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Colonisation of Assam : Second Phase 1840-1859

AMALENDU GUHA

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Assam was annexed to the British Empire in 1826. Until 1833, the East India Company's Government was undecided about its Assam policy and this indecision led to further ruination of the moribund local economy. With the Charter of 1833 which abolished the Company's commercial interests, there opened up the prospects of colonisation of Assam with import of private enterprise and capital from Britain. From this year onwards, Englishmen were encouraged by the administration to invest their capital in the wastelands of Assam to produce such cash crops as indigo, sugarcane and tea. The policy of Francis Jenkins (in charge of North-East Frontier 1834-66) of attracting British colonists to Assam for developing freehold farms growing indigo and sugarcane did not, however, materialise. But British private capital did certainly respond to the beckoning prospects of tea. The Assam Company was formed as a rupee Company in 1839 and began its operations immediately thereafter. During the next two decades, as many as 95 Europeans had been to Assam for short or long stay as staff members of the Company. The impact of tea in Assam during this period is discussed below. Throughout this paper, by Assam we mean Assam proper, i.e. the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley to the exclusion of Goalpara District—in all an area of nearly 20,000 sq. miles.

1. Growth of Tea Industry and its Linkage Effects

All developments in Assam during the years 1840-59 centred round tea and the Assam Company. The total acreage under tea plants—mature and immature—increased from 2311 acres in 1841 to about 8000 acres by 1859; and the output from 29,267 lbs. to more than 1.2 million lbs. (Tables 1 & 2). Until 1850 the Assam Company was the only planter in the field; by 1859 the number of

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estates under distinct proprietors increased to 51¹. But the former still continued to account for some 60 per cent of the acreage as well as of the output.

The process of expansion of tea acreage involved considerable expenditure by the planters. It was about one-fourth to one-fifth what the Government spent in Assam, and roughly averaged one-and-a-quarter lakh of rupees or so per year during the years 1841-53. Thereafter it slowly rose to nearly Rs. 4 lakhs in Assam proper by 1859. In 1857, planters' expenditure in the district of Lakhimpur alone was estimated by the Collector at Rs. 50,000 to 60,000 per annum, on the basis of a tea crop of 130,000 lbs.² In the early years the Company used to bring boat-loads of coins from Calcutta, as treasury and banking facilities had not yet developed. Thus the planters' activities lubricated the mechanism of transition from a predominantly natural to a cash economy during this period.³

There followed also a number of effects. The Assam Company's main problem was that of maintaining contacts with Calcutta over a distance of some 800 miles. During the first 18 months or so of its existence, the Company had to spend on water carriage by boats alone a sum of about Rs. 20,000. A steamer purchased at the cost of £ 13,000 and unsuccessfully tried on the Brahmaputra in 1842, had to be laid off for several years until its disposal in 1847. In its early years the Company therefore continued to depend on its own fleet of country-boats. From 1847 onwards, the Government agreed to operate a rather irregular steamer service between Calcutta and Gauhati—a distance of some 600 miles. It was extended up to Dibrugarh after 1856. The Government's expenditures on the service were, however,—fully covered by the earnings mainly because of the increasing traffic of the tea industry.

As early as 1845, the Assam Company claimed, with some exaggeration no doubt, that it had opened or repaired some 800 miles

¹Memorandum of Campbell in *Papers relating to the tea industry in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1873) Appendix D, p. 121.

²The magnitude of annual spending has been estimated on the basis of the assumption that one third of the final value of the crops was spent in Assam. See Table I. As to the spending in Lakhimpur, the information is based on the The Board of Revenue to Bengal Government, 20 March 1857, *Bengal Revenue Consultations*, 22 April 1858, No. 8.

³Throughout Section I, our data are from H. A. Antrobus, *A History of the Assam Company 1839-1953* (Edinburgh, 1957), unless indicated otherwise. As the book is thoroughly indexed, we have generally avoided any page reference.

of public roads, had erected 266 bridges and established several ferries across the rivers.⁴ By 1859, the Government came forward to take up road construction work here and there, although the Public Works Department was yet to be born. The industry made use of wheeled carts drawn by bullocks and sometimes by elephants to carry loads over short distances. Such carts were innovations in Assam. Gradually the remote gardens became connected with local markets through a number of newly established weekly marts and visiting pedlars. A class of Marwari traders, some of whom had come to Assam already before the discovery of tea, gradually became an agency of cashing planters' *hundis* on Calcutta and of certain types of supplies to the gardens. Thus the growth of tea acreage, transport and commerce was an interrelated process. Several European investors tried, on a small scale though, to develop other resources as well. One may mention in the early forties Mr. Becher's shellac factory, Dr. Scott's 600-acre farm with patches of sugarcane, coffee and tea cultivation, both at Gauhati, and a sugar factory. In the early fifties, export of rubber was gaining ground. A European-owned rubber-press was set up at Tezpur to process the juice collected from wild rubber trees (*ficus elastica*). We first hear of coal-mining when a thousand mds. were once raised in 1828. Again in 1941, we hear of a boat-load of locally-raised coal being sent to the first visiting steamer on the Brahmaputra. Steady demand for coal from the Government steamers and the Assam Company's tea factory led to a more regular exploitation of the coal mines from 1847 onwards. The Assam Coal and Timber Company, an unsuccessful attempt in this field, sold away its properties, to the Assam Company in 1850⁵. Coal exports from Sibsagar in 1852 amounted to 2500 mds. (Table-3)

Impressive though it was in appearance, this growth did not lead to an equivalent generation of incomes and diffusion of gains amongst the indigenous population. In 1839, the local cost of production of tea was experimentally calculated at a little over 5

⁴The Secretary to the Assam Company to the Court of Directors 14 January 1845, referred to in B. N. Choudhury, *An Economic History of Assam 1845-58* (Gauhati, 1959) p. 30.

⁵Information on the enterprises are collected from the following sources. Robinson, n. 1, p. 239; Antrobus, n. 3, pp. 73, 309 and 357; *Arunodai* (Assamese periodical) IX, No. 1, January, 1854; D. A. Macleod, *Sketch of the Medical Topography of Bishnath* (Calcutta, 1837) p. 21.

annas per lb. Due to top-heavy administration, later the unit cost mounted up and was around 10 annas per lb. in 1844. By 1853 it again came down close to 5 annas and remained thereabout in subsequent years. It appears from columns (6) and (7) of Table 1 that the Company's expenditures in Assam towards the production costs constituted only one-third of its gross earnings in those years for which estimates are available. The proportion might have been less, because the published London prices were customarily expressed, in most cases, as nett of Calcutta-London freight and sales and insurance charges. On the other hand, the Assam expenditure was inclusive of transportation cost from Assam to Calcutta. Even this one-third or so of the industry's gross earnings which were spent on Assam account, did not wholly accrue to the indigenous people. There were substantial leakages through (i) the fat salary-bill, (ii) recruitment and transportation costs incurred outside Assam and (iii) purchases of materials from Calcutta, gains of which accrued mostly to non-residents. This statement requires a little elaboration.

Let us, for example, take the year 1844. The Company's production cost (f.o.b. Calcutta) in Assam amounted to Rs. 127,000. The list of some 25 European officers along with their scales of pay in the *History of the Assam Company* (pp. 75, 422 and 425) suggests that the salary-bill was not less than Rs. 30,000, or about a quarter of this production cost. Presumably, most of this huge amount was saved or spent outside, as spending avenues in Assam jungles were extremely limited. The Chinese staff—70-member strong at one stage—also must have drawn Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 25,000 or so annually until their services were dispensed with in 1843. It may be noted that the Chinese were paid at 4 to 5 times the wage rate paid to the corresponding categories of Assamese labour.⁶ Another considerable leakage took place through wasteful and unsuccessful recruitment drives. For example, one Mr. Stewart's recruiting expedition outside Assam cost the Company Rs. 10,727 in 1840-41 with no coolies added to the Company's labour-force. In 1840, the recruitment of a big batch of Chinese workmen abroad and their transportation up to Calcutta cost the Company Rs. 22,000, but most of these workmen were not ultimately available. Examples cited here

⁶Calculated from information in Antrobus, n. 3, pp. 51, 322, 383 and 475.

throw some light on the pattern of the Company's spending on Assam account. We may, therefore, assume that quite a substantial part of this spending did not enter into the local income-flow.

What then was the share of the local people in the stream of incomes created by the tea industry? Obviously, (i) the wages earned by indigenous labour and (ii) whatever part of wages and salaries of the non-indigenous staff were spent on locally-produced goods. But in the early years, the Company had to import the entire supplies of rice to its labour from Bengal districts. Later, rice purchases were made also in Darrang and Nowgong districts, but occasional imports from outside did not stop. Similarly, other goods such as mustard oil, sugar, cutlery etc. also were imported from outside into the tea districts (Table-4).

Any spending other than on payment of wages by the planters benefited, more often than not, the outsiders. The transportation charges paid by the Company to the Bengal-based Government Marine Department caused a spill-over process outside Assam. The growing demand for lead lines, brushes and paints, bill-hooks, iron pans, hoes and such other things as required by the plantations was met with imports from Calcutta and London. The moribund indigenous iron industry—some forty iron-smelting units and a few smithies still staggering on⁷—was not given a trial for the supply of the new iron goods in demand. Packing boxes were generally brought from Calcutta and Chittagong, and even from the U.K. till 1847. For example, 1500 such boxes were imported in 1843 from U.K. Later, locally-made packing boxes came into use. But the practice was again interrupted by the emergence of imported plywood boxes in a subsequent period.

About the limitations of the spill-over process, nothing can be more revealing than the following comment of the official historian of the Assam Company, though made with reference to a more recent period :

It was the Company's normal policy to purchase the bulk of the gardens' requirement of stores in the United Kingdom and ship them to India. This heading of stores

⁷For a short account of the moribund iron industry, see Benudhar Sharma, *Maniram Dewan* (in Assamese, Gauhati, 1950) Appendix, pp. 6-10.

covered not only cultivation tools, factory maintenance materials such as belting, paint, oil, grease etc., but tea chests, steel works for buildings, machinery spares and replacements, and tea making machinery itself. (p. 240).

It is difficult to estimate how much was earned by the local people in the form of wages. This is because we have no reliable employment figures for the period. Nor do we know what proportion of the labour force was constituted of indigenous labour. It is, however, definite that the tea gardens suffered from chronic shortage of labour because of difficult and expensive recruitment from inside or outside the province and the reluctance of local people to work on wages. The ideal proportion of 1.5 workmen per planted acre was never reached before the sixties; in fact, the number was far short of this figure in the early years. So the labour force may be crudely estimated at one labourer per planted acre in any year. In 1859, then, the number of labourers was some 8000 or so. It appears that only a small part of this labour force was recruited outside the province. The most important source of recruitment was the *Kachari* (a tribe) population of Darang district. Besides, peasants from adjacent gardens were also employed in their off-seasons through contractors. The wage rate varied between Rs. 3 and Rs. 3.50 per month in the 'forties, and, later rose to Rs. 4 by 1857. But, even these apparently high wage rates did not appear to be sufficiently attractive. In 1859, there was a strike amongst the *Kachari* labour of the Assam Company for a wage-increase. Earlier in 1848, the same labour had to go on a strike to realise arrear wages.

In their letter to the Court of Directors, dated 14 January 1845, already referred to above, the Assam Company claimed to have 6550 workers on its rolls. This appears to be a gross exaggeration. In 1844, as we have seen, the Company's spending in Assam was Rs. 1,27,000 only, of which a sum of Rs. 30,000 or so was spent towards the salary-bill of the European officers. Even assuming that the remaining amount was entirely available for paying wages (which was not the case) at the rate of Rs. 3.5 per month and that wages were fully earned, we get a labour force of 2310 only for the year 1844. The Company's figures, therefore, only suggest a rapid change of personnel on the rolls, who together received full time

wages of not more than 2310 workmen. By 1859, this number rose to 8000 or so. But, in practice, the work of 8000 must have been done by many more persons who accepted short-term employment from time to time. Because of the low man-land ratio, the per-acre physical productivity, despite an increase since 1853, remained low, as per later standards.

The wastelands settlements policy tempted the planters to take possession of more lands than what they could manage. This inhibited intensive cultivation on the one hand and gave rise to unhealthy speculation on the other. Of about 55,000 acres taken up by 1859, only some 14 per cent was planted, and that too with a thin spread of the scant labour-force thereupon. "I think I shall not exaggerate when I say", commented Jenkins, "that we have now fully one-third more land than can be properly farmed."⁸

12. Impact on Agriculture

It is difficult to assess the impact of the tea industry as such as distinct from that of improved administration on the agriculture of the period. In terms of acreage, tea was still marginal till the 'fifties — not even half per cent of the total cultivated acreage, as shown in Table 5. It was still limited to Sibsagar and Lakhimpur although plantations had lately started in the other districts as well (Table 2). Already by 1852, tea accounted for more than half of the total export earnings (Table 3) of Sibsagar, although hardly 1.6 per cent of the district's cultivated acreage was under tea.

The cultivation and processing of tea during the period was purely manual, with little use of mechanical appliances. Yet it was basically different from traditional agriculture because of its capitalistic organisation and scientific outlook. The crop was new; the skills involved were new; even the scale of production was unprecedented in the region. But the tea gardens were like so many isolated islands of alien ways of life in the midst of a traditional society.

Tea had direct impact on the peasant economy in two ways :
(i) as a source of seasonal and casual employment for the needy

⁸Jenkins to the Off. Secy., Government of Bengal, 11 November 1859, in *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, XXXVII (Calcutta, 1861) p. 25.

As late as 1947, only some 30 per cent of all plantation lands were under tea.

peasants and (ii) as a source of market demand for rice and other locally-produced wage-goods. Both the impacts were extremely limited. An initially small labour-force rising slowly to an estimated 8000 by 1859 could at best generate an annual consumer demand for not more than one to two lakhs of mds. of rice. This could be easily met from even the existing rice acreage provided diffused procurement was possible without involving heavy transportation costs. This not being the case, the procurement of rice by the planters created certain problems.

Almost the entire labour-force was engaged in the two districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. But the bulk of the demand of labour for rice had always to be met from outside these districts. Total acreage under rice does not appear to have had appreciatively increased, either in these districts or elsewhere in Assam in response to this demand. It was so because of the general shortage of manpower. The population, under conditions of political security, increased from 7 to 8 lacs in the 'thirties to slightly more than 1 million in 1853. The over-all growth of cultivated acreage probably failed to keep pace with this increasing population, as it appears from Table 5. Between 1849-50 and 1852-53, total cultivated acreage appears to have increased by 1777 acres only, i.e., by less than 0.2 per cent. Part of this increase again is to be accounted for by tea.

Epidemics took an unusually heavy toll of lives both amongst human and cattle populations in the years 1853 and 1854.⁹ So any increase in the rice acreage of Assam for several years immediately after 1853 was most unlikely. Figures of revenue demand on Assam, available annually till 1856-7, show a steady fall. This fact is rather suggestive of a fall in cultivated acreage.¹⁰

Year	1852-3 Rs.	1853-4 Rs.	1854-5 Rs.	1855-6 Rs.	1856-7 Rs.
Revenue Demand	1154, 552	1115, 508	1049, 251	1035, 712	1015,746

Cultivation was on the decline in the districts of Darrang and Nowgong, while it was almost stationary in the other districts.

⁹Chaudhury, n. 27, pp. 11 and 14-15.

¹⁰*Ibid*, p. 34.

The impact of employment opportunities was felt not so much in the two tea districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur as in Darrang. The latter was not producing any tea till 1859. It is from there that a large number of *Kachari* peasants were recruited every year for work in gardens situated at a distance of some 14 days' journey from their homes. They entered service with the intention of earning sufficient cash to pay off their land revenue dues, and perhaps also the bride price, in some cases. With the money so earned, they settled down very often as independent farmers in the tea districts, instead of returning to their villages. Thus, the tea industry induced a slight redistribution of population between districts.

As mentioned earlier, the Assam Company used to purchase quantities of rice in Darrang. This should have been an incentive for expansion of cultivated acreage in this district. Yet Table 5 shows a decrease of about 10,000 acres, i.e. more than 4 per cent, in the cultivated acreage between the years 1849-50 and 1852-53. The annual drainage of manpower to the tea districts must have been one of the contributory causes of this fall in cultivated acreage. The only other district recording a fall in cultivated acreage during the same period was Nowgong. There, too, the decrease was to the extent of about 4 per cent, but probably due to some other reasons. In 1858, Nowgong experienced a serious famine, when the price of rice shot up as high as Rs. 10 per md., as an extreme case. The normal price of paddy in Sibsagar was 8 annas per md. in 1859,¹¹ as against the prevailing price of 4 to 6 annas in the 'thirties. It is but natural that, with stagnation in agriculture, the price of wage-goods like rice would move upwards during the years 1840-59. However, there was no steady trend in the absence of an organised market. Even as early as 1840, rice was landed in Sibsagar plantations at a cost of nearly Rs. 2 per md., while it would not sell there, at that time, even at 8 annas per md. according to Bruce.¹² In 1852 rice exported from Lakhimpur, recorded an average price of Rs. 0.79 per md., while fine rice, imported into adjoining Sibsagar, recorded an average price of Rs. 1.75 per md. [see Tables 3 and 4]. Thus, it is impossible to establish, with our

¹¹H. K. Barpujari, *Assam in the Days of the Company 1826-1858* (Gauhati, 1963) footnotes on pp. 215 and 257.

¹²Antrobus, n. 3, p. 387. C. A. Bruce was the first Superintendent of Assam Company's Northern Division.

scant heterogeneous data, any definite trend in the price of rice over the period.

The increasing importance of poppy as a cash crop during the period is particularly notable. Advances were regularly distributed by the traders amongst the cultivators for ensuring deliveries. The average after-harvest price of indigenous opium in the 'forties was Rs. 5 per *seer*; when cornered in scarcity, the retail price might go up to even Rs. 80 in the lean months. Opium accounted for more than a fifth of the total value of exports from Lakhimpur district in 1852 (Table 3). Its value was calculated at an average price of Rs. 5.46 per *seer*. In the same year, Nowgong—the leading poppy-producing district—had more than 3000 acres, i.e. about 2 per cent of its total cultivated acreage under poppy.¹³ With the introduction of sales of cheaper *abkari* opium by the Government since 1851-52, the rising price trend was probably checked, but not the cultivation of poppy. In fact, the growing monetisation of the economy induced the farmers to grow more poppy for cash even at the cost of other crops, instead of inducing them to accept employment in the tea industry. This might have been one of the causes of the shrinkage of over-all cultivated acreage in Darrang and Nowgong, for poppy is more labour-intensive and profitable as compared to ordinary crops. Increasing consumption of poppy resulted in the ruin of the Assamese society by the end of the 'fifties, as was evident from a number of representations to the Government at that time.

