

CURZON, INDIA AND EMPIRE

The Papers of Lord Curzon (1859-1925) from the Oriental and India Office Collections at the British Library, London



Adam Matthew Publications

“...as private letters between individuals, they include personal remarks, expressions of anger and annoyance directed toward other officials, comments on legislative proposals, assessment of the larger political scene, and the like. Because they range so widely, and are illuminated by the probing intelligence of a masterful viceroy, the papers collected here are an invaluable resource for students alike of Indian and of Imperial history.”

Professor Thomas Metcalf
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The Papers of Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, 1898-1905, and British Foreign Secretary, 1919-1924, from the British Library (MS.EUR F111 & F112) document all aspects of his involvement with the Middle East and South Asia and provide a rich source for historians of Empire:

- Viceregal correspondence including material relating to the relocation of the capital of India to Delhi, the creation of memorials to British rule and his concerns for the emerging Indian state.
- Correspondence has much on the emergence of the USA as a world power, the situation in China, and the future of the Empire.
- An ideal platform from which to survey his administration and a critical phase in imperial history

George Nathaniel Curzon, Marquis Curzon of Kedleston (1859-1925) was educated at Eton and Oxford and travelled widely as a young man, visiting Persia, Turkistan, Afghanistan, India, Ceylon, China, Korea and Japan. His travels resulted in a series of incisive books and these writings earned Curzon a reputation as a shrewd observer and analyst of Foreign Policy, which was underlined by his swift rise in politics. In 1898

Curzon was appointed Viceroy of India and to some extent he regarded the appointment as a meeting with destiny and an opportunity to assist the providential role of Empire. He saw "the hand of Divine Providence behind the creation and expansion of an empire which was a supreme force for good in the world."

India was a place where "a great work of industrial and commercial exploitation" was the challenge to be met for the benefit of Britain, India and the world. By reviving the durbar as a new imperial spectacle, he helped to bring together the local elites with wealthy entrepreneurs and stressed the orderliness of Empire. It would be a mistake to see Curzon purely as a paternalist and capitalist. He was also a champion of Indian self-government, reminding his colleagues of the crucial role of the princes in the administration of India, and of Indian soldiers, engineers and artisans in a number of conflicts and in the development of British Africa and Asia. His 1917 declaration promised India responsible self-government within the British Empire.

The official papers and files on the internal administration of India offer a wealth of detail and include topics such as:



- Agricultural reforms, from famine relief and irrigation to the establishment of an Agricultural Research Institute
- Industrial and Commercial reforms, from the opening of 6,000 miles of new railway lines to the rapid increase in factories and workshops in India
- Financial reforms including a 50% reduction of the salt-tax
- Military and Police reforms including the creation of new training schools, the expansion of the Provincial Police and the re-arming of native regiments
- Educational reforms with an emphasis on the teaching of science and medicine
- Conservation and Heritage including the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act of 1904, the creation of the Archaeological Department and planning control
- the partition of Bengal, 1905

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Part 1: Demi-official correspondence and Summary of Administration by topic, c.1898-1905

Part 2: Summary of Administration by Topic, Private Correspondence, and Official Papers on India: Internal Affairs, c.1898-1905

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