artillery college in Woolwich and six at the RAF college in Cranwell. Further progress, it was stated once more, would depend upon the results of these new measures. Undeterred by the growing criticism of the Eight Unit Scheme the GOI was not willing to abandon it and in the new policy announcement it was clearly stated that the Eight Unit Scheme was to be given a "full and fair trial."\footnote{Indianisation Committee Report, 1938-39, p.22; Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol.1, Official Report, Delhi, 1-27 March, 1928, announcement of government policy and general military review by Commander in Chief, 8 March 1928, pp.1175-1187. Certain concessions in accordance with the Skeen recommendations would be granted to India but with time, "the scheme would have to be reconsidered and, if necessary, revised from the stand-point of efficiency". This left M.L. Nehru "cold" and "completely shattered" Jinnah's "faith in the bona fides of the British Government".} In fact it was stated that when the supply of Indian officers outstripped demand they
would begin to replace the VCOs as platoon commanders to form homogeneous units on the British model. This in practice meant that the government did not want to dilute newer units with Indian officers thus keeping the Eight Unit Scheme open to the charge of discrimination. It can be argued, and as the nationalists did, that these Units would ultimately form a "segregated" Dominion army alongside the other reputed Indian regiments with their unbroken relationship with Indian VCOs and British officers. In 1928 several questions related to the most important issues of Indianisation were left unanswered. What would happen when the Indian KCOs reached the higher positions of command in the Indianising units? How would they be ranked along senior officers of other units? Would the Indianising units be trusted in the event of war? British policy did not answer these questions even in 1928 even when the GOI had rejected the Dominion Army concept in the early 1920s. Official ambivalence on the issue continued leaving the GOI open to the accusation of being called dishonest. It was, for instance, suggested that in the Indianising units there was no need to recruit VCOs without sensitivity to the comparison between Indian Commissioned officers starting as VCOs and Indian VCOs continuing in the British officered units. The demand for an Indian Sandhurst was turned down once again and this meant that accelerated Indianisation was virtually ruled out in the scheme of things for the 1930s. In the face of all this the disappointed Indians could only protest and Jinnah's adjournment motion in the Assembly, adopted by 70 to 41 votes, soon after Birdwood's announcement underlined the
Indian support for rapid Indianisation.\textsuperscript{44}

Due to the policy of Indianisation proposed in 1928 the problem of promotion and acrimony in general was bound to arise if Indian officers began their service as VCOs. How would they compare themselves with the VCOs in other units? Before 1928 whereas approximately one out of three Indian officers could have hoped for commands after it only one out of eight could hope to do so. There was every possibility that increased competition as a result of all this would generate bitterness in the Officers Corps and undermine the efficiency of the services leaving Indianisation objectives un-attained. Among men too as avenues to the VCO rank would close discontent would grow. Considering all this official policy appeared somewhat selfdefeating in the late 1920s.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{India in 1927-28, A Statement prepared for presentation to Parliament in accordance with the requirements of the 26th Section of the Government of India Act (56 Geo V. Chap.61), Calcutta, 1928, p.311; Government policy on Indianisation remained doubtful in this period - \textit{India in 1930-31, A Statement prepared for presentation to Parliament}, Calcutta 1932, p.43, referred clearly to, “extraordinary difficulty, indeed the impossibility, of establishing a coherent, efficient, and reliable army officered by Indians within the time desired by the critics of the Government”. The Storeman Scheme, as the same source, p.28, pointed out was a good example of minor Indianiation attempted by the GOI. The Storeman Scheme was designed to replace British Other Ranks (BORs) by Indians as Assistant Storekeepers in the Indian Army Ordnance Corps and was “financed”! by reducing the number of Indian sepoys in the same department! According to the report this made “it appear as though little or no increase in the Indian establishment” was actually being made.