It is reasonable to assume that, with various internal customs tolls abolished and better communications established, exports from and imports into Assam proper, in terms of both quantity and value, went on increasing. The partial data compiled in our Table 6 also suggest this.

Assuming that the export statistics available for the 'thirties were at least near-exhaustive—all major items were neatly recorded by Pemberton—undoubtedly the total value of exports increased considerably by 1852 (see Table 6). Both quantity and value of *mooga* and cotton exports increased. Most probably this was so also in the case of mustard exports from Assam proper though we do not have sufficient data to say so (the estimated exports of mustard

¹³John Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* (London, 1854) pp. 244 and 258-9; Barpujari, n. 19, pp. 245-6,

from Goalpara district—outside Assam proper—was 4 lac mds. in 1852). The comparative cheapness of salt—which still continued to be the major single item of import—indicates that the terms of trade, in general had moved in favour of Assam after the 'thirties. The price of mustard was calculated at Rs. 2.06 in Goalpara for 1852, as against a price ranging from Rs. 0.75 to Rs. 1.37 during the years 1832-35. Also some forest products, wax for example, recorded a price rise. But the prices of *mooga* thread, lac and cotton actually came down. The cotton price in the Lakhimpur, for example, came down from Rs. 4 around 1840 to Rs. 3 in 1852. Yet cotton featured largely in the exports of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts in that year. It also appears that local handlooms had not yet switched over to imported yarn, nor were clothing habits yet millcloth-oriented. However, millmade cloth—but not yarn—had already appeared in the market. The Government spent a meagre sum of about Rs. 10,000 in 1850 on an experimental cotton farm for the purpose of diffusing improved cotton culture. But, as there were no quick results, it was soon abandoned.¹⁴ From 1853 onwards, raw cotton exports from Bengal ports to the U. K. recorded a sharp decline. So it is but natural that cotton exports from Assam should have also faced a depression during the years 1853-59.¹⁵

The Wastelands Rules of 6 March 1838 did not go far in attracting European capitalists. They were therefore revised on 23 September 1854, providing for 99 years' lease on more liberal terms. But at the same time the minimum area for which one could apply was raised to 500 acres. Later, however, the limit was reduced to 200 acres and made relaxable to even 100 acres in special cases if native applicants could satisfy the collectors of their ability to bring ryots from outside Assam. The new Rules stimulated a land rush not only in Assam proper, but also in the adjoining districts of Cachar and Sylhet. But pressure for further liberalisation of the Rules in creating free-hold and perpetual grants continued.

Jenkins had been harping on his pet theory of colonisation of Assam by European capitalists for the cultivation of sugarcane,

¹⁴Barpujari, n. 11, pp. 232-3.

¹⁵Raw cotton exports from Bengal ports to the U. K. steadily went down from a total value of £ 83,328 in 1852-53 to £ 2,444 by 1859-60. *Statistical Tables for British India*, 5th Issue.

Raw cotton exports from India were again on the rise from 1862, following the outbreak of the American Civil War.

indigo, tea and other great staples ever since 1833. But the overall response received from European capitalists was altogether poor. Expensive communications with the port of Calcutta and the acute scarcity of labour were *inter alia* the main inhibiting factors. Consequently, the proposition that "every acre brought under tea would force four more of waste into cultivation to meet the growers and tea makers" remained yet unfulfilled even 20 years after the coming of tea.¹⁶ On the contrary, by 1859, for every acre planted with tea the planter kept in fallow 6 acres of wastelands in his possession for other purposes, including speculation (See Table-2).

Let us now come to the question of "drain". So far as the drain of revenue surplus to the Presidency is concerned, it was a transitional phase and was stopped by the end of the 'thirties. With the gearing up of the normal administration, the provincial finance rather tended to have an excess of expenditures over revenues during the 'forties and the 'fifties. Besides, as has already been pointed out, the planters pumped into circulation an ever-increasing amount of cash. The position regarding circulating media was therefore better than in the thirties.

Since the abolition of the Customs post in 1835, complete statistics of Assam's trade were no more available. It is, therefore, impossible to discuss the balance of trade position between Assam and the rest of India. Both exports and imports went on increasing, but the latter appear to have an edge over the former. Increasing export earnings from tea, perhaps, progressively narrowed down this trade gap during the 'fifties, but failed to wipe it out completely even by 1859. We conclude so from whatever information are available for the two tea districts in 1852. As per Tables 3 and 4, Lakhimpur which had not yet come to tea-producing state appears to have had a trade deficit, while Sibsagar showed a big surplus of exports over imports. But a checking with information compiled in Table 1 reveals that the tea exports of Sibsagar in Table 3 are overvalued and, therefore, the data require correction. Calculated even at the London price (1 s. 11½ d. or 98 paise per lb.) the total value would have been near about Rs. 263,000. Therefore, the on-the-spot value of tea (landed in Calcutta) could have been at best

¹⁶Quote from Major Vetch, Officiating Commissioner of Revenue, Assam to Mills, 22 June 1853 in A. J. M. Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam* (Calcutta 1854) Appendix C, p. XV.

half of this, if not one-third. In that case, it should have been estimated at Rs. 134,000 at the most. It is to this maximal extent that the indigenous people of Assam could derive any direct or indirect benefits from tea sales in that year. If we accept this revised figure of the value of the exports and take out the item of bullion and old coins worth Rs. 10,000 from the export side, then the trade surplus is reduced to a slender one. On the other hand, the data for Lakhimpur do not include one import item—*abkari* opium (Rs. 15, 420 in 1851-2)—perhaps by oversight. If this item is included and gold dust worth Rs. 8,000 excluded from export side, the trade deficit of Lakhimpur further widens. We may assume that, in the absence of tea exports, the remaining districts also had a trade deficit, though not to the same extent as Lakhimpur. By 1859, the overall position of Assam proper was then probably one of deficit, rather than of surplus.

Table 4 also shows the limited impact of tea on the consumption-pattern of the peasant economy. Total earnings from exported farm and forest produce did not suffice for even import of the two items of almost universal consumption—salt and *abkari* opium. Therefore, it is the cash generated on public and plantation accounts which went to meet the remaining part of the import-bill. This part of the bill was largely oriented to the consumption of a new class of traders, officers, clerks and, to a small extent, labour of non-indigenous origin. Sugar, wheat, *ghee*, printed calico, fine rice, wax candles, cutlery, soap etc. were consumed more by this class of people than by others. They constituted the new alien sector, island-like within the traditional economy. The rising demand therefrom for all sorts of consumption goods had therefore very little impact on traditional production-pattern. For example, the demand for mustard oil in the tea districts was met from imports, while mustard-seed continued to be exported. Unlike Goalpara, the tea districts failed to have jute cultivation on the riverine tracts; jute and jute goods were imported there from outside. Because of this situation, the traditional sector continued to suffer from stringency of cash. Peasants sometimes travelled two to three days' march to convert their good into cash through a series of exchanges in order to pay off their land revenue dues.¹⁷ Usury

¹⁷Observation by a missionary in *Arunodoi*, IX, No. 1, January 1854, n. 5.

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and usurious trade increased the miseries of the peasantry.

What was the way out of this stagnation? Rapid agricultural growth under a system of incentives to European capitalists was the colonialists' answer. But how in the face of acute labour shortage? By 1859, the planters came out with a three-point prescription of their own: (i) introduce a regular steamer service—Government-owned or subsidised—to facilitate the recruitment of labour from outside; (ii) suppress poppy cultivation as well as the sale of opium; and (iii) enhance the assessment of land revenue to compel villagers to work in the tea industry for wages.¹⁸ All these suggestions except that of stopping the sale of Government opium were accepted by the administration in due course. "Why should they [i.e. the peasants] thus be compelled to suffer", questioned Jenkins, "merely to provide labour for speculators in a very profitable commercial undertaking...?" And yet it is he who in 1859 recommended the enhancement of revenue rates on the non-*rupit* lands (other than wet lands) in four districts. These rates were increased by 15 to 30 per cent to bring them at par with the prevailing rates in Kamrup district. The planters continued to pay no rent at all for the major part of their holdings and only a normal rent (3 annas to 9 annas as against 12 annas to Re. 1-8 annas per acre paid by the peasants) for the remaining part. Poppy cultivation was prohibited from 1 May 1860. But the sale of *abkari* opium which had almost doubled between the years 1851-2 and 1858-9 was allowed to continue on revenue grounds even thereafter.¹⁹

3. Inflow of British Capital: Nature and Magnitude

The paid-up capital of the Assam Company stood at 2 million (£ 2 lakhs) in 1845—the year of its formal incorporation in India by an Act of Parliament. The entire amount had been spent by that year, and the Company became indebted to individuals and banks to the extent of some £ 14,000.²⁰ But in subsequent years, not only was the

¹⁸Antrobus, n. 3, p. 99.

¹⁹Barpujari, n. 11, pp. 205 and 207; *Arunodoi*, XV, No. 6, June 1860. Quotation from *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, XXXVII, n. 8, p. 4.

²⁰Antrobus, n. 3, pp. 80, 87, 405 and 478.

Of the amount, only half was raised in the U.K. and repaid within years. The rest was raised in India.

Company able to pay off its loans and finance further extension of acreage from its own earnings but it was also able to return in the form of dividends an amount equal to 80 per cent of its paid-up capital over the period of two decades till 1859. Besides, it facilitated the formation of capital by its European employees on service, out of their regular and irregular incomes in India.

During the 'fifties the Company's fixed assets increased rapidly. In 1858 and 1859—both normal years—the value of each paid-up share of £ 20 approximated around £ 30 (Rs. 300). We may, therefore, estimate the value of the Company's capital in 1859 at Rs. 3 million. This gives us an investment of nearly Rs. 647 per planted acre. This, of course, includes all assets of the Company, related to and necessary for all its tea operations. The other Companies and private proprietors, together accounting for only some 40 per cent of the total planted acreage and output would naturally require a lesser amount of investment per acre because of their advantages in starting late. So Rs. 600 may be taken as the average value of investments per acre for 1859. Multiplying this figure by the acreage (8000 acres) we get Rs. 4.8 million as the total value of capital invested in Assam plantations till that year. Another Rs. 0.2 million may be arbitrarily taken as the value of private British capital engaged in other fields. Rs. 5 million, then, was the total amount of British capital in Assam.²¹ The magnitude may be better expressed as approximately Rs. 4 per head of population at that time.

However, it should be borne in mind that not even half of this Rs. 5 million was received from out of the savings made in the U.K. Of the Assam Company's paid-up capital of Rs. 2 million, an amount of Rs. 1.6 million only was subscribed in the U.K.; the rest was subscribed in Calcutta by local British and Indian share-holders. Even of the small loans raised, only half was raised in London and the rest in Calcutta.²² The actual inflow of British capital into the Assam Company remained limited to what had already come before

²¹Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the state and prospects of tea cultivation in Assam, Cachar and Sylhet 1868 (Calcutta, 1868) on pp. 4-6, calculated the cost of making a tea garden, i.e. the cost of bringing a plot of land to the crop-yielding stage to be of the order of Rs. 500 per acre. To this should be added the overhead costs of other assets.

In 1871 it was claimed that the investment was nearly £ 70 for each planted acre. D. H. Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India* (N. York, 1934) p. 57.

²²See, n. 20.

1845. The proprietary gardens and other British assets, not belonging to the Assam Company, did not represent any net import of capital from the U.K. For example, take the case of Jorhat Tea Company founded in 1859. Its initial paid-up capital of Rs. 0.6 million represented not so much any actual inflow of capital as the capitalisation of the existing private gardens built up by its major shareholders out of their fortunes made in Assam.²³ We, therefore, conclude that not more than half of the estimated British capital assets in 1859 was of the nature of capital inflow. The other half represents formation of capital through a process of ploughing-back and mobilisation of locally available savings.

"Three Deputy Commissioners, four assistant commissioners and several police officers threw up their appointments to engage in tea planting." Civil surgeons and military officers also did not lag behind.²⁴ We may assume that most of their investments came from their own and their friends' savings in India. We have got better information as to wherefrom the other group of founders of new tea companies like the Jorhat Tea Company got their capital. In this respect, we may quote at length from *A History of the Assam Company*.

... from the highest Administrative Officer in Calcutta and Assam to the newest joined Assistant, were, speaking generally, all in this racket of using the circumstances of their employment to open out land under tea in competition with their own employers.

They were blatant enough to have taken up their lands near the boundary or actually adjoining the Company's grants, and it would not be difficult to guess from whence they obtained their tea-seed and labour.

To put it plainly, their employment by the Assam Company as Assistants gave them the necessary subsistence

²³"Directors and Officers of the Company had been planting tea estates on their own account for years. Henry Burkinyoung's Numaligarh was started in 1852-53. George Williamson, Junior, owned Koliabor which he first planted in 1856: he, with George Williamson, Senior, and the latter's brother Captain J. H. Williamson, shared in the ownership of Cinnamara, which was opened out in 1854, and in Oating, in 1857—all of which gardens were formed subsequently into the Jorhat Company". Antrobus, n. 3, p. 110.

²⁴Quote from Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, 2nd Ed., Calcutta/Simla, 1926, p. 356. Also see Antrobus, n. 3, pp. 314-15 and 395.

on which to live in the province while they pursued the objects of their own enterprise.

(pp. 113-14)

It is, therefore, pertinent to assume that much of the investments in plantations were of the nature of "primitive accumulation". Henry Burkinyoung who held around 1859 one-eighth stock of the Assam Company and one-fifth that of Jorhat Tea Company appears to have built up his fortunes in Calcutta as a resident director during the years 1841-63.

Until the 'sixties the tea industry was hardly a carrier of the fruits of the industrial revolution. Planters required capital for a wide-spread organisation, for hiring labour to clear and improve the jungle lands and for an inventory of simple tools and materials. In the early years the bare cost of clearing an acre of jungles was Rs. 67 only.²⁵ Added to it was three years' labour cost for planting and bringing it to the stage of tea-yielding. This was a substantial part of the investment. Construction of houses for all purposes involved, in practice, only the labour-cost since bamboo and timber were available at nominal cost.

The first pieces of machinery in Assam were a saw-mill costing £ 1009 and a steamer costing £13,000 imported into Assam in 1841 and 1842, respectively. But both had to be laid off immediately after unsuccessful trials and were sold away by 1847. The same old saw-mill was, however, re-purchased in 1850 from the Assam Coal and Timber Company, on its liquidation, and was in use during the 'fifties. The first fire proof building—cast-iron columns and corrugated iron-roof for factory premises—was imported in 1856. However, the most impressive mechanical appliances until the 'sixties did not belong to the tea industry. They were the three Government-owned steamers which plied up and down the Brahmaputra since 1847 and the first printing press brought in 1836, but put into operation in the 'forties, by the American Baptist Mission. In a period when the Assamese language was banished from the courts and schools of Assam to make way for Bengali, the Baptists regularly published an Assamese periodical from 1846 onwards. It became not only a forum of Christianity, but also that of dissemination of scientific

²⁵Antrobus, n. 3, p. 328.

knowledge and western outlook.

The years 1840-59 saw the gradual evolution of the new technology of tea culture. Scientific principles of agriculture were systematically experimented with and applied. Seedlings were carefully raised. Innovations in pruning and plucking were introduced in the 'fifties. Many of the manufacturing processes were already organised in such manner as to make their mechanisation easy in the subsequent period. But the progressive agriculture of the plantation sector had hardly any demonstration effect on the surrounding traditional economy.

One important conclusion may now be drawn. It is that the British private enterprise in Assam was not the outcome of a *laissez faire* policy. The heavy cost of early experimentation in Assam tea was entirely borne by the Government. The expertise thus acquired and the experimental gardens were both handed over as free gifts to the Assam Company. Secondly, the revenue concessions granted to the planters must have amounted to several lakhs of rupees over the whole period till 1859 alone.²⁶ Free wastelands grants on long lease provided them with much more than mere sites. They contained all necessary housing materials including in many cases even valuable timber. Being transferable under the 1854 Rules, such lands—even those undergoing no improvements—could be sold at profit in a later period. And, above all, a part of the land could occasionally be used as a bait to allure land-hungry peasants as labour to the plantations at otherwise unattractive wages. Lastly, there were other forms of concession such as free supply of seeds and carriage of labour recruits at concessional rates by Government steamers. Thus the Government's role in building up the plantation industry was substantial.

The role played by a handful of Indian gentlemen in pioneering the tea industry is also worth noting. Recent research has established beyond doubt that it is the partnership firm of Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1846)—Carr, Tagore and Co. (1834-48)—which took the first steps in promoting the Assam Company. But "because

²⁶According to the Government of Assam, the sum total of land revenue concessions granted to the planters till 1951 amounted to more than Rs. 10 crores. Sri. B. R. Medhi in his Assam Budget Speech of 1950-51 said: "For the development and encouragement of this Tea Industry, Assam had to sacrifice not less than 25 crores of rupees in the shape of revenue and other concessions in respect of fee-simple and other grants offered at nominal revenue."

they could not command the large amount of capital necessary to establish the tea industry in India", this enterprise came almost immediately under the control of London.²⁷ Although one-fifth of the share-capital of the Assam Company was subscribed in Calcutta as against four-fifths in London, Indian participation was very small indeed. Nine Indian share-holders between them held 275 shares, i.e. about 3 per cent of the share-capital in the early years.²⁸

Amongst the promoters of the Assam Company were five prominent business leaders of Calcutta—Dwarkanath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore (1801-68), Rustomjee Cowasjee (?-1852), Motilal Seal and Haji Ispahani. Of them, Seal and Prasanna Kumar Tagore served in 1839 and 1839-41, respectively, as directors on the Calcutta Board of the Company. Another notable Indian, little known elsewhere but still remembered in Assam as a martyr of the national rebellion of 1857, was closely associated with tea from its very inception. As the chief informant of the British officers, and probably of the Tea Committee on local matters and as the *Dewan* of the Assam Company in the early 'forties, Maniram Dutta played a crucial role. He was drawing as *Dewan* a higher salary—Rs. 200 per month—than the majority of the Company's European staff. The Chairman of the Assam Company credited him in the Company's Annual report of 1841-42, with the opening of new gardens and raising profits of the Company. In the course of his long career, Maniram Dutta had raised coal as a contractor, supplied rations to the army and, in the 'fifties, established two small proprietary tea gardens of his own. In 1853, he submitted a Memorandum to the Government criticising the *modus operandi* of British rule in Assam.

