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### **The National Institute of Sciences of India**

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Your Editor has asked me to write an article on the National Institute of Sciences of India. In accepting this invitation it has seemed to me that it would be useful if I showed the position of this organisation with reference to other scientific organisations in India, as it is only in this way that one can see clearly what place the National Institute should occupy in the edifice of Science in India, and, therefore, what its functions should be.

Briefly, the position is that provision for modern scientific work in India commences in the days of the East India Company with the recruitment of Medical Officers and Mint Assayers, who, towards the end of the 18th century, with interested civil and military officers, began in their spare time the first modern scientific investigations. At this time the general need for an organised association for the encouragement of the study of all branches of learning became felt, and on the 15th of January 1784, at a meeting presided over by Sir William Jones, the Asiatic Society was founded, later to be termed the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The objects of this society were both scien-

tific and literary, and in the comprehensive words of Sir William Jones as paraphrased 'The bounds of its investigation will be the geographical limits of Asia, and within these limits its enquiries will be extended to whatever is performed by a man or produced by nature'.

The first organised provision for scientific research in India was, therefore, actually non-official; but in 1788, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sibpur, were founded; and in 1800 the first of the scientific services, namely the Trigonometrical Survey of the Peninsula, later to become the Great Trigonometrical Survey and now merged in the Survey of India, was established by East India Company with Colonel Lambton as the first geodesist. The Geological Survey of India was founded in 1851, and in 1866 the first Museum Act was passed and the Indian Museum was established, the zoological, geological and archaeological collections of the Asiatic Society being transferred thereto; and with the foundation of this Museum we have the first direct official provision for zoology. Provision for meteorology in the form of various observatories existed in various parts of India from the end of the 18th century and in the early 19th century, and in 1875 the Government of India appointed a Meteorological Reporter for the whole of India, and the present Meteorological Department was founded.

With the 20th century we have opened another volume in the scientific life of India, and the first third of the century has been characterised by the formation of a large number of specialist societies and research institutes. Amongst the societies mention may be made of the Mining and Geological Institute of India (1906), the Indian Mathematical Society (1907), the Institution of Engineers, India (1921), the Indian Botanical Society (1921), the

Indian Chemical Society (1924), Institution of Chemists, India (1927), the Society of Biological Chemists (1931), and finally of the Indian Physical Society, the Indian Society of Soil Science and the Indian Physiological Society, all founded last year.

Amongst the research institutes supported from central revenues one may mention the Imperial Institute of Veterinary Research now at Muktesar but originally founded at Poona under another name (1890); the Imperial Agricultural Research Institute, Pusa (1903); the Central Research Institute, Kasauli (1906); the Imperial Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun (1906); and the All India Institute of Public Health and Hygiene, Calcutta (1934). As examples of research institutions administered provincially mention may be made of the School of Tropical Medicine, Calcutta, and the Haffkine Institute, Bombay. And as a fine example of another type of research institute, namely one supported mainly by private bequests supplemented by Government grants, we have the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (1911).

All these societies and institutes, except the Indian Institute of Science, must be regarded as specialized organisations.

But starting in 1857, with the foundations of the Universities in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, there has been formed a series of university educational institutions with chairs and laboratories for various Science subjects, playing an important part in the provision of facilities for scientific research. The scientific societies all maintain their own publication, but happily the tendency is for our University friends to offer the results of their researches to existing scientific societies rather than for Universities to start their own journals and so increase the multitude of publications.