\textsuperscript{45} 1/5 Correspondence and notes about Sikh troubles in the Indian Army, The Papers of Lt.Gen. Thomas William Corbett, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, tell us that elements of British recruitment policy geared to achieve a favourable balance in the units also led to growth in intrigue and discontent. For instance during the late 1920s the policy of balancing \textit{manjha} and \textit{malwa} recruits in the Sikh cavalry was linked to discontent among Sikh troops. During court martials, promotions and recruitment British officers could also easily be accused of favouritism. In fact the situation was serious enough for a certain officer Reynolds to write to Corbett that the Sikh troops were well behaved in face but extremely hesitant to use force against religious leaders. Reynolds was asked to exercise caution in promoting men because in at least one cavalry
Parts of the discussion and official thinking on the subject of Indianisation not made public in 1927 after the submission of the Skeen Report also prove the charge of dishonesty brought against the government by Indian leaders like Jinnah. Lord Irwin while holding Indianisation responsible for the reluctance of young Britons at Sandhurst to join the Indian Army clearly told Lord Birkenhead that the British were following a policy on Indianisation more out of helplessness than anything else:

We are all moreover so limited by the pledges of our predecessors, definitely to concede a certain measure of Indianisation, that it is not likely to be possible to give any absolute guarantees, which would bring reassurance in this way to the hesitating young men at Sandhurst.46

The Viceroy also realised the need for more propaganda to influence the British recruits who were hesitating because the conditions of service offered by the Indian Army were unattractive. Furthermore the lowering of living standards in the British Army was seriously affecting recruitment to the Indian Army. The British Army had become more affordable - earlier a boy could enter a good British regiment only if he had 300 pounds a year to spare at least. In the inter-war period as prices fell the British army became more affordable thereby "inevitably" suggesting to the young Briton the question "why become an exile in

squadron promotions were being considered at the last moment and names "calculated to reduce the efficiency of the Sqn." were being mentioned, presumably by the Indian VCOs.

India if you can afford not to". The young British officer-recruits had to be offered inducements and told that the British element in the Indian Army was bound to be great or perhaps greater than in the Civil Services and that the defence of India would be the real Imperial problem of the future. 47

Birdwood's limited concessions of 1928 can be placed in better perspective if we see how the Viceroy's Council reacted to the Skeen Committee Report in 1927. At the outset it had become clear that the GOI had to increase the number of commissions offered to Indians due to the general conditions prevalent in India and the past commitments if not the promises made during the Great War and in its immediate aftermath. While discussing the Skeen report the Viceroy's Council had before it three possible methods of posting Indian officers to the units of the Indian Army. The first, as the Skeen Committee suggested, was to post them anywhere they liked but this was thought impossible. The second was to post Indian KCOs to selected units upto a maximum of 23. Thirdly it was thought desirable to give Indians a Dominion Commission within the Eight Unit Scheme making them replace the VCOs and the British officers in gradual course of time. Great caution was needed in the whole affair because Indians were strongly opposed to the grant of a lower form of commission. But for the GOI along the kind of commission given other matters too were crucial:

47 Ibid.
The real point of principle and substance, as it seems to me, is that you should do nothing to impair the efficiency of other units than those in which you are already conducting your experiment.\textsuperscript{48}

Considering all this the Viceroy’s Council, despite the Commander-in-Chief’s opposition, agreed, "upon a formula which, while not specifically mentioning the eight units, means substantially the same thing". The compromise lay in the Indian KCOs replacing the British KCOs and Indian VCOs in the Eight Units. Furthermore the demand of Indians to get admission to Woolwich for artillery training and Cranwell for air force training was mentioned by Irwin with a feeling little short of contempt:

We also decided to ask for admissions to Woolwich and Cranwell. As regards the first, I don’t think, if you accede to our request, it is the least likely that for years to come any Indians - or at least not more than an odd one - will succeed in qualifying.\textsuperscript{49}

The policy of Indianisation remained short-sighted and while the Raj showed every sign of backtracking on it it took another round of the Indian nationalist movement to move the rusted wheels of reform. As an upshot of the Civil Disobedience movement and growing Indian pressure some important decisions were taken by the Sub-Committee of Defence (No. VII) set up by the Round Table