²⁷Blair B. Kling, "The Origin of the Managing Agency System in India", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, XXVI, No. 1 (Nov. 1966) p. 44. The original partners of this firm included William Carr, William Prinsep and the two Tagores. When Carr and Prinsep left for the U. K., other Europeans were taken in as partners, but Dwarkanath Tagore remained a constant partner and the chief financier. William Prinsep after serving as a director of the Calcutta Board of the Assam Company for two years (1839-41) became an important member of the London Board (1842-73), and remained so until his death.

²⁸Antrobus, n. 3, p. 413. Using the same source as Antrobus, Kling puts the number of Indian-owned shares at 475. Obviously one of the figures involves a printing error.

It is to be noted that, under circumstances of complete free trade and exchange between U. K. and India, shares registered in Calcutta could be easily transferred to London and vice versa. So, it is difficult to ascertain how much of the capital was Britain's home savings. It appears that both William Prinsep and Henry Burkinyoung who held substantial parts of stock registered in London had made their fortunes in India.

Suspected of participation in the Sepoy Mutiny, he was hanged in 1858, and his tea gardens were confiscated.²⁹ To complete our account of the Indians' role in the promotion of tea, we may note that the 12-member Committee founded by Lord Bentinck in 1834 included two eminent Indians of the age—Radhakanta Dev (1784-1867) and Ram Kamal Sen (1783-1844), Vice-President of the Agricultural-Horticultural Society of Calcutta.

4. Conclusion

While concluding, a question naturally comes up. Was there any other and better alternative within the colonial framework for breaking through the stagnation in Assam? It is difficult to answer. Of several alternative crops which could be grown on wastelands, tea and sugarcane were undoubtedly most productive. We estimate below the gross yields of alternative crops from an acre of land capable of several uses, around 1852:

Crop	Approximate physical product per acre	Approximate Price per unit	Approximate value product per acre
Rice (cleaned)	12 Mds.	Re. 1.00	Rs. 12.00
Cotton (with seeds)	6 „	Rs. 3.50	Rs. 21.00
Opium	7½ seers	Rs. 5.00	Rs. 37.50
Mooga Silk	12 „	Rs. 4.50	Rs. 54.00
Sugarcane	24 Mds. of gur	Rs. 8.00	Rs. 192.00
Tea	180 Lbs.	Re. 1.00 (London Price)	Rs. 180.00

(Compiled from various sources)³⁰

²⁹For information on Maniram, see Barpujari, n. 11, pp. 156-57 and Sharma, n. 7.

William Prinsep, on his visit to Assam in 1841, wrote: "I find the Native Department of the offices in the most beneficial state under the excellent direction of Muneeram, whose intelligence and activity is of the greatest value to our Establishment. There is not a question regarding expenditure or return which he is not ready to answer from Book in most satisfactory manner."—Antrobus, n. 3, pp. 343-44.

³⁰The average yield of rice per acre of the four years from 1952-53 to 1955-56 was 878 lbs. (nearly 10 Mds.) for Assam as a whole. It appears from contemporaneous sources that average yield of rice was far higher than today in the first half of the 19th century. See n. 31. I have rather made a conservative estimate of the yield at 12 Mds. of rice (i.e. 18 mds. of paddy) per acre.

Sources for yields of other crops—Cotton figure from Appendix to *Agricultural Statistics of British India*, 1891-92; for opium, Butler, n. 13, p. 244; for mooga silk, T. Hugon in *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, VI, Jan. 1837, p. 31; for sugarcane, Asian average of four years from 1952-3 to 1955-6 was 2270 Lbs.

Under circumstances of land-abundance and labour-scarcity, the per acre productivity should not, however, be treated as the guiding line. Valuation of tea crop at London price is also least meaningful. We have seen that generally only some one-third of the final value of tea crop accrued to the local economy. Therefore, its on-the-spot value inclusive of freight up to Calcutta may be taken at Rs. 60 per acre. Moreover, in assessing the respective advantages of several alternative crops, a better method will be—in the case of labour-short and land-abundant Assam—to take into consideration not the land use, but the man-power use.

A family unit of man, wife and their two working children could have managed only 3 acres of tea in 1852, on the basis of the then-prevailing man-land ratio. Thus, they would have produced a crop worth Rs. 180 (Rs. 60×3) on the spot, out of which they would have earned Rs. 126 (Rs. 42×3) as their wages. On the other hand, the same family unit could have alternatively managed some 5 acres (1 plough) of ordinary agriculture. Thus, they could normally earn nearly Rs. 72 by producing 79 mds. of paddy and a second crop of 16 mds. of mustard.³¹ Their gross earnings could go up to as high as Rs. 100, if half an acre of the holding were put under *mooga* silk, or even to Rs. 160, if put under sugarcane. Undoubtedly, tea was the most productive crop. It was so particularly when its long-run potentialities were taken into consideration. No other crop could have created an equal or comparable demand for betterment of communications and transport in Assam. Moreover, the physical productivity of tea per acre was continuously rising over the years.

But if the accent on tea was justified, the Government's policy in boosting it up at the cost of ordinary agriculture was overdone. Tax burden on ordinary agricultural lands was intensified, while planters were allowed to cultivate and hold as much tax-free land as they wanted to. This policy led to stagnation in rice acreage. As a result, prices of rice and other wage-goods went on increasing.

³¹Physical productivity of 1 plough of land, as given by Buchanan-Hamilton, n. 1, p. 36. To find out the value-product we have used the prices of 1852—As. 8 and Rs. 2 per md. of paddy and mustard, respectively.

In 1835, a 16-acre single-crop (wet rice) farm, with 3 pairs of bullocks and 5 hired ploughmen for 8 months was expected to produce 400 mds. of wet paddy, i.e. 25 mds. per acre. It should be noted that productivity of dry paddy (*ahlu*) was far less—Capt. Mathie to Jenkins, 15 February 1835.

The existing wage rates therefore became less and less attractive, and local labour could not be increasingly drawn towards the plantations. This situation could be, to some extent, avoided if food production were encouraged along with tea. Such a policy could have been adopted, at least from the 'fifties, by equalising the tax burden between tea and rice lands. After the tea industry had begun to make profits, there was no longer any justification in making the peasants pay at 4 to 5 times the average rate at which a planter was taxed for his holding. Special revenue concessions and other governmental help should have been extended to *mooga* silk and sugarcane producers. Such measures would have checked, on the one hand, the planters' unhealthy rush for land noted by Jenkins in 1858, and would have provided for a more balanced growth, on the other. Proportionate increases in rice and sugarcane acreage and/or output with that of tea would have served the long-run interests of the tea industry better through an increased flow of basic wage-goods.

The policy of raising ordinary land revenue rates to force the peasants out of their farms to seek jobs in plantations proved a failure. On the contrary, it led to the stagnation of agricultural growth and made the plantations dependent on expensive food imports. Potential growth of both rice and tea acreage, however, was limited by the rate of growth of population. The population increased from an estimated 0.8 million in 1840 to slightly above 1 million in 1853 and about 1.5 million in 1872. So, during our period the population was increasing at a simple rate of less than 2.5 per cent per annum. The density of population remained far below 100 per sq. mile. A more rapid growth of population could have been achieved (i) by assisting the emigration of landless peasants from neighbouring provinces to the wastelands of Assam under direct government supervision and (ii) by taking adequate public health measures to enhance the natural growth of population. The tea industry as well as the traditional economy would have benefited much more from such a policy than they did from discriminatory concessions in land revenue on a lavish scale. Under such a policy, the legalised reduction of indentured plantation labour to the status of semi-slavery would have become unnecessary in the face of a growing market of free labour. Thus agrarian prosperity would have been compatible with growth of tea.

In short such a long-run policy of balanced growth would have kept within restraints the isolative economic dualism which took roots by 1859 and has plagued Assam to the present. Whether such an economic policy could be expected of the colonial regime is another matter.

TABLE I
THE ASSAM COMPANY'S STATISTICS, 1840-51 ^(a)
TOTAL PAID-UP CAPITAL £ 200,000. (£ 1 = Rs. 10)

Year	Total acreage under Tea (both bearing and non-bearing) Acres	Manufactured Tea Lbs.	Crop per acre in bearing Lbs.	Average** price per Lb. Sh. d.	Estimated** Total value of crop £
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1840	1356	10212	39	3-0	1532
1841	2311	29267	23	2-0	2927
1842					
1843	2768	87705*		3-1	13521
1844		181614			
1845		194800		2-0 (app) ^(b)	19480
1846		136267			
1847		160334		1-7-3/16	12820
1848		210655		1-8- $\frac{1}{2}$	18213
1849		214817		1-10	19692
1850		251633		1-6- $\frac{1}{2}$	19047
1851		253354		1-8 $\frac{1}{2}$	21641
1852		271427		1-11 $\frac{1}{2}$	26577
1853	2425 a/	366867	180	1-11	35158
1854	3313	478258		1-11- $\frac{3}{4}$	46580
1855	3493	583094		1-10 $\frac{1}{2}$	54665
1856	3838	644199	268	1-11- $\frac{3}{4}$	63507
1857	4261	707132		1-8- $\frac{1}{2}$	59296
1858	4466	766998		1-11 $\frac{1}{2}$	75102
1859	4638	810680		1-8	67557

*Incomplete figure.

**Figures in Column (4) must be treated with caution. It is difficult to regard these prices as the true market value of a year's crop for it was customary to quote them as nett excluding cost of lead linings, freight, insurance and sales charges. The production cost of tea landed in Calcutta appears to have been less than 6 annas per lb. for most of the years at least till 1861. Figures in Column (5) are our estimates, arrived at by multiplying the year's crop by the average price.

Source: (a) Antrobus, n. 3, Table in pp. 407-8 and additional information in pp. 56, 59, 88, 100 and 415.

(b) Average price of 1845 from *Arunodoi*, I, No. 2 (February 1846).

TABLE 1 (contd.)

Year	Cost of production per Lb.	Total cost of production in Assam	Dividend	Profit	Market price per share (£20 Liability £30)
	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
1841		Rs. 129,840 (c)	3		
1844	As. 10† (approx.)	Rs. 127,000	2½		
1846					2s.6d at London
1849					
1850			2½		
1851			3		
1852			5		
1853	As. 5-8 pices (= 8d.)	Rs. 129,690	6	13261	Rs. 120 (i.e. £12) at Calcutta
1854			7	20640	
1855			8	11480	
1856			9	25077	Rs. 240 "
1857	As. 4 to As. 6 (approx.)		10	13008	£23 to £26 in London
1858			12	29790	£30 to £31 in London.
1859			12	18311	£29-3/4 to £31-1/4 in London

†In 1845, the cost of production of 90,000 lbs. of tea was calculated at 14 as, inclusive of freight and insurance. Harold H. Mann, "The early history of the tea industry in North-east India," *Bengal Economic Journal*, II (1918), pp. 44-59.

(c) Source: *ibid.*

TABLE 2
TOTAL AREA UNDER TEA IN ASSAM PROPER, 1859

District	Acreage Taken-up	Acreage Cleared for Tea
Kamrup	12207	297
Darrang	3783	375
Nowgong	11034	negligible
*Sibsagar	13796	5227
Lakhimpur	14038	1700
Total for Assam proper	54858	7599

*Previous year's figures.

Source: *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, XXXVII, n. 8, pp. 33-5.

TABLE 3
EXPORTS FROM SELECTED DISTRICTS OF ASSAM, 1852

GOALPARA DISTRICT			
Commodity	Quantity (Mds.)	Value (Rs.)	Average price per Mds. (Rs.)
1 Mustard seed	400000	824000	2.06
2 Cotton	50000	175000	3.50
3 Lac (raw)	7000	36750	5.25
4 Jute	20000	20000	1.00
5 Ivory	100	18750	187.50
6 Silk Cloth	4000	16000	
	(pieces)		
7 Munjit (a kind of wild dye)	2500	9375	3.75
8 Wax	300	8250	27.50
9 Pepper (long)	400	4200	10.50
10 Chapra Lac		4000	
11 Muga Silk (raw)	600 Seers**	2622	174.80
12 Sesamum seed	2000 Mds.	2500	1.25
13 Rhino horns	7 Mds.	1680	2.40
Total+		1123127	

TABLE 3 (contd.)

LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT			
Commodity	Quantity (Mds.)	Value (Rs.)	Average price per mds. (Rs.)
1. Muga Silk (raw)	385	51850	134.68
2. Indigenous Opium	135	29500	218.52
3. Munjit	500	8000	16.00
4. Gold (dust)	7 seers	8000	—
5. Silk (Endi)	3000 pieces	6000	—
6. Mustard seed	7000 mds.	6000	0.86
7. Ivory	25 mds.	3750	150.00
8. Rice	4250 "	3378	0.79
9. Wax	100 "	2500	25.00
10. Pulses (Kalai)	2000 "	2475	1.47
11. Rhino-horns	4.5 "	2000	444.44
13. Cotton	600 "	1800	3.00
13. Gur (Molasses)	1135 "	1080	8.00
14. Silk Cloth	1050 "	1050	—
Total +		127383	

TABLE 3 (contd.)

Commodity	SIBSAGAR DISTRICT		
	Quantity (Mds.)	Value (Rs.)	Average price per md. (Rs.)
1. Tea	3337½	200250*	60.00
2. Muga silk (raw)	315	50400	160.00
3. Cotton	12609	36500	2.89
4. Mustard seed	17000	17000	1.00
5. Silver (Old coin.)	7000 tolas	6125	
6. Gold (dust)	250 „	3125	
7. Ivory	17 mds.	2550	150.00
8. Silver	1500 tolas	750	
9. Coal	2500 mds.	625	0.25
10. Rhino-horns	1½ „	600	400.00
11. Other horns	1160 „	360	0.31
12. Wax	12 „	240	20.00
Total		318525	

*The figure represents an overestimated value. The actual value on the spot would have been anything around Rs. 134000, as explained in the text.

**Seers were obviously misprinted as mds. We have corrected the mistake.

*The list and respective totals may not be exhaustive, although they appear to be very nearly so.

Source : A. J. M. Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam* (Calcutta, 1854).

—Sibsagar, Appendix B ; Lakhimpur, para 33 and Goalpara paras 10-11.

TABLE 4
IMPORTS INTO SELECTED DISTRICTS OF ASSAM : 1852

Commodities	GOALPARA			LAKHIMPUR			SIBSAGAR		
	Quantity in Mds.	Value (Rs.)	Average price per Md. (Rs.)	Quantity in Mds.	Value (Rs.)	Average price per Md. (Rs.)	Quantity in Mds.	Value (Rs.)	Average price per Md. (Rs.)
1. Salt	100000	370000	3.70	7910	35000		25000	112000	4.48
2. Pulses	50000	150000	3.00				2295	3874	1.69
3. Ghee	1000	20000	20.00		7200		391	8266	21.14
4. Sugar	2000	20000	10.00		9050		267	2136	8.00
5. Printed Calico, Silk & Cotton Clothes		200000			24441			6113	
6. Rice	100000	100000	1.00		10000		800	1400	1.75
7. Mustard Oil	4000	32000	8.00		6467		1640	11480	7.00
8. Tobacco	4000	16000	4.00				870	4350	5.00
9. Wheat	2000	2500	2.50				750	1125	1.50
10. Gur (Molasses)	4000	10000	2.50				650	1300	2.00
11. Opium					*		60	24000	400.00
12. Cutlery etc.		80000			22072			10000	
13. Jute		nil			nil		165	412	2.50
14. Miscellaneous		22000			26467			48529	
Total +		1022500			140697			234985	

* *Abkari* opium does not appear in the import list of Lakhimpur obviously due to oversight. It is known from other resources that 38½ mds. of *abkari* opium worth Rs. 15420 were sold in Lakhimpur in the year 1851-52.

+ The list and respective totals, though not exhaustive, are very nearly so.

SOURCE : The same as of Table-3.

TABLE 5
TOTAL CULTIVATED ACREAGE IN ASSAM PROPER

District	Cultivated Acreage as of 1849-50	Cultivated Acreage as of 1852-53	Population as of 1853	As of 1853 Cultivated Acreage per head of population
Kamrup	472624	478699	387775	1.23
Darrang	233615	223699	185569	1.21
Nowgong	181917	174777	241300	0.72
Sibsagar	168164	180673	159573	1.13
Lakhimpur	21234	21483	85296	0.25
Total of Assam proper	1077554	1079331	1059513	1.02

Source: *Mills, Report on the Province of Assam*, n. 16, p. 5 and Appendix A.

Area, wherever given in the source in *pura* or *bigha*, has been converted into acres.

Cultivated acreage appears to mean net cropped area plus the current fallow for which land revenue is paid.

TABLE 6
A COMPARATIVE TABLE OF SELECT EXPORTS AND THEIR PRICES

A. Quantities Exported

	Quantity in mds exported from Assam proper			Quantity in mds exported from Sibsagar and Lakhimpur alone 1852
	1808-9	1933-34	1834-35	
Mustard	15000	83457½	162705	2400
Muga thread	65	291	225	700
Lac	10000	3600	3931	—
Cotton	7000	8543	6967	13209

Total value of All

Exports including Rs. 130900 Rs. 249367 Rs. 304186 Rs. 445908
above items

Note: Mustard-seed and lac were exported mainly from the three districts of Lower Assam, for which we have no data for 1852.

B. Average Prices at Export Point

	1808-9	1832-3	1833-4	1834-5	1852*
Mustard (Rs. per mds).	1.33	1.37	0.75	1.00	2.06
Muga thread (Rs. per ser)	4.36	4.99	5.00	5.99	4.37
Lac (Rs. per md.)	3.05	12.00	12.46	10.96	5.25
Cotton (Rs. per md.)	5.00	4.50	4.68		3.50
C. Average price of Imported Salt (Rs. per md.)	5.50	4.12	5.00	4.50	3.70

*Average price, derived from the export from the border district of Goalpara only, has been given in this column for the sake of comparability.

Source: For 1808-9, Francis Buchanan-Hamilton, *An Account of Assam First Compiled in 1807-14* (S. K. Bhuyan ed., Gauhati, 1940) pp. 45-6. For the 'thirties, R. B. Pemberton, *The Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India* (Calcutta, 1835) Tables 12-14. The figures for lac exports have been adjusted.

For 1852, our tables 3 and 4.

Average prices have been derived from the quantity and value of goods, given in the original tables.

Indian Emigration to Ceylon : Some Aspects of the Historical and Social Background of the Emigrants

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I

Tamilians from South India emigrated in large numbers to Ceylon from about the middle of the nineteenth century till about the 'thirties of this century to work mostly as labourers on the coffee, tea and rubber plantations. A majority of them were Hindus, and belonged to the Non-Brahman and Adi-Dravida castes of Tamilnad. They carried along with them many of their traditional customs and practices to the new country.

Today many of the tea plantations in Ceylon contain a sizeable Tamil population. Even now the caste affiliations and the traditional cultural practices govern, to a great extent, the life of the Tamilians on tea estates.¹ This paper is concerned with some important features of the historical and social background of Indian emigrants to Ceylon.

Some of the material presented here is based on sociological fieldwork carried out in three tea plantations in Ceylon during 1959-60. The rest is drawn from historical accounts and from the accounts of aged labourers on the plantations.

II

Nature and Extent of Indian Emigration to Ceylon : 1839-1950

Indians moved in large numbers to Ceylon from 1839 onwards to work as labourers on the developing coffee plantations. Having

1. See my earlier paper, "Caste and Kinship in a Ceylon Tea Estate" in *The Economic Weekly*, February 22, 1964, pp. 393-97.

found the local Sinhalese labour unwilling and unsuitable for plantation work, the British planters recruited labour from India in large numbers. But there had also been recruitment of Indian labourers prior to 1839, though not to the coffee plantations.²

In 1837 there were 5,000 acres under coffee cultivation in Ceylon with 10,000 South Indian labourers working on them. Most of them came from the Tamil districts of South India. This predominantly Tamilian character of the labour force is the first major feature of the emigration to Ceylon.

In 1847 Sir Emerson Tennent, Governor of Ceylon, drew attention to it when he wrote to the Secretary of State for Colonies about the coolie immigration to Ceylon :

It is only within the last 8 or 9 years, however, the influx of Indian labourers in search of employment attained its present height, commencing with the opening of coffee estates in the interior and augmenting from year to year in proportion to the demand created by their extension. The great body of emigration has hitherto issued almost exclusively from the extreme South India.³

In the same despatch another feature of the emigration was singled out by the Governor, this was the *kangani* system of recruit-

2. For a full survey of this emigration see N. S. Kuruppa, "A History of the working-class movement in Ceylon", *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, VI. I, 1951-52, p. 129. For a general study of the emigration to Ceylon see Babu Lal Gupta, *The Political and Civic Status of Indians in Ceylon* (Agra, 1963); P. Naguleswaran, "A History of the working-class movement in Ceylon: The Problem of Indian Immigrant labour in the Nineteenth Century", *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. I, No. 3, 1951-52, pp. 231-41 and C. Kondapi, *Indians Overseas: 1838-1949* (London, 1951).

Kuruppa cites the following movements from India to Ceylon :

(a) "Portuguese recruited Chalis (Weaver's caste) as Cinnamon peelers" quoting Fernadas de Queyroz, *The Spritual and Temporal Conquest of Ceylon*, Trs. by S. G. Perera, pp. 1018-20. (b) "... Governor North first organised a corps of pioneers consisting of Indian coolies ... In 1804 under the exigencies of the Kandayan war this body was transferred from Civil to Military control" quoting Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon under the British Occupation*, Vol. II, p. 405. (c) "In 1818 (Governor) Browning had a corps of 5,000 Indians to solve the shortage of coolly labour in connection with the Kandayan rebellion" *Ibid.*, Vol. I p. 17. (d) "... with (Governor) Barnes road and bridge building mainly for military purposes came to be of paramount importance. ..." quoting Jackson, *Report of Immigration*, 1938, p. 13. (e) "... as early as 1828 Barnes and Bird find that local labour was not sufficient, recruited 180 labourers from South India" quoting G. C. Mendix, *Ceylon Under the British*, Ch. 3, Sec. 3.

3. Governor's Despatch Mis. No. 6 of 21st April, 1847 to the Secretary of State of Colonies, p. 203.

ment of labour. The despatch runs :

It is the habit of immigrants to form themselves into gangs varying from 25 to 100 who elect one of their own body as their cangancy (*sic*) or headman. The influence of these officers over the coolies is singularly great, they conduct their journeys, negotiate their engagements, superindent their labour and receive in return a trifling proportion of their pay.⁴

The all-Tamilian character of the emigration coupled with the kangani system of recruitment of labourers played the significant role of helping the migration of caste and kin groups. The emigration resulted in the coming into existence of an Indian minority in Ceylon as a whole and at the local level of caste and kin groups.⁵

III

The history of Indian emigration to Ceylon can broadly be divided into three major periods : the first period, from 1839 to 1900, the second period, from 1900 to 1930, and the third period, from 1930 to 1950.

The First Period—1839 to 1900

In the early years of the migration to Ceylon, the emigrants from India consisted almost exclusively of able-bodied men. Moreover, the movement was seasonal in the sense that the emigrants generally returned to India within the year. In other words, the migration was individual and seasonal and not familial and permanent. The

4. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

In this connection it may be pointed out that there were two or three types of kanganis in the early days of Indian emigration to Ceylon. In the first phase of coffee planting in Ceylon, a kangani was generally a 'democratically' elected leader, but there were others who were merely agents of the planters. Some of them were induced to establish themselves as agents for recruiting labour, providing advances from their own funds to men who did not have the means to come across to Ceylon. They came to assume this role of planters' agent increasingly after 1850. There was a third category of kangani who earned a living by 'Crimping' labourers from one plantation to another, and were particularly active during periods of labour scarcity. For this information, please refer to K. M. de Silva, *Social Policy and Missionary Organization in Ceylon 1840-1855*, p. 240.

5. See the last section of this paper for a fuller study of the kangani system.

TABLE I
MIGRATION FIGURES FOR THE YEAR 1839-59

Year	Arrivals of Tamilian Labourers in Ceylon			Departures of Tamilian Labourers from Ceylon		
	Men	Women	Children	Men	Women	Children
1839	2,432	188	99	1,936	161	85
1840	3,326	307	181	3,464	256	3
1841	4,523	363	164	4,243	279	120
1842	9,025	279	166	10,691	345	228
1843	35,195	957	448	18,977	694	482
1844	74,840	957	724	38,337	825	535
1845	72,526	698	177	24,623	145	36
1846	41,862	330	125	13,833	48	25
1847	44,085	1,638	417	5,897	74	33
1848	29,936	1,685	551	22,680	557	152
1849	22,171	1,430	268	10,397	335	83
1850	37,155	1,818	449	20,758	548	303
1851	28,224	1,003	273	16,775	419	191
1852	50,843	2,226	770	22,664	780	284
1853	36,583	2,042	653	27,129	981	378
1854	54,014	9,006	4,301	21,640	1,422	479
1855	55,979	5,018	1,270	23,130	573	313
1856	59,263	6,342	2,399	32,148	1,502	659
1857	60,048	6,974	2,298	36,887	2,278	772
1858	75,172	16,172	4,718	45,747	3,277	1,416
1859	32,377	5,797	1,911	43,900	3,722	1,196
Total:	829,579	65,230	22,362	445,876	19,221	7,773
						472,870

[SOURCE: Governor's despatch *Mis. No. 6 of 21st April, 1847 to the Secretary of State for Colonies*, p. 207].

individual and seasonal nature of the emigration did not, however, continue for a long time. The volume of migration also varied from year to year depending upon the internal economic conditions of the two countries. A large number of landless agricultural labourers migrated to Ceylon because of poor harvests in Tamilnad. For instance, 1877, a famine year in India, produced a tally of Tamil labourers in Ceylon of no fewer than 380,000⁶. Conversely, a bad coffee or tea season in Ceylon drove back to India a large number of those who were engaged on estate work.

The variation in the sex composition and in the total number of emigrants to Ceylon can be seen from Table I, on migration, 1839-59.⁷

Between 1839 and 1859 there were as many as 917,171 labourers who arrived in Ceylon. The total number of labourers who left Ceylon during the same period was 472,870. In 1839 there were only 2,719 labourers who arrived in Ceylon while in 1859 there were 40,085. There is some increase in the proportion of women and children to men between 1839 and 1859. In 1839 there were only 188 women and 99 children to 2,432 men who went to Ceylon. In 1859 there were 5,797 women and 1,911 children to 32,377 men who left for Ceylon.

The Table 2 on migration for the period 1860 to 1870, shows a marked increase in the proportion of women and children to men among emigrants to Ceylon. It also shows an increase in the number of those who stayed back in the estates.⁸

Ferguson's Ceylon Directory, 1866-68, presenting the immigration returns for the above-mentioned period, discusses their significance thus:

One feature in the immigration returns for 1866 requires to be specially noted, viz., the increased proportion of women and children to the men in the arrivals. Some years ago this was thought to be a satisfactory sign as indicating the increasing popularity of Ceylon estate homes with immi-

6. *Census of India*, 1931 (Madras), Vol. XIV, Part I, p. 84.

7. *Governor's Despatch Mis. No. 6 of 21st April, 1847 to the Secretary of State for Colonies*, p. 207.

It should be kept in mind that these early migration figures are only approximate.

8. *Ferguson's Ceylon Directory*, 1866-68, p. 183.

TABLE 2
MIGRATION FIGURES FOR THE YEAR 1860-70

Year	Arrivals of Tamilian labourers in Ceylon				Departure of Tamilian labourers from Ceylon			
	Men	Women	Children	Total	Men	Women	Children	Total
1860	41,906	8,946	2,093	52,945	21,279	1,874	721	23,874
1861	43,147	8,175	2,110	53,432	32,636	3,487	1,079	37,202
1862	51,859	12,503	4,534	68,896	35,577	4,691	1,641	41,909
1863	53,828	11,858	5,032	70,718	50,334	7,804	3,627	61,765
1864	63,087	14,214	4,499	81,800	54,724	8,526	4,029	67,279
1865	66,007	16,831	6,759	89,597	51,504	8,478	4,555	64,537
1866	58,488	23,723	6,117	88,328	38,997	6,717	3,515	49,229
1867	31,688	8,836	2,255	42,779	35,507	7,293	3,198	45,998
1868	41,499	11,540	2,682	55,721	44,820	7,524	2,182	54,526
1869	43,998	11,150	2,523	57,671	43,820	8,330	2,175	54,325
1870	51,644	10,835	2,735	65,214	44,797	8,035	2,260	55,092
Total	547,151	138,611	41,339	727,101	453,995	72,759	28,982	555,736

[SOURCE: Ferguson's Ceylon Directory, 1866-68, p. 183].

grant coolies, but the recent discussions on estate expenditure throw new light on the subject and show that one of the chief causes of the increased working expense is owing to the number of weak hands, women and children among the coolies. *A certain proportion is useful for light work, but the fact that the percentage has increased from 2.61 and 1.22 of women and children in 1843 and 5.3 women and 1.16 children in 1853 to 16.76 women and 7.11 children in 1863 and still further to 26.87 women and 6.92 children in 1866 seems to prove that this ground of complaint is well founded. The average proportion for the four years 1862 to 1865 was 75 per cent men, 18 per cent of women and 7 per cent of children, but 1866 showed already stated 27 per cent of women, 7 per cent of children to 66 per cent of men.*⁹

This increase in the volume, and more or less equal distribution of males and females continued as a rule to be a feature of the emigration even after 1870. It is not necessary for our purpose to follow the frequency of the movement of the immigrant worker between India and Ceylon year after year. Suffice it to say that after 1870 the number of Tamilian labourers enumerated on estates in Ceylon had increased considerably. According to the early census reports of Ceylon the estate Tamilian population was as follows:—¹⁰

Census year	Tamilian Population	Numerical increase	Inter-censal per cent increase
1871	123,654	—	—
1881	206,495	82,841	67.0
1891	262,262	55,767	27.0
1901	441,601	179,339	68.4

The figure shown as numerical increase in the Tamilian population of the estates consists of excess of arrivals over departures and the natural increase during the inter-censal period. The variations in the inter-censal percentage are due to the vicissitudes of the plantation industry in Ceylon. For instance, the low inter-censal increase between 1881 and 1891 is mainly due to the collapse of

9. *Ibid.*, p. 183 (Italics mine).

10. *Census of Ceylon*, 1946, Vol. 1, Part I, p. 237.

coffee cultivation which led to a decrease in the inflow and also an increase in the outflow of labourers from Ceylon. In the same way, the increase in the inter-censal percentage between 1891 and 1901 is due to the advent of tea cultivation in the place of coffee, and the consequent increase in the demand for labour. Moreover, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, with the appearance of tea, and later rubber, on the scene, and with the increasing demand for labour by the Ceylon Government for public works, there was a heavy influx of labour.

IV

The Second Period—1900 to 1930

After 1900 the emigration to Ceylon assumed a decisively familial pattern. In addition, many of the new emigrants to Ceylon were those who had been there previously. These features bring to our attention the importance of the already-established existence of women and children in the Tamilian estate population of Ceylon. Its importance lies in the fact that emigration by families and the more or less normal sex composition helped to keep marriage within one's caste or sub-caste. This, along with frequent travel to and from India, facilitated the establishment of affinal links in India within caste and sub-caste. Frequent travel between India and Ceylon also reinforced the links between Tamilians at home and the migrants.

Now to recapitulate the argument, Tamilians went to Ceylon in search of employment. To begin with, this movement was seasonal and voluntary, and it continued thus for sometime. With the opening up of a number of coffee estates in Ceylon in the 1820's and 30's there was a great demand for Tamilian labour. The planters were not able to obtain a satisfactory and regular supply of labour within the island, and had therefore to tap sources of supply outside Ceylon. The initial influx of Tamilians in search of employment helped the planters to find labourers for estates. Later, estate-owners, taking advantage of immigrants from Tamilnad, encouraged the kangani system of recruitment of labourers, the kangani acting as the controller and recruiter of labourers who worked under him. The kangani system assured them a regular supply of labourers. Therefore, in the early years of the migration the inducement and control was essentially in the hands of indi-

dual planters, who by appointing a few individuals as kanganis, encouraged people to move to the estates for work.

We saw that in the last decade of the nineteenth century, with the appearance of tea, and later rubber, on the scene the demand for labour increased and in a very short period of time. During this time again, the kanganis were entrusted with the sole job of securing labourers from Tamilnad. It must be mentioned here that the estate labourers were recruited from Tamilnad because the kanganis were from this region. Whenever additional labour was found necessary, the kangani was provided with a sum of money, known as the 'coast advances', towards the payment of advances to prospective labourers from India. This 'coast advances' made available to the labourers through kanganis to meet the expenses associated with travel from India to Ceylon, were later recovered from the labourers. The kanganis, whether or not they distributed these advances to the prospective labourers, demanded large sums of money from the estate-owners as 'coast advances'.

The history of emigration to Ceylon during this period shows serious attempts to control the system of recruitment of labourers.¹¹ The subsequent development in the control of migration was the outcome of an attack against the exploitation of the kangani who started charging exorbitant 'coast advances' for procuring labourers

11. It must be mentioned here that from the earliest days of large-scale emigration, the Governments of India and Ceylon had shown considerable interest in the emigration of Indians to Ceylon. The Indian Government had known the evils of the indentured labour in countries other than Ceylon and they feared that labour recruited for Ceylon might percolate to other countries through engagements entered in Ceylon. Hence, the Government of India passed the Act 14 of 1839 which prohibited emigration to Ceylon. The Ceylon Government later took the initiative to lift the ban on emigration imposed by the Act 14 of 1839 by passing an Ordinance in 1847 which prohibited Indians in Ceylon from entering into contracts for service abroad. The Government of India in response lifted the ban on emigration to Ceylon by passing an Act in 1847. Further, the Governments of India and Ceylon had shown from the earliest times considerable interest over matters such as the travel arrangements for the emigrants and their conditions of work on estates. For a brief review of the interest shown by the Ceylon Government over problems of Indian Labour immigration during the period between 1840 and 1855, please see K. M. de Silva, *Social Policy and Missionary Organization in Ceylon 1840-1855* (London, 1965). See also M. W. Roberts, "Indian Estate Labour in Ceylon during the coffee period—1830-1880" Part-II, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. III, No. 2, June, 1966, pp. 101-136.

from India.¹²

Thus, we see the formation of the Ceylon Labour Federation in the last decade of the nineteenth century by the estate-owners to control the steady increase in the 'coast advances' demanded by the kangani. In 1902 they introduced 'the tin-ticket system' by which labourers were sent from India to Ceylon. The prospective emigrant from India was provided with a small tin disc punched with a letter denoting his district in India. The disc was punched with two other numbers, of which one denoted the number of the estate in the official register of estates and the other denoted the serial number assigned to the emigrant labourer. It must be noted here that each prospective labourer was assigned a tin-ticket. Each estate-owner was required to purchase as many tin-tickets as he needed. When the tin-tickets were produced by the labourers, the officials of the Federation sent them to their estates by road and rail, the cost of travel being recovered later from the employers. In a way the tin-ticket system helped to keep down the 'coast advances'. The significance of the introduction of the tin-ticket system lay in the fact that it emphasised the necessity to have an organization of planters, and in a systematic way, to control and supervise the flow of immigration to Ceylon. With the introduction of the tin-ticket system, the planters controlled the financial side of the recruitment; the actual enrolment of labourers, however, continued to be in the hands of the kanganis. There were two types of kanganis operating in India, those who were controlled by the planters and those who recruited labourers independently.