\textsuperscript{48} Viceroy Irwin to Lord Birkenhead, 14 July 1927, Acc.No.1949.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
Conference in 1931. Among the members of this Committee and the Indian delegates to the Round Table were Indians like T.B. Sapru, M.R. Jayakar, B.S. Moonje and M.A. Jinnah and among the "definite resolutions" of the Committee were planned steps "to increase substantially the rate of Indianising the Indian Army". Once again Jinnah dissented from this stated objective in desiring a clearer indication of the pace of Indianisation. The Sub-Committee also called for the establishment of a training college in India at the earliest possible. In a familiar move the GOI was instructed to form a Committee of Experts, both British and Indian, to, "work out the details of the establishment of such a college." The Sub-Committee was also "unanimous" in its view "that the declaration must not be taken as a mere pious expression of opinion, but that immediately the Conference was concluded, steps should be taken to deal effectively with the recommendations made."50

As a result of this in May 1931 a Committee of Experts under the Commander in Chief Gen. Sir Phillip Chetwode was set up, "in order to work out the details of the establishment of a military college in India to train candidates for commissions in all arms of Indian Defence Services". Indianisation was now to extend to a complete division of all arms and a cavalry brigade with proportionate provisions for ancillary services, staff etc. This would require an

intake of 60 officers per year. Realising that the 8 units "were not popular with either the Indian public or the young Indian officer" for the first time "a real start with an Indian Army as a fighting proposition, and not merely an experiment" was being made. While the long awaited Indian Sandhurst would eventually open producing Indian officers in larger numbers the official position on the expansion of Indianisation was spelt out once again in older terms by Chetwode:

In dealing with the expansion of Indianisation, our object is to create a recognised combatant force on a purely Indian basis, which would in time replace a force of a similar size in the Imperial Army. For it is by the gradual replacement of Imperial fighting formations alone that India will be able eventually to assume responsibility for her own defence.... Our first task is to create a steady flow of fine young officers.\textsuperscript{51}

Six Indian unofficial members of the Chetwode Committee in reference to the resolutions of the Defence Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference, submitted 'dissertations' of dissent with the main report. Comprising a telling commentary on the "dilatory" British policy of Indianisation these minutes touched upon vital matters of interpreting reform, the bias of British positions on

\textsuperscript{51} Chetwode Committee Report, p.21; Indianisation Committee Report 1938-39, p.31; Progress Report on the armed forces for 1929-30, 601/10848/H, Secret, Delhi, 1930 [H] tells us that the long awaited Kitchner College was opened in July 1929 to prepare NCOs for VCO rank and as platoon commanders; India in 1931-32, A Statement prepared for presentation to Parliament..., Calcutta, 1933, section on Indianisation mentions that the Indian Military Academy started off in Dehradun in October 1932 with the aim of taking in 40 cadets every two years. Of these 12 were to be selected by open competition, 3 were to be nominated by the Commander in Chief from among the other qualifiers of the exam, 15 were to be serving soldiers of the Indian Army including the Auxiliary and the Territorial Forces and 10 were to come from the Indian States Forces.
reform, the question of nominations and the persistence of the "martial races" myth.

Launching a frontal attack on government intentions the minute by Chotu Ram, S.N. Mukarji and Abdur Rahim rightfully claimed that the scheme ratified by the official members of the Chetwode Committee fell far short of satisfying the requirements voiced by the resolutions of the Round Table Conference. The defence sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference had asked for steps to "increase substantially the rate of Indianisation". The Chetwode recommendations did not concede this because the plan to replace the VCOs with Indian KCOs coming from an Indian college later made the "apparent increase" in Indianisation "entirely illusory". There was actually no point in delaying substantial Indianisation when in the Indian Army 17000 non-nationals from territories outside India were serving at the cost of the Indian tax-payer. Furthermore the college proposed by the Committee had no provision for either naval or air training. The minute also objected to the use of the world experiment as it went against the spirit of Indianisation embodied in the Round Table Resolutions. It was also pointed out that the measure of replacing the VCOs by Indian KCOs in the Indianising units would actually dampen efficiency by eliminating the avenues of promotion to the jawans. Simultaneously better men would not join
these units and this would lead to deterioration of standards in the long run.52