The kangani wielded, as before, considerable influence over the labourers. Besides, the kangani extended his control over the lab-

12. *The Report of the Cooly Immigration Committee, 1877*, addresses itself to the problem of 'coast advances'. H. H. Thomas, a merchant of Colombo, answering a question put by the Commission of 1877 says '... taking thirty estates in different districts, we had on the check roll on 30th June (1876) last 6,110 men of the total force there were than absent on the coast say 3,053. The total advances out at that date were 59,166 rupees and 81 cents; equal to 19 rupees 36 cents per man.' Another respondent Saunders, the then Chairman of the Planters' Association, says '... every additional man, required in crop may be put down at £2 cost to the estate.' He adds a note about the true situation of the 'coast advances' '... we know every cooly or nearly every one on the estate contributes to the return of 'coast advances', whether he has been brought from the coast that season or happens to be an old resident on the place so that nothing like £2 is given to a new man. Probably his mere expenses are paid and 5 rupees are advanced to him to leave with his friends in his village. It is true that most of our coast advances are probably expended in settling up old debts due to large rice Chettis in the Bazar near the estate; but then the kangani often gets a new loan from the Chetti ...'

ourers through the increasing popularity of the *tundu* system of advances. The *tundu* (slip) was a written promise by one estate to another to discharge the labourers on being paid the amount outstanding as advances against them. The *tundu* system worked in the following manner: the kangani, taking advantage of the bond, would seek employment for his gang on an estate short of labour, and from the higher advance received from that estate he paid off the estate he had left earlier. When the account for the new advances closed, he shifted with his gang to a new estate paying more. Therefore, the kangani used the *tundu* system to shift his labour from estates paying less to estates paying more by way of advances. In all these shifts, prompted by the desire for higher advances, it was the labourers who had to bear the full brunt of repaying the advances. Once again the estate-owners had to intervene to curb the exploitative use of the *tundu* system. This they did by ruling that an estate-owner or superintendent issuing a *tundu* should specify the actual registered debt in his account and no more, and the member estates taking labourers were prohibited from paying more than the amount entered on the *tundu*. Though the ruling did not succeed because of the non-co-operation of member estates, it paved the way for the Government to take stern action against the evil-effects of the *tundu* system.

Thus, *Ordinance XLIII of 1921* (Tundu Prohibition) was passed by the Government in Ceylon, abolishing the *tundu* system. Along with this the Ceylon recruiting agency was adjusted to an assisted emigration policy which introduced the issue of licences to authorised recruiting agents. This Ordinance brought into existence a competent and government-controlled agency to control immigration. At this point came the enactment of the *Indian Emigration Act of 1922* and the *Labour Ordinance of 1923*. These Acts, passed by the Central Legislature in India, empowered the Government of India to supervise and control the emigration of Indians to areas outside India. After the enactment of the *Indian Emigration Act of 1922* and the *Ordinance of 1923*, the emigration of Indians to Ceylon was governed by these Acts.¹³ According to the *Indian Emigration Act of 1922*, Indians going to Ceylon were 'emigrants' (a) if they pro-

13. For a compilation of emigration Acts of different countries, see *Migration Laws and Treaties*, I. L. O., Vol I (Geneva, 1928).

ceeded to Ceylon under an agreement to work for hire, or (b) if they were assisted to depart from India (otherwise than by a relative) in order to work for hire or to engage themselves in agriculture. These and other general provisions of the Act, however, were applicable to emigrants recruited by persons other than relatives.

With the passing of the *Indian Emigration Act, 1922* by the Government of India, family-wise migration increased. Commenting on the effects of this Act, the *Census of India, 1931* observed that :-

The rules framed under the Act (1922) had as one definite intention to encourage family as distinct from individual recruitment and for this purpose a restriction was laid down that not more than one in five assisted emigrants should be unmarried or unaccompanied males.....¹⁴

As regards migration to Ceylon, the Census Report says that "Ceylon was permanently exempted from this regulation as emigration to that country had always been practically a family affair."¹⁵

Emigration to Ceylon after 1921 saw in a marked form the features enumerated in the preceding pages: increasing control by government, and increasing family migration. Table 3 gives the figures for Indian arrivals in and departures from Ceylon for selected years from 1923 to 1931.¹⁶

TABLE 3
MIGRATION FIGURES FOR SELECTED YEARS
FROM 1923 TO 1931.

Year	No. of arrivals Old	New	Total	No. of Departures	Excess of A/D
1923	46,272	43,587	89,859	51,762	+ 38,097
1926	51,330	50,461	101,746	63,707	+ 38,039
1929	59,404	45,691	105,095	104,411	+ 684
1931	45,389	22,948	68,337	91,537	- 23,236

(The column, Number of Arrivals, is broken down into 'Old' and 'New'; the labourers who had been in Ceylon previously are classified as 'old' and those who went for the first time as 'new').

[Source : *Administrative Report of Commissioner of Labour, Report for 1958, Part I, p. 255.*]

14. *Census of India, 1931* (Madras), n. 6, p. 80.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

16. *Administrative Report of Commissioner of Labour, Report for 1958, Part I, p. 255.*

The estate population for the years 1926-29 showed an increase over that of 1921. The total estate population for the years 1926-29 with the sex composition is given below.¹⁷

Year	Total Indian Population in Ceylon	Indian Estate Population			
		Men	Women	Children	Total
1926	820,000	226,680	291,540	220,711	666,931
1927	885,200	241,200	234,131	244,221	719,552
1928	—	244,603	236,304	258,409	739,316
1929	—	242,161	232,996	274,973	740,130

The Indian estate population in 1931 was 790,376. There was an increase of 221,562 over the 1921 Census figures, the intercensal increase being 38.9 per cent.¹⁸

V

Non-estate Indian Emigration to Ceylon.

What has not been so far discussed is the non-estate Indian emigration to Ceylon. Though it is difficult to say when it started, it became significant from the last decade of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ No statistical record of the non-estate Indian emigration was kept before 1921, for it was voluntary and unaided migration. However, it is important to see the nature and extent of this migration, for it involved a movement of people differing greatly from the estate population. For instance, trade and commerce attracted the Chettiers of the Tamil districts of South India. They migrated in large numbers. Similarly, specialised jobs, associated with caste differ-

17. Ceylon Colonial Report : *Report for 1926*, p. 121.
Report for 1927, p. 127.
Report for 1928, p. 78.
Report for 1929, p. 99.

18. *Ibid.*, *Report for 1931*, p. 87.

19. See Governor's Despatch No. 503 of 28 November, 1882 to the Secretary of State for Colonies. p. 32.

In the 1880's and 90's apart from the estate population, there was another class of people who consisted mainly of small merchants, traders and others who found employment in the Ceylon Railways, Police and Public Work Departments of the Government of Ceylon.

ences, drew people belonging to Thattan (Goldsmith), Kosavan (Potter), Kollan (Blacksmith), Vannan (Washerman) and Pariyari (Barber) castes of the Tamil country. Some of these castes also found their way into estates. This was in contrast with the movement to the estates which drew persons belonging to Pallan, Paraiyan, Chakkiliyan, Vellalan, Kallan and other agricultural castes of Tamilnad.

It is, therefore, useful to see the volume of non-estate emigration for a period of ten years from 1921. The total number of non-estate people travelling to Ceylon each year for a period of ten years is given below :—²⁰

Year	Total
1921	82,757
1922	82,880
1923	83,258
1924	88,787
1925	102,292
1926	114,421
1927	125,739
1928	138,157
1929	133,046
1930	114,669

Comparison Between Estate and Non-estate Emigration.

The Report of the Immigration Commission, 1938 makes a comparative study of estate and non-estate Indian populations in Ceylon.²¹ According to this Report the main differences between the two are that the immigrant estate worker comes to Ceylon for the purpose only of working on organised estates. He is specially recruited, at any rate on his first coming, and is brought to the island and cared for on his journey free of charge to himself by a very elaborate organization established and supervised under the law of India and under the law of Ceylon. The non-estate immigrant worker, on the other hand, is not recruited, or at least is

20. *Census of India, 1931* (Madras), n. 6, p. 85.

21. *Report of a Commission on Immigration into Ceylon* by Jackson. 1938, p. 5. The Immigration Commission, 1938 was appointed by the then Government of Ceylon to study the immigration of Indians into Ceylon.

not supposed to be. He comes, supposedly, on his own initiative and at his own charge. He comes, as a rule, from a different part of India from the home of the estate workers, or from different castes. He engages himself in a great variety of occupations. A further difference is the source of supply of labour. The main source of non-estate immigration is the district of Tinnevely which supplies about 43 per cent of the total and 2 per cent of labour for estates. The districts around Trichinopoly, which supply about 75 per cent of estate labour, only supply 17 per cent of immigrants of the other class.²²

In this connection it will be useful to see the contribution of different districts in Tamilnad to emigration. Table 4 shows the district-wise contribution to emigration to Ceylon as given in the *Census Report, 1931*.²³

TABLE 4
THE DISTRICT-WISE CONTRIBUTION TO EMIGRATION
TO CEYLON

Estate Labour			Non-Estate Labour		
District	Percentage of total emigration		District	Percentage of total emigration	
Trichinopoly	...	35	Tinnevely	...	40
Salem	...	18	Ramnad	...	15
Tanjore	...	10	Malabar	...	8
Madura	...	8	Tanjore	...	8
Ramnad	...	7	Madura	...	6
Pudukkottai	...	7	Travancore	...	5
South Arcot	...	6	Madras	...	4
North Arcot	...	5	Trichinopoly	...	4
Chingleput	...	3	Cochin	...	4
Tinnevely	...	3	Other		
			Districts	...	3
Coimbatore	...	2	Pudukkottai	...	1
Other Districts	...	2	Arcot	...	1

[Source : *Census of India, 1931* (Madras), p. 85.]

In order to have a clear picture of the district-wise contribution to the emigration, we must also see the average annual number of

22. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

23. *Census of India, 1931* (Madras), n. 6., p. 85.

immigrants for a certain number of years. Let us see the average number of immigrants by districts given by the *Immigration Commission, 1938*.²⁴

TABLE 5
AVERAGE NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS BY DISTRICTS
IN TAMILNAD 1921-25

District	average annual number immigrants (1921-35)	
	Estate	Others
Tinnevely	2,267	42,898
Ramand	6,092	15,618
Madura	73,052	17,375
Pudukkottai		
Trichinopoly		
Tanjore		
Salem		
Coimbatore		
Arcot	11,331	5,033
Madras		
Chingleput		
Chittor and other Telugu Districts.		
Travancore		
Cochin	545	15,984
Malabar	190	6,919
Other sources		

[Source: *Report of the Immigration Commission, 1938*, p. 41.]

In addition to the differences in the location of their Indian homes and caste backgrounds, another noticeable difference between the Indian estate worker and the non-estate immigrant is the sex-ratio of the population. There is considerable disproportion between men and women among the non-estate immigrants in Ceylon. As the Immigration Commission of 1938 observes:

In 1921, according to the Census of that year, the total Indian population of Ceylon, excluding estate labourers, was 153,225; of these 116,733 were males and 36,492 females. These figures include children. The disproportion between men and women was particularly noticeable

among the Malayali community, the actual figures being, at the date of that Census 16,499 males and 628 females, making a total of 17,127 including children. On the other hand, the Indian population on estates, at least in recent years, will generally be found to consist of about one-third men, one-third women and one-third children under 16. In 1935 the actual proportion, among a total estate population of 675,000 were 32 per cent men, 30.4 per cent women and 37.6 per cent of children...²⁵

In considering the nature and extent of non-estate migration to Ceylon, it is worthwhile to consider, for a specific period, the distribution of the migrants in different occupations. For this purpose, it is useful to see the details of the occupational distribution of Indian immigrants for the years 1933-35, as re-classified by N. K. Sarkar, from the *Report of the Immigration Commission, 1938*.²⁶ A study of the occupational distribution of Indian immigrants will give a broad picture of the types of people who migrated to Ceylon.

It is clear from Table 6 that the Indian immigrants in Ceylon took up almost every conceivable occupation. It is significant to note that during the years 1933-35 the persons taking up occupations under the categories 'Unskilled non-agricultural labour', 'Commerce, Transport and Storage' and 'Personal Service' formed the largest section in the total immigrants. Agricultural labourers constituted only 6,320 out of 224,660.

There is a broad correlation between caste and occupation. For instance, potters, goldsmiths, barbers and washermen were supplied to the estate by the castes of Kosavan, Thattan, Pariyari and Vannan respectively. Similarly, labourers who were engaged as scavengers belonged to Adi-Dravida castes of Tamilnad, and the traders and shop-assistants came from castes such as Chettiar, Mudaliar, Vellalan and Parvan. The scope for occupational specialization, particularly in the case of the specialist castes, helped the perpetuation of caste specialization and caste-oriented activities. Hence, the specialist occupations have retained to the present day their caste connotation.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

26. N. K. Sarkar, *The Demography of Ceylon* (Colombo, 1957), p. 179.

24. *Report of the Immigration Commission, 1938*, p. 41.

TABLE 6

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE IMMIGRANTS
FOR THE YEAR 1933-35

<u>Occupation</u>		<u>Total</u>
I.	Agricultural	6,230
	Estate labourers	5,454
	Farmers	866
II.	Unskilled non-agricultural labour	54,255
	Harbour workers	6,160
	Railway	1,831
	Latrine Labourers	5,923
	Engineering Dept. labour	244
	Tappers	2,734
	Rickshaw-pullers	2,793
	other labourers	34,570
III.	Commerce, Transport and Storage	121,218
	Skilled Harbour workers	1,651
	Skilled Railway workers	349
	Skilled Transport workers	2,682
	Moror Drivers	682
	Shop-assistants	41,589
	Traders	76,947
IV.	Preparation and Supply of Materials	8,279
	Blacksmiths	130
	Goldsmiths	1,787
	Potters	344
	Tailors	1,828
	Weavers	622
	Carpenters	2,035
	Butchers	1,056
	Fishermen	477
V.	Personal Services	21,241
	Dhobis	1,320
	Barbers	4,862
	Hotel Servants	4,718
	Domestic Servants	10,341
VI.	Government Service	1,363
VII.	Professions	2,584
	Teachers	1,198
	Actors and Musicians	1,386
VIII.	Other Occupations	9,400
	Total in all occupations	224,600

[Source : N. K. Sarkar, *The Demography of Ceylon*, Colombo, 1957, p. 179.]

The caste affiliations of the migrants to the estates are somewhat different from the caste affiliations of non-estate emigrants. Though we possess no reliable data for such a study for the early days of the emigration, it is necessary to see the nature of caste affiliations of the migrants going to Ceylon. The lack of detailed information is partly compensated by the reliable data available in the census reports of India for later years. The Census Report of 1911 gave some attention to the caste representation of emigrants to estates. According to this Report during the years 1905 to 1909 there were 42,493 Paraiyans, 28,596 Pallans, 15,759 Kallans, 13,738 Vellalas, 18,066 Ambalakkarans, 9,753 Agamudaiyans and 5 Brahmans among the emigrants to Ceylon.²⁷ Discussing the emigration of Indians to Ceylon during the period between 1911 and 1921, the *Census of India*, 1921 observes that the majority of the emigrants are drawn from the Paraiyan, Kallan, Vellala and Pallan castes of Tamilnad. They together have contributed, 619,000 out of 744,500 who have emigrated during the decade.

The *Census Report of 1931* carries much data about the caste contribution to Ceylon. The report observes :

Ceylon emigration is a Tamil phenomenon ; it is also an Adi-Dravida phenomenon, for in the earlier years of the decade depressed classes contributed half of total emigration and later never less than a third. Other castes contributing regularly are Agambudias, Ambalakkarans, Vellalas, Vanniyans, Naickans, Goundans and Kallans ; but these added together do not exceed a half or at most two-thirds of the Adi-Dravida contribution. In 1930, depressed classes contributed 38 per cent of the estate emigration or 38,700 out of 91,400...²⁹

It is clear from Census Reports that almost all castes of Tamilnad except the Brahmans have emigrated in large numbers to Ceylon.

An interesting feature of the data given in the *Census of India*, 1931 is the depressed classes' contribution to the emigration to

27. *Census of India*, 1911 (Madras), Vol. XII, Part I, p. 26.

28. *Census of India*, 1921 (Madras), Vol. XIII, Part I, p. 49.

29. *Census of India*, 1931 (Madras), n. 6, p. 86.

Ceylon during the period between 1921 and 1930. The total number of labourers in each year of the decade 1921-30, and the number of Adi-Dravidas in it are as follows :³⁰

TABLE 7
DEPRESSED CLASSES' CONTRIBUTION TO EMIGRATION
TO CEYLON—1921-30

Year	Total	Depressed	Classes	Percentage
1921	25,344	8,568		34
1922	78,106	29,921		38
1923	90,289	35,316		39
1924	153,989	71,441		47
1925	125,585	52,400		42
1926	101,360	41,089		40
1927	161,027	64,969		40
1928	133,712	51,593		39
1929	105,095	42,177		40
1930	91,422	34,710		38
Total	1,066,429	432,184		41

[Source : *Census of India*, 1931 (Madras), p. 84.]

From a quite different source, we possess information to corroborate the presence of such caste groups in the estates of Ceylon. Writing about estate life in the 'twenties of this century, Lewis B. Green presents in his book a list of castes commonly found on Ceylon estates.³¹ He includes the following castes in his list: Ambalakkaran, Ambattan, Chakkiliyan, Vannan or Dhobi, Kallans, Padiyachi or Vanniyan, Pallan, Pandaram, Paraiyan, Koliyan, Pujari, Retti, Valluvan and Vellalan. He provides also a list of castes less commonly found on the estate but which are occasionally met with. In the second list he includes the following castes: Agamudaiyan, Asari, Chakkan, Chetti, Idaiyan, Kavandans, Irula, Kaikaolan, Kammalan, Kollan, Koravan, Kurumba, Kusavan, Malaiali, Maravan, Mudali, Muppan, Mutriyan, Odde or Wudder, Paravan, Shanar, Talayari, Tottiyen, Uppiliyan, Vaduga and Valaiyan.

The Third Period—1923 to 1950

To come back to the discussion about the trend in the emigra-

30. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

31. Lewis B. Green, *The Planter's Book of Caste and Custom* (Colombo, 1926). Mr. Green was himself an estate-owner and had considerable experience as a planter in up-country tea estates in Ceylon.

tion to Ceylon, it could be said that though the movement of Tamilians to the estates continued after 1930 and till 1954 in the form of emigration of those who had already been in Ceylon previously (*pazhaiyals*), the recruitment of new labourers came to a standstill from the year 1940. This is mainly due to the dispute about the political rights of Indian immigrants in Ceylon. A glance at the migration figures after 1931 in Table 9 reveals this trend clearly.³²

The total Indian estate population in 1946, according to the *Census of Ceylon*, 1946, was 851,359. This represents a numerical increase of 60,983 persons from the figure of 1931, the inter-censal increase being just 7.7%. The reasons for such a low percentage of increase in the Indian estate population are firstly, the depression in the plantation industry in the 30's; secondly, the cessation of plantings in tea and rubber; thirdly, the ban on the emigration of Indians by the Government of India, and lastly the greater participation of indigenous labour in work on estates.³³ The estate population in 1953 was 809,084. In this total there were 414,273 males and 394,811 females.³⁴ The emigration return given in Table 8 for the period 1951-57 shows the complete closure of emigration from India.³⁵

TABLE 8
NUMBER OF ARRIVALS INTO CEYLON 1951-57

Year	Old	New	Total
1951	53,218	1,503	54,721
1952	55,530	1,717	57,247
1953	40,761	1,160	41,921
1954	26,550	577	27,127
1955	902	—	902
1956	2,360	3	3,363
1957	1,068	4	1,072

[Source : *Administrative Report of the Commissioner of Labour for 1958*, p. 256].