The minute of B.S. Moonje emphasised the political nature of the Indianisation question. Apparently after the Round Table Conference the GOI quickly forgot the fact that Indians "wanted to be the architects of their own destiny". The Round Table Conference had once again clarified that in the near future Indians would become ever more responsible for their defence and governance. Quoting extensively from the resolutions of the Defence Sub-Committee Moonje underlined the spirit behind reform in contradistinction to the words in which the government intentions were voiced. Considering all this the fixing of the annual intake at 60 into the new college by the GOI came to him as a "sad though highly instructive disillusionment". There were lessons to be learnt here, for who actually had the authority to fix the intake? The GOI was wrong, if not downright dishonest, in fixing the intake of recruits to the new college when the Sub-Committee had clearly spelled out the functions of the Expert Committee. In any case, and compared to the figure suggested by the Shea Committee in the early 1920s, 60 was at best parsimonious. With a 60% nomination opposing 40% open competition the concession appeared paltry and went against the recommendations of the learned Skeen Committee which wanted nominations restricted to not more than 20%. Moonje converted his attack on this system of

52 Minute by Chotu Ram, S.N. Mukarji and Abdur rahim appended to the Chetwode Committee Report.
preserving the vested interests into a full scale assault on colonialism:

This system of nomination perpetuates the myth of the artificial distinction of martial and non-martial classes. It serves as a handle for the people to charge the Government with the policy of "Divide the Rule". It propagates the poison of communalism in the body politic of India. It emasculates large sections of the people and as a reaction serves to create what may be called swelled headed in those who are generally enlisted in the Army. It strikes at the very root of the conception of a national Army, and perpetuates the system of a mercenary Army which is the inevitable concomitant of a foreign government.\textsuperscript{53}

The most powerful and comprehensive critique of British military policy in India and the Indianisation issue was provided by the veteran campaigner Sir. P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyer and Maj. Gen. Raja Ganpat Rao Raghunath Rao Rajwade. Their minute began with a criticism of the limits imposed upon the Chetwode Committee's scope of enquiry by the GOI. The fact that the Commander in Chief over-emphasised the details of an Indian Sandhurst compared to the pace of Indianisation which was the central issue smacked of authoritarianism. In laying

\textsuperscript{53} Minute by Dr. B.S. Moonje appended to the Chetwode Committee Report. Earlier Indians had vehemently opposed the Simon Commission Report on similar grounds. Even Nirad C. Chaudhuri, \textit{Thy Hand Great Anarch India 1921-1952}, London, 1987, p.321, called the report "a dishonest document". Even before the Indian Military College Committee (Chetwode Committee) had concluded its report in July 1931, Chaudhuri wrote a series of well informed articles criticising the martial races theory in \textit{The Modern Review} between 1930 and 1931. Later in an article in the same \textit{Review} for October 1931 he examined the Chetwode Report finding it "an ungenerous and unintelligent sneer". Earlier in a letter to Sir. Sivaswamy he had warned against the British attempts to "convert" Indian "cadets into imitation polo-playing English subalterns, weaned away from their habits and tradition, which will make them as ineffective or offensive as the majority of the Indian members of the services". In fact Chaudhuri emerged as a publicist because of his acclaimed articles on the martial races. A precise summary of his involvement in the Indianisation issue is given in \textit{Thy Hand Great Anarch}, pp.319-28.
down the terms of reference of the Committee the central contradiction of Indianisation was ignored by the government. Indians were simply not going to be satisfied with slow change anymore and easily disproved the irrational sounding official arguments favouring it:

The validity of these arguments will be examined later on. They are considered by Indians to be more specious than sound, but they appeal to the average British layman. The British mind is essentially empirical and wishes to build upon the results of experience and is content to solve the problems of the day without looking forward beyond tomorrow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" is a maxim which more or less accurately expresses the mentality of the average Englishman. If the Empire had to face the danger of another world war on the same scale as the Great War, there can be little doubt that England would be obliged to train India for her own defence within a much shorter period.54