The Indian population on the estates in 1957 was 860,547. In this total there were 236,355 men, 240,741 women and 383,451 children.³⁶

32. *Administrative Report of the Commission of Labour for 1958*, p. 255.

33. *Census of Ceylon*, 1946, Vol. I, p. 237.

34. *Census of Ceylon*, 1953, Vol. I, p. 209.

35. *Administrative Report of the Commission of Labour for 1958*, p. 256.

36. *Addendum to the Administrative Report of the Commissioner of Labour for 1957*, p. 113.

TABLE 9
MIGRATION FIGURES FOR THE YEAR 1932-50

Year	Number of arrivals into Ceylon 1932-50		Number of departures from Ceylon 1932-50		Excess of A/D	Excess of D/A
	Old (pazahiyals)	New (puthuals)	Total	Assisted	Unassisted	Total
1932	37,837	3,032	50,869	14,338	58,157	72,495
1934	69,310	71,297	140,607	2,304	52,481	54,785
1936	35,832	4,971	40,803	5,396	39,747	45,143
1938	41,008	6,202	41,210	3,004	43,803	46,807
1940	2,955	363	3,318	5,560	12,578	18,138
1942	6,585	229	6,814	5,398	33,181	38,581
1944	49,354	2,623	51,977	786	59,683	60,469
1946	75,269	3,325	78,594	282	75,659	75,939
1948	47,621	2,926	50,547	151	47,115	47,266
1950	49,385	1,525	50,910	267	55,360	55,627
						21,625
						—
						84,822
						—
						4,340
						—
						403
						—
						14,820
						31,867
						8,492
						—
						2,655
						3,281
						—
						4,717

[SOURCE: Administrative Report of the Commissioner of Labour for 1958, p. 255.]

TABLE 10
THE BIRTH RATE, DEATH RATE, INFANT MORTALITY RATE AND
MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE OF MEAN ESTATE POPULATION
FOR THE PERIOD 1924-47⁸⁷

Year	Population		Birth rate per 1000 of the population		Death rate per 1000 of the population		Infant death rate per 1000 of live birth		Maternal death rate per 1000 live births	
	Estate	Ceylon mid-year	Estate	Ceylon	Estate	Ceylon	Estate	Ceylon	Estate	Ceylon
1925	589,724	4,846,850	36.2	39.9	31.2	24.3	216	172	—	18.5
1927	691,855	5,009,394	34.8	41.0	28.2	22.6	228	160	20.0	17.0
1929	731,177	5,171,938	34.3	38.3	25.1	26.1	213	187	20.6	20.4
1931	685,527	5,326,000	34.2	37.4	20.8	22.1	184	158	20.4	20.8
1933	618,314	5,418,000	39.4	38.6	18.9	21.2	181	157	16.9	18.6
1935	679,201	5,608,000	37.9	34.4	26.7	36.9	198	263	21.2	26.8
1937	664,000	5,725,000	38.4	37.4	19.0	21.7	169	158	18.2	19.9
1939	679,000	5,916,000	38.6	35.9	19.2	21.7	169	166	15.0	18.2
1941	681,000	6,044,000	45.9	36.4	15.4	18.8	119	129	12.6	15.3
1943	673,000	6,161,000	45.6	40.4	15.8	21.3	122	132	9.0	13.3
1945	647,000	6,561,000	41.5	36.6	17.1	21.9	126	140	10.2	16.5
1947	721,000	6,903,000	40.4	39.3	13.0	14.3	109	101	6.4	10.6
1949	757,000	7,321,000	39.1	39.8	12.4	12.6	111	87	5.1	6.5
1951	781,000	7,742,000	38.6	40.5	12.9	12.8	109	82	4.4	5.3
1953	815,000	8,155,000	32.5	39.4	11.1	10.7	112	71	3.7	4.9
1955	844,000	8,589,000	35.1	37.9	13.3	10.8	115	71	3.8	4.1
1957	859,000	9,165,000	29.6	36.5	10.8	10.1	119	67.5	3.5	3.7

[SOURCE: Administrative Report of the Commissioner of Labour for 1958, p. 256.]

VI

Natural Increase

In the discussion on the inter-censal numerical increase of the estate population, we have been able to see the contribution of annual immigration to the estate population. What remains to be seen is the trend in the annual addition by natural increase to the estate population. Here again paucity of data for the early days of immigration prevents us from discussing the whole period of the emigration. However, we shall try to provide a broad account of the general trend.

The Table 10 given in the previous page presents the birth rate, death rate, infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rate of the Indian estate labour population. The estate returns are given along with the all-Ceylon figures. The returns for seventeen selected years are given in the Table.³⁷

We have examined the birth and death rates of mean estate population for the period 1924-57. It is significant to note that the birth rate of the estate population was highest during the 'forties of this century and it stood at 29.6 per 1000 of the population in 1957. As compared to the estates, the all-Ceylon birth rate is higher, i.e. 36.5 in 1957. On the other hand, the death rate of the estate population was highest during the 'twenties and has come down to as low a figure as 10.8 per 1000 of the population in 1957. But the all-Ceylon death rate, 10.1 in 1957, was even lower.

Age-structure

Before we proceed to consider the social background of the emigrants to Ceylon, it is necessary to see the age-structure of the estate population as a whole. We possess no data regarding the age-structure of the early emigrants to Ceylon. However, in the

37. *Administrative Report of the Commissioner of Labour for 1958*, p. 256.

38. It is the returns of two types of estates, (1) those referred to as 'Estates' having ten acres or more in cultivation furnish half-yearly returns relating to the Indian Labour population (under Section 16 of the Estate Labour (Indian) Ordinance, 1923) and (2) those described as 'Scheduled Estates' meaning estates scheduled for medical aid under the Medical Wants Ordinance. The latter is slightly smaller in number and is included in the former.

early days of the emigration it is the working population who emigrated in large numbers and hence it is probable that they fell within the age-group of 15-49 years. At a later period, since men, women and children emigrated in large numbers, the age-structure changed considerably. The working population, even then, dominated the composition.

The *Census of Ceylon*, 1946 using a 'triple age-grouping', presents the distribution of the estate population as in the following table.³⁹

TABLE 11
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE TRIPLE AGE-GROUPING OF THE ESTATE POPULATION, 1946

Ages	As percentage to total estate population
0-14	38.9
15-49	53.5
50 and over	7.6

[SOURCE: *Census of Ceylon*, 1946, p. 240.]

Discussing the significance of the distribution of the 'triple age-grouping', the *Census of Ceylon*, 1946 observed :

... compared with the Island triple age-grouping, the estate population is seen to be composed of more children and persons 'in the prime of life' and fewer old people than the general population of Ceylon ... the corresponding figures for Ceylon being 0-14 years 37 per cent ; 15-49 years 52 per cent ; 50 and over 11 per cent ...⁴⁰

VII

Social Background of the Emigrants

The history of emigration is only one part of the events which influenced the social structure of the Tamil estate labourers. The culture and attitude of the estate labourers have been moulded to a considerable extent by the social background of the emigrants. It is therefore but proper that we consider the social background of the estate Tamilians.

39. *Census of Ceylon*, 1946, p. 240.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 204

We have enumerated, in a general way, the types of caste groups emigrating to Ceylon. By and large, they belonged to the agricultural, trading or commercial and specialist castes of Tamilnad. The Brahmans of Tamilnad did not emigrate in large numbers. Only a few Brahman Kurukkals emigrated to Ceylon and they worked as temple priests and priests to Non-Brahman castes.

Among the agricultural castes emigrating to Ceylon, there were the Non-Brahman or *kudiyanaavan* (Cultivator) castes of owner-cultivators, tenants and landless agricultural labourers such as Vellalan, Kallan, Agamudaiyan, Ambalakkaran, Muthuraja and Padaiyachi. There were the agricultural labourers belonging to the Adi-Dravida or Untouchable groups of the Pallan, Paraiyan and Chakkiliyan castes. The traders were drawn from Non-Brahman castes, particularly castes such as Chettiar, Mudaliar and Pillai (Vellalan). The Parava caste from the Western coast of South India was one of the prominent groups among the traders. Castes such as Pariyari (Barber), Vannan (Washerman), Thachchan (Carpenter), Kosavan (Potter) constituted the specialist group.

The agricultural castes were able to find work on the estates, while the trading castes opened shops and business centers on estates and important towns in Ceylon. The specialist castes were able to pursue their traditional calling as there was a demand for their services on the estates and elsewhere. Those who were not able to pursue their traditional calling joined estates as labourers.

Caste and village background is our main concern here, since most of the emigrants came from villages and belonged to one caste or another of Tamilnad. Though the labour force on estates was supplied mainly from Trichinopoly and its adjoining districts, the study of the village background of the emigrants has to include the whole of Tamilnad, for people have emigrated from nearly all the Tamil districts of South India. Moreover, this study has to take into account the social structure of the village as it was in the later half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. Here our picture of Tamilnad, and in particular, the districts from which the emigrants hailed, is necessarily a reconstruction. It is partly derived from the early District Gazetteers and other written accounts about Tamilnad, and partly from accounts of very old

settlers now living in Ceylon.⁴¹

The advent of British rule in South India, in the later half of the eighteenth century, brought about certain changes in village society. The effects of these changes were felt more in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The village was deprived of its relative exclusiveness. The British administration introduced various measures which affected the life of the people. The new bureaucratic system went against the traditional social barriers. The bureaucratic system was supported by the liberal educational policy of the government. The introduction of a modern transport system improved the communication between villages and between villages and other parts of the country. These measures greatly helped the movement of people from one place to another.

In spite of these changes, villages continued to function in a more or less traditional manner and caste-based administrative bodies persisted outside the legal institutions established by the British Government. At this stage it may be worthwhile to recall the basic features of the caste system in Tamilnad.

Every Hindu is born into a *jati* or sub-caste. A number of sub-castes together form a larger caste. The unit of endogamy is, however, the *jati*. Since membership of a caste is through birth alone every caste is a closed unit. In the social order, each caste is given a rank in what can be called a hierarchy of castes. The rank in the hierarchy expressed itself in terms of purity and pollution.

41. The information about the social background of the emigrants was mostly gathered from the following sources:

- Lewis Moore, *A Manual of the Trichinopoly District in the Presidency of Madras* (Madras, 1878).
- F.R. Hemingway, *Madras District Gazetteers: Trichinopoly* (Madras, 1907), Vol. 1.
- F.J. Richards, *Madras District Gazetteers: Salem* (Madras, 1906).
- Imperial Gazetteers: *Madras Southern Districts* (Madras, 1906).
- Census of India, 1871* (Madras) Vol. I, Report by W.R. Cornish.
- Census of India, 1881* (Madras) Vol. I, Report by Lewis MacIver.
- Census of India, 1891* (Madras) Vol. XIII, Report by H.A. Stuart.
- Census of India, 1901* (Madras) Vol. XV, Report by W. Francis.
- E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909). 7 Vols.
- E. Kathleen Gough, "Caste in a Tanjore Village" in *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North-West Pakistan*, ed. by E.R. Leach (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 11-60.
- Lewis B. Green, *Planter's Book of Caste and Custom* (Colombo, 1926).
- G. Slater, *Some South Indian Villages* (Oxford, 1918).
- C.S. Srinivasachari, "Village Organization in the Madras Presidency at the time of the introduction of British rule", *Journal of the Annamalai University*, Vol. I, 1932, pp. 32-38.
- Tara Chand, *Freedom Movement in India* (New Delhi, 1961), Vol. I.

Political and economic factors also contributed to rank, though eventually they had to be indicated in ritual terms. Ritual purity is lessened by certain kinds of social contact with the lower castes. As is well-known, members of higher castes are forbidden to touch the lower castes. It is equally forbidden to eat with lower castes or eat food which they have cooked or handled. Ritual purity is lessened by certain kinds of behaviour and practices hereditarily allowed to certain caste members. Vegetarian castes are given a higher ritual status over non-vegetarian castes. Among the non-vegetarians, a person who eats goat's meat is considered superior to a pork or a beef-eater. Beef eating is considered as the most polluting habit. Moreover, to do work connected with death or body substances, like the work of the barber or washerman gives the caste pursuing such occupations a low status in the hierarchy of castes. It is easy to identify the position of Brahmans, the highest caste, whose habits and practices are the most exclusive. The lowest are the sweepers and leather workers belonging to the Untouchable group who dispose of dead animals and human excreta. They are the only people who are supposed to eat beef. They are supposed to eat from the hearths of almost all other castes. The commonly accepted rules of behaviour are more or less strictly enforced. Those who break them are judged by a *panchayat* of caste or village mates. It imposes fines and in the severest of cases excommunicates the culprit. The social sanctions are supported by the Hindu doctrine of *karma* and *dharma*.

Since there is a caste-wise division of labour and certain services are essential (smith, potter, barber, washerman, sweeper and priest) villages are generally multi-caste. Villages are nucleated and within a village houses are clustered in streets or hamlets. Generally, the residential area of one caste group is different from that of another. The living quarters of Brahmans, Non-Brahmans and Untouchables or Adi-Dravida castes are separate. This spatial distribution and segregation of the castes corresponded in large measure to their occupations and mutual ritual rank. Brahmans, being generally the highest caste of landlords, and ritually pure, live segregated in their streets (known as *agraharam*) of large brick and tile houses. The Untouchable group of Pallan, Paraiyan and Chakkiliyan castes, the lowest in the caste hierarchy, are landless labourers. They live in small thatched mud houses outside the

village proper. Their area of residence is known as *cheri* such as the Palla *cheri* or Para *cheri* inhabited by the Pallan or Paraiyan. The Non-Brahman castes, mostly farmers and farm-labourers with varied traditional backgrounds, occupy different positions in the middle-range of the caste hierarchy. They live in moderately built houses. It is the Brahmans and some Non-Brahman castes such as Vellalan, Mudaliar, Chettiar, Kallan, Maravan, Padaiyachi, Retti, Kowandan who own most of the land and rarely if ever did the Untouchable group own land in a significant way.

The broad caste categories like Brahman, Non-Brahman and Untouchable are further divided and sub-divided into smaller groups or *jatis*. For instance, though the Brahmans are generally classified as a single caste, they fall into many sub-divisions such as Smartha and Shri Vaishnava Brahmans. In the same way, Non-Brahmans fall into many divisions within which there are further sub-divisions. First of all, there are the Non-Brahman castes such as Vallalan, Mudaliar, Kallan, Maravan, Kowandan, Padaiyachi. They are the main land-owning castes among the Non-Brahmans. Then there are the smaller agricultural land-owners, farmers and farm-labourers among the Non-Brahmans such as Agamudaiyan, Muthuraja, Konan and Nayakkan. The specialist castes comprise Vannan (Washerman), Pariyari (Barber), Kollan (Blacksmith), Thattan (Goldsmith), Thachchan (Carpenter), Kosavan (Potter) and Melakkaran (Musician). There are also exclusively trading castes such as Chettians among the Non-Brahman group. The Adi-Dravida group consists of mainly three castes: Pallan, Paraiyan and Chakkiliyan. Among the Adi-Dravida castes again there are further divisions and sub-divisions.

In the preceding pages we have outlined the broad features of castes and their occupations. Though castes are known by their respective traditional calling, all the Non-Brahman castes except Potter, Washerman and Barber are predominantly dependent on agricultural occupations. On the whole, it is only the specialist castes who followed, in whole or part, their traditional work. Among the Brahmans it is only Panchangakarans and Kurukkals who are dependent on their traditional calling. The Adi-Dravida castes of Pallan, Paraiyan and Chakkiliyan were engaged as agricultural labourers. Thus there was heterogeneity in the choice of occupations. Though this heterogeneity in the choice of occupations

had affected the caste system, the ideas of ritual purity and pollution, the ritual rules of castes and their economic standing limited the scope for selection of occupations. It is a truism to say that no one would undertake forms of work traditionally proper to castes he considered lower than his own.

The internal organization of castes supported the sentiments of superiority and inferiority. Internally, each caste belonged to an endogamous group dispersed over many villages. Each of these endogamous groups adhered to the practice of close kin alliances, for it is a well-known fact that castes of Tamilnad, in varying degrees, had a preference for cross-cousin marriages. The close kin alliances and the resultant solidarity helped to maintain the unity of kin and caste groups.

In addition, these endogamous groups played a significant part in the maintenance of social order. In almost all the Non-Brahman and Untouchable castes, caste disputes were settled by *panchayats*. Normally, each endogamous sub-division of the caste in each village had its *periya tanakkaran* (headman) and his assistant *kariyastan* (secretary). A number of castes had in addition a *panchayat* with jurisdiction over each *nadu* or group villages. Again, normally, those disputes not decided within a caste were referred to the village *panchayat* or to the disputants' landlords. Thus the caste *panchayats*, the village *panchayats* and the patron-client relationships helped greatly in the preservation and continuity of the traditional order in the village.

Here a word must be added about the nature of the present day social structure of villages in Tamilnad. The last two decades have seen marked changes in the social structure of villages in Tamilnad. These changes have affected the caste structure. From the few modern studies that we have on Tamilnad, it is possible to discern a broad picture of the existing social structure in some districts of Tamilnad.⁴² It is seen that certain beliefs and practices such as purity-pollution, endogamy at sub-caste level and the social distance between castes of the same category such as the divisions among the Brahmans, the divisions among the Non-Brahmans and the divisions

42. E. Kathleen Gough, "Caste in a Tanjore Village", in *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North-West Pakistan*, ed. by E. R. Leach, pp. 11-60.

Andre Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power* (California, 1965). D. Sivertsen, *When Caste Barriers Fall* (New York, 1963).

among the Adi-Dravidas are weakened. But membership of a caste is still the over-all controlling if not determining factor in the lives of the people in the villages of Tamilnad.

Reasons for the persistence of caste restrictions and practices in Ceylon

In Ceylon too membership in caste is still important in the lives of the estate Tamilians. At this stage, therefore, it is necessary to examine the factors which are related to the pattern of emigration that contributed to the persistence of caste restrictions and practices.

Survival of caste practices

In the early days of the history of plantations the British planters owned most of the estates and Tamilians worked for them. Though the planters ignored the rules and the relationships regulated by caste membership between labourers, they could not directly wipe out the caste practice which had survived the journey from South India to Ceylon.⁴³ Many caste practices survived the journey for various reasons. In the first place, since the actual time spent in travelling from South India to Ceylon was short the emigrants from India were not required to sacrifice their caste practices by having to eat with others or eat food cooked or served by others.⁴⁴ In the second place, the actual operation of the recruitment system

43. The factors responsible for the persistence of caste restrictions can be gathered from Reports (e.g. *The Report of the Cooly Immigration Committee*, 1877), the writings of Planters (e.g. P.D. Millie, *Thirty years ago or Reminiscences of the early days of Coffee Planting in Ceylon*, 1878) and the account of old emigrants.

44. This is in contrast to Indian Emigration to distant places such as South Africa, Fiji, British Guiana and East Africa. For details of the sociological studies of Overseas Indian Communities, see the following works:—

Hilda Kuper, *Indian People in Natal* (Natal, 1960).

A.C. Mayer, *Peasants in the Pacific: A Study of Fiji Indian Rural Society* (London, 1961).

Chandra Jayawardena, *Conflict and Solidarity in Guianese Plantation* (London, 1963).

Morton Klass, *East Indians in Trinidad* (New York, 1961).

Stephen Morris, "Indians in East Africa: A study in a Plural Society" in *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. VII, No. 3, Sept. 1956, pp. 194-211.

R.W. Firth and others, "Factions in Indian and Overseas Indian Societies", in *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1957, pp. 295-306.

Burton Benedict, *Indians in a Plural Society* (London, 1961).

helped a great deal in preserving caste practices.⁴⁵ Intending emigrants from villages in Tamilnad were taken by the kanganis to the nearest recruiting centre. In Trichinopoly district, for instance, there were three centres of recruitment at Thuraiyur, Musiri and Kulittalai. After a formal registration at these centres, they were taken by road or rail to the port at Dhanushkodi or Tuticorin where they underwent a thorough medical examination. Those who embarked at Dhanushkodi were required to disembark at Talaimannar and then go by road or rail to their respective estates while those who embarked at Tuticorin disembarked at Colombo and then they were sent from there to their respective estates. The kangani led the emigrants from their natal villages in South India to the estates in Ceylon. Recruitment through a kangani prevented falsification of caste names, for the emigrants went with their families and those accompanying them were all known to each other, coming probably from the same village or adjoining villages. In addition, the kangani knew all of them. Hence, the emigrants could not change their castes as individuals either before departure for Ceylon or after reaching Ceylon. In the third place, the emigrants were, by and large, afraid of changing their occupations or caste practices, for fear that the moment they returned to India they would be subjected to the discipline of caste *panchayats*. In the fourth place, though the settlement pattern did not permit strict spatial segregation, castes were able to maintain their identity in separate estate line rooms. In the early days of the emigration, separate grass huts were erected for the labourers. It was only later that compact permanent lines were provided. In these concrete lines often persons belonging to the same caste occupied adjoining line rooms. In the fifth place, though their new work implied a break with tradi-

45. Many of the early Immigration Commissions took particular interest in the system and mode of labour recruitment. The reports of these Commissions provide some information about the conditions prevalent in those days. For instance, the *Report of the Cooily Immigration Committee, 1877* gives a kangani's account of the actual recruitment of workers and their movements to their respective estates. The questions put by the Commission and the answers given by the kangani are as follows: "(Q) What is your country? (A) Madura. (Q) What route do the coolies take from Madura? (A) They come this way (Tuticorin) as well as by the North Road. (Q) How many coolies have with you? (A) Fifteen. (Q) Will coolies of different castes eat together on the voyage? (A) They take only water. (Q) But supposing they are on voyage for four or six days? (A) They only take water. They don't eat anything." To the same Commission a trader in a vessel between India and Ceylon said "I give one meal a day. They bring with them some beaten rice, young coconuts and other little things and with this and that they manage."

tional occupational specialization, the members of the specialist castes such as Barber and Washerman were able to secure an opportunity to practice their traditional callings on the estates. The Untouchable castes such as Paraiyan and Chakkiliyan were also able to practise certain caste-oriented services for the others. Thus the new system had a very broad continuity with the old one. This meant that the hierarchical attitude which existed in India could be maintained though not with the same intensity.

In fact, the early planters allowed the system, which fostered interdependence as well as exclusiveness of castes, to work its own way. On the one hand, there were many occasions when the planters recognized the existence of caste feelings and respected them. Mary E. Steuart, who visited Ceylon in the early years of this century, gives us an illuminating example:

The poor woman with pneumonia is I am glad to know so much better. . . . One feels so helpless when any one of the coolies is ill, for the distinctions of caste make it so utterly impossible to help them. They would rather die than eat any food cooked in our kitchen, and much prefer trying charms and native medicaments rather than any treatment we would prescribe.⁴⁶

This shows that caste feelings were strong among the estate labourers and the planters felt helpless at certain manifestations of caste sentiment. Mary E. Steuart stayed in an estate, known as *Ranee thottam*, near Kandy for a year. She has in her record of day-to-day events of the estate more to say about the importance of caste among the estate labourers. In one place she writes:

Today arose one of the often recurring worries consequent on caste. On this estate at present we have only three low-caste coolies all the others are of such high caste that they will not work as kitchen coolies or be horse-keepers or go to Kandy with our beef box. On this present occasion one of these precious three was away on leave and the two were ill with fever. . . .⁴⁷

46. Mary E. Steuart, *Every day life on a Ceylon Cocoa Estate* (London, 1906), p. 36.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

Handwritten notes at the bottom of the page include "Xm 2, N 6", "N 67-4-4", and a large number "222514".

In the course of her discussion about estate life she observed :

The head-kangani who went to India... returned. We were in hopes that he would bring with him some additional coolies, and especially a few of low caste who would condescend to carry our 'beef box' and occasionally fill gaps about the bungalow. The dearth on Raneetottam of Pariah coolies causes us continual perplexity for none but that will act as kitchen cooly or as horse-keepers or fetch our meat supplies. This very day we were in absolute danger of famine, for the man who usually takes the 'beef box' has hurt his leg, two other Parians were engaged on necessary estate work, and the fourth has run away to shirk holing; *so there was no one left to undertake this very necessary duty without breaking caste, a thing not to be thought of for a moment.* At last the difficulty was solved by taking a man from the work he was already doing... *This system of caste complicates not only work, but also marriages, for the girls are absolutely compelled to marry into exactly the same caste as their own family. It also causes trouble in sickness, for however weak the invalid, he or she will eat nothing cooked by our servants or in our kitchen. On a friend's estate a poor woman was absolutely dying of exhaustion having been ordered by the Doctor a more nourishing diet, my friend begged to be allowed to send her jelly and chicken broth, she emphatically refused, but on great pressure being brought to bear she at last consented on condition that the lady cooked all the food herself, in brand new saucepans, that had never previously been used...*⁴⁸

The Kangani System : In the Early Days of Emigration

Moreover, the British planters gave encouragement to the kangani system which favoured the alignment of labourers on the basis of family and caste. There were two kinds of kanganis on estates: the head-kangani and the sub-kangani. Writing about the kangani system, the *Labour Commission*, 1908 points out a salient

48. *Ibid.*, p. 95 (Italics mine).

feature of the system viz., the alignment of labourers on the basis of family. The Commission observed that :

This system... is of a purely patriarchal character in its origin and principles. The kangani or Labour Headman, was in the beginning, and still is in a large number of the older and more solidly established estates, the senior member of the family group composed of his personal relatives to whom may be added other families drawn from villages in Southern India from the vicinity of which he and his relatives also come. The labour force thus formed is sub-divided into a number of smaller groups each under its patriarch, the sub or silara kangani; and the family principle is further manifested in the groups which are under these minor headmen, a man with his wife and children and, it may be, one or more close relations, assuming joint liability for advances made to them, and holding their earnings in some sort, common.⁴⁹

To a very large extent the above description of the kangani system holds good even today. The only significant change in the kangani system is the increasing tendency to replace head-kanganis by forming estate gangs under the control of estate management. Sub-kanganis continue to function both independently and under the estate gangs. These and other changes in the kangani system are discussed towards the end of this section.

The kangani system, in fact, decided which castes or group of castes migrated. Generally a kangani favoured members of his own caste. For example, if a Vellalan, who is high in the caste hierarchy of Tamilnad, was appointed as a head-kangani, he recruited, though not always, many Vellalans and other Non-Brahmans from his village or adjoining villages. He also brought along with him members of the Untouchable caste groups such as Pallans, Paraiyans and Chakkiliyans who recognized his position in the village in India. In this, the sub-kangani system gave different castes and families a certain amount of autonomy and exclusiveness for they could form separate sub-kangani gangs under a head-kangani.

49. *Report of the Labour Commission*, 1908, p. 1.

From various accounts about the kangani system in the past, it seems that a large number of head-kanganis belonged to the high Non-Brahman castes such as Vellalan, Kallan, Kowandan and Maravan. A head-kangani belonging to the Pallan, Paraiyan or Chakkiliyan caste had under him mainly his own castemen whereas this was not always the case with the Non-Brahman head-kanganis. Further, in the old kangani system the estate labourers had to align their sub-kangani groups with one head-kangani group or the other and they had, as sub-kangani groups or as individuals, no separate identity.¹ In reality, this meant that a large number of labourers belonging to the Pallan, Paraiyan and Chakkiliyan castes had to work under Non-Brahman head-kanganis.

The alignment between the Non-Brahman head-kanganis and the Untouchable labourers reflects the traditional caste hierarchy. The nature of resemblance between the caste hierarchy in Tamilnad and the alignment of labourers who went to Ceylon can be broadly presented in the following manner. The Brahmans, who are considered ritually the purest group, occupied the topmost position in the caste hierarchy in Tamilnad. The Non-Brahman castes occupied positions in between the Brahmans and the Untouchables. Lower castes, particularly the Untouchable castes of Pallan, Paraiyan and Chakkiliyan, formed the core of the lowest group in ritual terms. Even in economic terms, they were generally landless labourers, depending upon high caste landowners. Landowners came generally from among the Brahmans and a few upper caste Non-Brahmans such as Vellalan, Kallan, Kowandan and Maravan. They were the dominant caste in one district or another in Tamilnad. It is possible, therefore, to see the economic power, in a sense, reflected in the ritual positions of castes. This is in spite of the fact that some Brahmans and a large number of Non-Brahmans themselves were landless and depended on landowning castes. In the alignment of labourers who went to Ceylon under the head-kangani for work in the estates, it is generally the Non-Brahmans who took the leadership and worked as head-kanganis. This gave them a slightly superior economic position over the Untouchable group. This was so in spite of the fact that some persons belonging to the Untouchable group were head-kanganis and many persons belonging to Non-Brahman castes were only labourers.

The head-kanganis were the real masters of these labourers

working under them.⁵⁰ There were many instances when the planters had to listen to head-kanganis for they commanded the labourers.⁵¹ This was always the case in times of labour shortage. Particularly during such periods the planters tried to please the head-kanganis, for fear that the kanganis might take away their gangs. Moreover, the head-kanganis exercised decisive control over the labourers because most of them were indebted to them. This indebtedness was brought about by way of cash advanced, including the advances given initially by the head-kangani to the labourers to meet the expenses on the way to Ceylon from the home town in Tamilnad. The head-kanganis advanced money to labourers for purposes such as birth, puberty ceremony, marriage and death. Often they recovered from the labourers far more than the amount advanced. There was, in a sense, a sort of patron-client relationship between head-kanganis and labourers. It was a relationship in which the kanganis were more secure, being the creditors and the labourers who worked under them being the debtors.

50. About the institutions of head-kangani and sub-kangani, the *Report of the Labour Commission*, 1908 observes thus: "The head-kangani, as a patriarch of the whole labour force under his charge, transacts or supervises all the financial affairs of the estate with his coolies, with the exception of the payment of their wages. On a single estate there may be and often are several head-kanganis. Often the head-kangani is the sole debtor to the estates he being the medium through whom all advances are made, the sub-kanganis, and, it may be his own personal gang of labourers, owing him money, while the remainder of his coolies are responsible for their debts individual or collective to the sub-kanganis. In most of older and more firmly established estates the sub-kanganis and their coolies owe more money to their head-kangani than the latter owes to the estate, and in such instances the head-kangani, apart from being the head and the organizer of the labour force, actually assists the estates to finance the coolies. The head-kangani supervises work in the fields for which he draws what is called 'head-money', a sum that varies from 1½ to 2 cents per diem a head for every labourer who daily turns out to work. In addition, he is occasionally paid a fixed salary for special duties performed by him. The sub-kangani may owe money direct to the estate and to the head-kangani or may owe money only to the head-kangani. He is the sole creditor of the labourers who compose his gang. The sub-kangani usually works in the fields, either as labourer or as an overseer, and for this he receives a 'name' which means that he becomes entitled to a day's pay. He receives in addition what is known as 'pence money', viz., a sum from 3 to 4 cents a head daily for each labourer in his gang who turns out to work". p. 1.

51. P.D. Millie, *Thirty years ago or Reminiscences of the Early days of the Coffee Planting in Ceylon* (Colombo, 1878).

Millie gives in this book an interesting account about head-kanganis. "...on some estates where he has acquired the ear or confidence of the master, his influence was immense, his word was taken for everything and woe to the unfortunate sub-kangani or coolie who came under his displeasure. During crop time if a neighbour required assistance in labour from another estate, say on a Sunday, of course the master's consent was first obtained, but this was merely a point of etiquette, nothing would be done, without gaining over the head-kangani..." (The pages of this book are not numbered).

The patron-client relationship between the head-kanganis and the labourers extended further than this creditor-debtor relationship. The head-kanganis looked after the welfare of the labourers, represented them in the settlement of labour disputes, settled the disputes between labourers, and were generally called upon also to settle family disputes. In turn, besides his fixed monthly pay for supervising the work of the labour force, the head-kangani was paid by the estates a commission known as 'head money' or 'pence money' for every labourer of his gang who turned out for work. The labourers gave their help, physical or otherwise, whenever the head-kanganis wanted.

Some of these early head-kanganis were able to make money.⁵² They were the people who started acquiring plantations from the British along with other local people.⁵³ Many of the Tamilians who now own plantations are the descendants of head-kanganis and most of them belong to the upper Non-Brahman castes.⁵⁴

The Kanganis System at present

The kanganis system of today is not as powerful as it was before. In fact, there was a move in the 1930's and the 40's to abolish head-kanganiship through legislation. Many of the earlier head-kanganis, who have made money, have abandoned kanganiship. They joined business or bought plantations or have come back to India. In some cases the head-kanganiship has been hereditary in families. In the company-owned estates, the kanganiship of the old type is

52. P. D. Millie in his book offers an interesting case. He says '...I have seen on pay day at the pay-table the head-kanganis dressed out for the occasion, any amount of red turban and white cloth. He had a bag in his hand, and a few of his admirers and parasites behind him, a clerk was at his side with steel pen and talipot leaf, for the head-kangani could not write, this was far beneath his dignity. As the names were called out from the check-roll and sums counted out, the head-kangani swept them into his bag and the clerk made a note of it on his talipot leaf. On expressing my surprise at his system of paying, the master told me it saved a great deal of trouble, and was soon got through, that the head-kangani took the money to the lines and settled with the coolies and, I have no doubt he settled the matter in a way peculiar to himself.' *Ibid.*

53. Sinhalese, Pathans (popularly known as Bawa) and Tamil Chettians were the other communities who acquired plantations.

54. Vallalan, Kallan, Kowandan and Chettians are some of the high caste Non-Brahmans who own plantations now. In the past only a few Tamilians acquired estates and even this has stopped now-a-days.

Persons belonging to these castes were able to purchase estates partly because most of them had other sources of income such as trade or business and land in India. This helped to supplement the income from the kanganiship.

still to be seen. The present head-kanganis do not have the same kind of strong economic bonds with their gang members which their fathers and grandfathers had. There are various factors such as the general improvement in the bargaining position of the labourers brought about by joining trade unions, the rise in the wages of labourers and the ban on immigration into Ceylon from about the 40's which has contributed to this situation.⁵⁵ With the ban on the immigration of Tamilians into Ceylon from about the 40's, the head-kanganis could no longer perform the role of recruiters of labour force.

Hence, the labourers, as never before, are free to move from one kanganis gang to another. This tendency is seen in the frequent and voluntary migration of labourers from one estate to another. This has also brought about a change in the alignment of labourers. Now the labourers have the option of enlisting themselves under any head-kanganis they like or with the group known as the 'estate gang' which is directly under the management's control. This has also helped the free movement of labourers from one estate to another. However, it must be kept in mind that the increasing tendency to replace head-kanganis by forming estate gangs need not necessarily bring about changes in the alignment of labourers. In the estate gang, as in the head-kanganiship, there are sub-kanganis. The sub-kanganis in an estate gang operate on the same lines as the

55. According to the *Report of Commission, 1917* (member N. E. Narjoribanks and the Hon. A. T. Marakkayar) the wage rates of the labourers were as follows. Pruners...40 to 45 cents per day; Pluckers...25 to 30 cents per day; Factory workers...50 to 60 cents per day. Karumuttu Thiagaraja, writing in the *Indian Review*, March, 1917, pp. 180-84, about the "Indian Coolies in Ceylon Estates", gives his own data on wage rates: Pruners...40 cents per day; Pluckers...25 cents per day; Factory workers...40 cents per day. The average monthly income, from the same source, was about 12 to 15 rupees and the monthly expenditure was about 8 to 10 rupees.

The following Table shows the wage rate in August, 1960 in the Brekale Estate.

Type of worker	Basic rate (Rs.) per day	Special allowance (Rs.) per day	Total (Rs.) per day
Male workers not under 16 years	1.25	1.12	2.37
Female workers not under 15 years	1.05	0.84	1.89
Child worker	0.80	0.77	1.57

In addition, a family, consisting of husband, wife and children, might take up contract work by which they might get another 20 to 30 rupees a month. This is, however, seasonal. In a month on an average a labourer gets work for about 25 to 27 days. The average monthly income is about 50 to 60 rupees. The average monthly expenses are about 40 to 50 rupees.

sub-kanganis under a head-kangani's gang. At the same time many of these modern features have brought about certain changes, particularly in the field of caste relations.