Compared to the British the nationalists appeared farsighted. Much of established British policy regarding the martial and non-martial races collapsed due to a different reading of Indian history. Once the myth, that Indians lacked the capacity for military leadership, was sidelined it became clear how a carefully cultivated colonial discourse was responsible for crushing a lot in the Indian sepoys. Since the beginning British policy had considered it "necessary to impress upon the mind of the Indian solider a conviction of his permanent racial

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54 Minute by Sivaswamy Aiyer and Major General Rajwade appended to the Chetwode Committee Report.
inferiority to the British soldier". On the other hand history proved that military qualities were dependent on suitable opportunities and training. The theory of the martial classes had actually evolved to suit the "policy of combining absolute political safety with the maximum of military efficiency" and the government's continued reliance on reports like the one presented by the Simon Commission was most unfortunate because the Simon Commission showed "no intelligent analysis or appreciation of the various causes affecting recruitment" in India. Simultaneously, and if the Duke of Wellington could do with the "scum of the earth" in the Peninsular War, the climatic theory flouted in favour of the martial races and restricted recruitment was irrational:

If this were a valid argument the British and the Gurkha soldier should not be enlisted for service in India or in expeditions to other tropical countries. During the wars in foreign lands in which Indian troops were employed, nothing was heard of unadaptability of the Indian soldiers to the climatic conditions of other countries.\(^5^5\)

The British rulers of India, whose military thinking was presumably conditioned by the geographical placement of their islands, did not appreciate the importance of a national army in modern times or in the conditions imposed upon nations by the century of total war. History showed that a national army possessed greater moral strength compared to "merely professional army drawn from particular classes". Since the military situation of India with its long frontiers

\(^5^5\) Ibid.
was more analogous to that of the Continental powers Indianisation was the only means of developing a national army in India.

Three aspects of the scheme proposed by Chetwode i.e. segregation, elimination of the VCOs and the organisation of the Indianising units on the British pattern and the pace of Indianisation were criticised by Aiyer and Rajwade on the basis of solid academic research and the applicability of reason. The arguments favouring segregation stemmed from the construction of colonial stereotypes, were old and untrue. Indeed racial discrimination and the arrogance on part of the British were to blame for this "scheme of segregation". The official fear that young Britons would refuse to join the Indian army if commissions were given to Indians appeared true only in the case of the aristocratic and exceptionally haughty Britons. But even if all Britons were like that "India should be prepared to face the situation and learn to do without British recruitment". The real issue, and this was stated on V. Chirol's authority, behind segregation was the widely acknowledged fear among the British that "the Englishmen's prestige with the native troops themselves would be gone, if they were ever placed under other than British command." Any scheme of segregation treated and tried to experiment with Indian officers as a class. This was most unfortunate for there was nothing to prove that British officers as a class were superior to anyone else. Indeed evidence gathered and the observations of none other than Lord Roberts
after the Boer War pointed to the contrary.\textsuperscript{56} The nationalists were correct in choosing the Boer War, which was a severe indictment of the British model of military training, as an example. The evidence related to the Boer War also proves that the theory of the 'martial races' existed and prospered in conditions of geographical and national isolation. Criticising the contemporary British system of producing officers the experienced Maj. Gen. R.S.S. Baden Powell had said the following before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa:

\begin{quote}
Junior officers should be given responsibility from their first entry into the service. They should be made to really command their unit, however small, and be answerable for its efficiency and success.... The so-called chain of responsibility is too often one of irresponsibility.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

Other senior officers like Roberts, Kitchener and Hamilton were equally or even more critical of British officers in the field. Lord Kitchener had the following to say about staff and regimental officers:

\begin{quote}
There appears to be too often a want of serious study of their profession by officers who are, I think, rather inclined to deal too lightly with military questions of moment.... I should like to point out, further, that in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{56} Minute by Sivaswamy Aiyer and Maj. Gen. Rajwade appended to the Chetwode Committee Report.

\textsuperscript{57} Report of the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, Vol.III, 1904 [Cmd.1791, CUL]. Minutes of Evidence, pp.424-25: Powell's view was very critical. Angered by the fact that very few of the British officers or men knew, "how to sharpen a sword or how to keep it sharp on service", he emphasised the educational reform of the officer corps and the promotion of battlefield resource and cunning as opposed to the existing overemphasis on barrack square drill, form and deadening routine.
the higher ranks also there seems to be a want of that professionalism which is essential to thorough efficiency. 58

Among the entire officer corps was noticeable a tendency to shun responsibility. Training by subordinating juniors too much to the seniors, in the words of the report, "blighted the development of their self-reliance and power of decision". Maj. Gen. Sir. Henry Colvile called the "want of initiative" the greatest fault of the British officers. How much the British officers had actually learnt from the skirmishing on the romanticised Indian frontier was made clear by Sir. Ian Hamilton (Military Secretary in South Africa) who attacked the peace time training methods of the British Army:

The previous practical peace training of Aldershot proved itself quite unsuited to the requirements of South African warfare. This training was calculated to stunt rather than to develop the initiative of company officers, section leaders, and men. 59 [emphasis added].

The Boer wars were a blow to the Victorian military sensibility cultivated in the British establishment with gay abandon after the Indian mutiny of 1857. South Africa proved that modern warfare was conditional and in which with discipline the individuality of troops was important for success. No doubt all the colonials i.e. Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders did extremely well in the Boer

58 Report of His Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Military preparations and other matters connected with the War in South Africa, 1903 [Cmd.1789, CUL], pp.53-4.

59 Ibid., pp.55-6.
War because compared to the average British recruit they had, as the Commander in Chief Field Marshal Lord Roberts put it, "more individuality".\textsuperscript{60} That the criticism of British officers did not stop at the Boer wars was proved by the observations of the Indian Army after the Great War made by senior and experienced officers like Corbett. Blaming British officers for often causing discontent in the Indian Army he admitted that young British officers were "apt to consider themselves infallible with little reason for doing so". It had become a practice in the Indian Army to damn the VCOs and NCOs before their men by the British officers. This lowered their prestige before the jawans and was resented even more because junior British subalterns were "not treated in this way".\textsuperscript{61}

The officials also forwarded some arguments in favour of abolishing the VCOs in the Indian officered units to pattern them on the British Army model but the very fact that such arguments emerged after Indianisation was beginning to become real made them rather suspect. On the contrary the elimination of the VCOs would negatively affect recruitment to the Indianising units and create more problems of discrimination within the Indian KCOs and between Indian and

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p.79.

\textsuperscript{61} 1/5 Correspondence and notes about Sikh troubles in the Indian Army (1928), Corbett Papers, op.cit., Corbett's advise to young officers was simple enough: "We cannot all be interpreters in the language. A far more important factor is knowlede of human nature and justice tempered by cool judgement and the milk of human kindness. If British officers consider themselves exempt from the standards of smartness in dress, punctiliousness and general military thoroughness demanded of them, slackness and inefficiency are bound to occur in the Regiment."
British officers. In fact the paternal official concern for the VCOs appeared paradoxical: "The military authorities are so full of tenderness for the Viceroy's commissioned officer that they wish to improve his class out of existence." The message of nationalism was simple only the British had to be replaced with Indians and that too at an accelerating pace.

The relevance of the nationalist critique was not accepted by British policy till the end. Even after the College opened in Dehradun the principles of policy were spelt out at the third session of the Indian Round Table Conference in 1932. A specific time-frame for Indianisation was kept outside the purview of policy in the following reassertion: "The view was stated on behalf of His Majesty's Government that the pace of Indianisation must continue to be regulated by stages, while it was pointed out that a programme of Indianisation already exists which extends much further than the previous stage and looks forward to still greater developments in future." Indians also desired some legislative control over the employment of Indian troops but the British were categorical on this point because it was "implicit in the reservation of Defence" that the Governor-General be supreme in the decisions involving the employment of Indian troops anywhere in the world in the interest of the Empire.  

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62 Minute by Aiyer and Rajwade, op.cit.