Summary

To sum up, in this paper I have tried to examine the historical and social background of Indian emigration to Ceylon which in many ways moulded the social system of the labourers on estates.

In tracing the background, I have pointed out that it was mostly the Tamilians from South India who emigrated to Ceylon. They moved in large numbers from about the middle of the nineteenth century till about the 'forties' of the present century to work as labourers on the coffee, tea and rubber plantations. A majority of them were Hindus, and belonged to the Non-Brahman and Adi-Dravida castes of Tamilnad. Further, the emigrants moved into Ceylon in small groups or gangs. Each group was headed by a head-kangani who recruited, directed and controlled the labourers in his group. The system of recruiting labourers through head-kanganis for the purpose of work on estates is known as the kangani system.

I have argued that the kangani system has helped to perpetuate caste and kin-group among the Tamilian estate labourers in Ceylon, for each kangani group was relatively homogeneous in terms of caste and kinship. However, it is necessary to distinguish between the head-kangani whose group was more heterogeneous in terms of caste and kinship, and the sub-kangani who had a more homogeneous group.

Though large-scale recruitment of labourers from India ceased from the 'forties, the system of labourers forming small groups under kanganis continued to operate in estates. Even to this day kanganis perform the functions of supplying and controlling labour force. In addition, they have become labour supervisors on estates. The labour gangs formed by the kanganis are recognized as working groups by estate management. Even today, as it was during the time of large-scale recruitment, a kangani represents the labourers in his gang, for in most cases he belonged to the same caste and kinship groups. The formation of working gangs under kanganis, formed as it is on caste and kinship lines, does help to preserve the

caste and kinship identities of people on estates.

However, the survival of caste restrictions and practices cannot be attributed to the survival of the kangani system alone. Many traditional practices survived in Ceylon also due to factors such as the physical proximity of Ceylon, the agricultural set up of the tea plantations, the comparative physical isolation of estate communities from the rest of the society and the opportunities for certain castes such as Barbers and Washermen to practice their traditional callings on estates. The interplay of these factors created conditions which provided a broad continuity with the spatial and social set up of the Indian village.⁵⁶

56. I thank Professor M. N. Srinivas and Dr. Andre Beteille for their comments and suggestions on a preliminary draft of the paper.

Technical Education in India, 1900-1920

APARNA BASU

The system of education introduced by the East India Company in the 1830s was, to begin with, mainly geared to the administrative needs of the country and encouraged literary and philosophic studies rather than those of a more practical character. This bias in the system was accentuated by another fact. Higher caste Hindus who were the first to take to English education, had a tradition of pure literary and religious education, and were averse to manual or technical training. As a result while pupils in high schools and arts colleges increased at a remarkably rapid rate, the growth of technical education was very slow. At the beginning of the century there were 140 English Arts colleges with over 17,000 pupils in them, while there were only 4 engineering colleges and four medical colleges.* The number of pupils in professional colleges, excluding law, was 2,491. There were 3,097 English secondary schools with 422,187 pupils in them, as against only 84 industrial and technical schools with an enrolment of 4,977.¹

Lord Curzon who assumed the Viceroyalty in 1898 was immensely interested in problems of educational planning and policies. He wanted to give, if possible, a new direction to Indian education and, therefore, turned his attention to the question of technical education. In 1900 he appointed Sir Edward Buck to advise him on this subject, but Buck's recommendation that technical and industrial schools should be placed under a separate technological department was never carried out.² The Simla Conference which Curzon convened in 1900 to discuss educational problems and initiate a new policy passed numerous resolutions on the subject of

*See Tables at the end of this article.

1. *Progress of Education in India, 4th Quinquennial Review*, Vol. II, pp. 22, 66, 72.

2. *Edn. A*, Dec. 1901, Progs. 20-21 (N.A.I.).

technical education but they were of little value, because of the dominating idea that it was outside the province of government to take any part in the industrial development of the country. After the assumption of direct rule by the Crown in 1858, the *laissez-faire* policy of the Home Government was extended to India. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, all that the Government did to assist industry was to provide a certain amount of technical and industrial education, and to attempt to collect and disseminate commercial and industrial information.³ Its efforts to develop the material resources of the country were largely limited to provision for improved methods of transport and the construction of irrigation works. Except in Bombay, the introduction of modern methods of manufacture was almost entirely confined to the European community. The Education Department was not concerned with the mercantile aspects of technical education.⁴ The development of trade or industry were subjects which Curzon also wanted to be "solved by the application of private enterprise and capital."⁵

The Viceroy's idea was to spend money and effort on technical and industrial schools, not on higher technical education, to provide for "the less favoured tens of thousands" and not for the select few.⁶ Around 1896 Jamsetji Tata conceived the idea of vesting in trustees certain houses and landed property of his in Bombay and utilising the income from it for endowing a Research Institution. A scheme was drawn up and presented to Curzon on the day after his arrival in India.⁷ The new Viceroy was not however enthusiastic about the same because he believed that India was not yet ready for higher technical education, and that there was a certain danger in starting too many ambitious schemes. He felt that Tata's plans for a Research University were premature and to the Secretary of State expressed the view :

"There are in India neither the students for the work nor the places for them when they have completed their studies, and I shall not myself be at all surprised, though I should bitterly regret, if in another ten or fifteen years time the costly experiment will turn out to have been a dismal failure."⁸

Curzon believed that the "native party" had captured the movement for a technical university in Bombay, and to Lord Ampthill, Governor of Madras, he wrote :

"It is strange to me that Englishmen do not see that this rage for so-called technical education in India is merely one more aspect of the craze for posts, for the finding of billets, for young men of the educated classes, who, if they fail, as nine out of ten will fail, will only add to the discontented hordes."⁹

The Indian National Congress in 1900 passed a Resolution expressing its "grateful appreciation of the patriotic and munificent gift of Mr. Tata" for higher scientific education and research. The Indian newspapers all welcomed Tata's scheme and condemned Government's attitude as a fresh illustration of "bureaucratic intolerance of indigenous enterprise."¹⁰ They accused Curzon of deliberately delaying the scheme and putting spokes in the wheel. But the Secretary of State agreed with the Viceroy that "the keenness of natives for technical education" arose from the belief that whereas the purely literary degree which they now obtained failed to give them employment, technical education would offer them alternative occupation. This, wrote Hamilton, is putting the cart before the horse, since "for a generation or more to come, manufacturing employment in India cannot so develop as to afford occupation for any appreciably large number of technically trained students".¹¹ This was largely true because there were few industries

3. *Report of the Indian Industrial Commission, 1916-18*, p. 92. For further discussion on this subject see Vera Anstey's *The Economic Development of India*, (London, 1929), Chap. IX. D. R. Gadgil, *Industrial evolution of India*, (London, 1933), Chap. XIV. P. P. Pillai, *Economic Conditions in India*, (London, 1925), Chap. XI. L. C. A. Knowles, *The Economic Development of the British Overseas Empire*, (London, 1924), Vol. I, pp. 101, 299-301, 322, 342, 413.

4. Resolution No. 101 passed at the Simla Conference in 1901. Edn. A. Nov. 1901, Progs. 47-61, (N.A.I.).

5. *Lord Curzon in India*, (Speeches), ed. T. Raleigh, London, 1906, p. 333.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 334.

7. Edn. A. May, 1903, Proc. 7. See also Edn. A. Dec. 1899, Progs. 33-36. Edn. A. June 1899, Progs. 81-85.

8. Curzon to Hamilton, 30.8.1903, Curzon Papers, (162).

9. Curzon to Ampthill, 21.2.1901, Curzon Papers, (203).

10. *India Mirror*, 12.4.1904. Native Newspaper Reports from 1898 onwards contain frequent attacks on Government policy towards Tata's scheme for a Research University.

11. Hamilton to Curzon, 25.0.1901, Curzon Papers, (160).

run by Indians¹² and when the European-managed industries required men with technical knowledge for responsible posts, they almost always preferred Europeans. The Europeans and Anglo-Indians held most of the superior posts in Indian industry, especially in the manufacturing and construction fields. Indians in the main occupied subordinate and clerical situations. La Touche, the Lieutenant-

The following table illustrates industrial control by communities in 1911.

No. of Companies		No. of Directors
British	282	652
Parsis	15	96
Gujaratis	3	71
Jews	5	17
Muslims	—	24
Bengalis	8	48
Marawaris	—	6
Mixed Control	28	102

[Source : B. B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes*, (London, 1961), p. 250.]

Governor of U. P. wrote to Lord Ampthill that while the European mill-owners of Kanpur wanted Indian labour, they preferred to import Europeans for supervision.¹³ Both the Madras Chamber of Commerce and the Upper India Chamber of Commerce held that it would be extremely difficult to replace European experts by Indians. Except cotton textiles, most of the industries were European owned and they preferred to employ their own countrymen in superior positions. The Director-General of Education considered this as one of the most serious obstacles to the growth of higher technical education in India.¹⁴

Curzon was, therefore, interested not in the development of higher technical education but in encouraging technical and industrial schools. In 1901 he appointed a committee to study this

12. This was specially true of Bengal, where British and Scottish interests had almost an exclusive control of tea, jute and coal. In Bombay Presidency, however, Gujarati Hindus, Parsis and Jews held the ground successfully. See *Industries Commission Report*, para 102 ; also para 135. M. M. Mehta, *Structure of Indian Industries*, (Bombay 1955), p. 281. Dr. Mehta has made a statistical study of certain Indian business communities in relation to specific industries. He shows that right until 1911 the British played a major part in India's industrial life, except in Bombay.

13. La Touche to Ampthill, 6.6.1904, Ampthill Collection, Mss. Eur.E.233.

14. *Progress of Education in India, 5th Quinquennial Review*, Vol. 1, paras 590-591.

subject, with Col. Clibborn as its President, but its report greatly disappointed the Viceroy and was consequently never published.¹⁵

The only concrete proposal that emerged from the Simla Conference was the establishment of ten technical scholarships to enable Indians to proceed to England and Europe and America for special training.¹⁶ The scholars were to be chosen by the Provinces not by the Universities. The response to this scheme from the local governments as well as from India Office was lukewarm.¹⁷ The Indian Government had excluded law, medicine, veterinary science and forestry from the list of subjects in which scholarships could be awarded and at the suggestion of the Secretary of State also excluded engineering.¹⁸ He felt that there were enough Indians already clamouring for entrance to Cooper's Hill College. Progress on this scholarship scheme was, however, slow. Between 1900 and 1918 about a hundred students were sent abroad of whom sixty returned home. Difficulties for Indians to get training and practical experience abroad made these schemes only partially successful. The Industrial Commission in 1916, therefore, recommended that more facilities for technical and technological training should be provided here in India, rather than send students abroad. The students who completed their courses and returned expected jobs with greater responsibility and salary than were available.¹⁹ It became therefore difficult to attract the class of students to climb eventually to the top of the managerial ladder. Curzon's object was to limit the importation of senior grades of engineers in the Public Works Department and also in industries. But since Indians had in the past been excluded from responsible posts, the industries still doubted their ability to handle technological problems efficiently, especially when trained abroad independently of the needs of India.

The provincial governments, which never seemed to show enthu-

15. Edn. A. Oct. 1903. Prog. 13. Notes, Curzon, 16. 7. 1903.

16. Resolution No. 5 of the Simla Conference. Edn. A. Nov. 1901, Progs. 46-61. (N.A.I.).

See *Report of the Morison Committee on State Technical Scholarships*. Cd. 6867, P. P. 1913, Vol. xlvii.

17. Secretary of State's Despatch No. 65 (Public), 29. 5. 1903. J & P, 811/1903, Vol. 633, 1903.

18. *Idem*.

19. *Progress of Education in India, Seventh Quinquennial Review, 1912-1913 to 1916-1917*, Vol. 1, p. 154.

siasm for any departure from the status quo, were extremely apathetic towards technical education schemes. In 1903, the Government of India sent out a circular letter asking for suggestions on the utilisation of an additional grant for technical education.²⁰ The replies were most disappointing and oscillated between "bored indifference and futile suggestions."²¹ Mr. A.T. Arundel, member of the Governor-General's Council, remarked that the results of the circular were "scanty" because in many parts of India there was "no demand for the trained artisan or pupil from the industrial schools. In some cases the trained pupil has been able to find no occupation in the industry he has learnt and has to turn to teaching others who were as little wanted as himself."^{21(a)} Assam wanted no grant for technical education, neither did Madras.²² The Lieut. Governor of the Punjab replied that he proposed no immediate establishment of a large number of industrial schools at Government expense.²³ U.P. on the advice of the Upper India Chamber of Commerce, considered technical schools "unnecessary" and were of the opinion that industrial schools for local handicrafts "would serve no useful purpose."²⁴ Bengal and Bombay alone put up some sort of a scheme.²⁵ The replies convinced Curzon that there was not much genuine demand for technical education, that "a few persons who talked on technical education have any idea what it really means" and that it had so far mainly subsisted on "platitudes and gubernatorial speeches."²⁶ The replies of the local governments were yet another illustration of their inability to gauge or respond to public opinion.

Since the 1880s educated Indians had been pressing for more government expenditure and facilities for technical education. At its third session at Madras in 1887, the Indian National Congress

passed a resolution "that having regard for the poverty of the people, it is desirable that the Government be moved to elaborate a system of technical education..." This Resolution was repeated in different words year after year. There were repeated references to "the imperative need for technical education" in the Congress Presidential Addresses by W.C. Bonnerji in 1892, Anandamohan Bose in 1898, Chandavarkar in 1900, Pandit Malaviya in 1909 and in subsequent addresses also.²⁷ The newspapers were continually criticising the Government for not making enough provision for technical education. *The Native Newspaper Reports for almost any year during this period and for any province contain numerous criticisms of the official policy, the chief target being the inadequate expenditure on technical education. When the Curzon Fund for commemorating Queen Victoria had amounted to Rs. 1½ crores, public opinion was strong that the money should be used for advanced technical education. Khaparde suggested that the amount should be used for adding to Tata's "princely gift" for the proposed Research Institute which would have enabled a large number of Indians to be trained in the advanced sciences. But Curzon refused and planned "a memorial in stone" for the Queen instead.²⁸ To show that the subject of technical education and industrial development had something more than merely "an extraordinary fascination for the tongue in India"²⁹ efforts were made by Indians to do something on their own. In 1887 the Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute had been established in Bombay largely through private efforts. Various private projects were started enabling students to proceed abroad for technical training. In 1904 an Association was started in Calcutta for the advancement of the Scientific and Industrial Education of Indians, the main object of which was to send

20. Edn. A. Nov. 1905, Progs. 44-56.

21. *Ibid.*, Notes, Curzon, 29.7.1905,

21. (a). *Ibid.*, Notes Arundel, 25.7.1905.

22. Edn. A. Nov. 1905, Proc. 44. "In this province organised industry does not exist... There are no great industrial centres in this Presidency... and the small industries or local handicrafts appear to be decaying rather than advancing".

23. Edn. A. Nov. 1905, Proc. 49. (N.A.I.).

24. Edn. A. Nov. 1905, Proc. 41, (N.A.I.).

25. Edn. A. Nov. 1905. Proceedings 45 and 46. Bombay wanted 3 or 4 new technical schools, reorganise the V.J.T.I., etc. Bengal wanted an Institute of Weaving at Serampore.

26. Curzon, Notes, 29.7.1905, Proceedings 44-56. (N.A.I.).

27. See Indian National Congress Resolutions and Presidential Addresses.

28. Khaparde Collection, Diary, 11.2.1901.

*The *Kesari* wanted the D.P.I., Bombay to explain why, while Japan could, within a period of thirty years, manage to make its subjects thoroughly proficient in the industrial arts of the West, the British in India, "should not be able to accomplish anything beyond producing a few sapless graduates..." It held that higher education given for forty years had not resulted in prosperity because the technical part had been allowed to lag behind the liberal and "government had never gone an inch beyond boasting of its noble intentions..." 27 (a).

27. (a) *Kesari*, 22.11.1898.

29. A phrase used by Curzon and quoted by N.G. Chandavarkar in his Presidential Address to the Lahore Congress, 1900. *Congress Presidential Addresses* Vol. I, p. 441.

students to Japan, the United States and other European countries.³⁰ The National Fund and Industrial Association of Madras, and the Indian Industrial Development Scheme in Bombay were started with the same object in view. An Industrial Conference sponsored jointly by Indian industrialists and the Indian National Congress was held at Benares in December 1905 and thereafter met every year as an adjunct of the Congress. The Benares Conference suggested that the Government should establish at least one Polytechnic Institute for the whole of India and one technological college for each province, but such proposals coming from Indians were always dismissed as vague or impractical or showing a lack of appreciation of the difficulties of the problem.³¹ Curzon rejected them as "native clamourings for things about which they know nothing".³² Minto's officials assured him that such "harmless platitudes" deserved no serious attention.³³

However, Indian business and political leadership took the initiative in advancing the study of science and technology. The leaders of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal started a college of engineering and technology at Jadavpur in 1907, at present one of the important centres of technical education in India.³⁴ While other national schools and colleges collapsed ignominiously, the technical college survived and flourished which was itself a proof of the genuine demand for technical education.

Hardinge's Government realised that there was a genuine popular demand for technical education, and the Viceroy suggested to Lord Crewe that a grant of a crore of rupees for technical education could be the boon the King may announce, as a gift from England, at the Coronation Durbar. He thought that such an announcement would appeal tremendously "to the imagination and impressionability of the Indian people..." and hopefully believed that as a result "all doubtful moderates would rally to the side of loyalty", and that they would hear no more of sedition for a long

30. *Indian Industrial Commission Report*, 261. The Association gave 16 scholarships in 1904, 44 in 1905 and 96 in 1906. In 1916-17 it was reported that 156 of its scholars had returned and 140 were employed. *Ibid.* 261.

31. W.S. Marris, Notes, 24.2.1906, Edn. A. April 1906, Progs. 22-26, (N.A.I.).

32. Curzon, Notes, 29.7.1905, Edn. A. Nov. 1905, Progs. 44-56, (N.A.I.).

33. W.S. Marris, Notes, 24.2.1906, Edn. A. April 1906, Progs. 22-26, (N.A.I.).

34. For an early history of the Bengal Technical Institute and the Bengal National College see Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, *The Origins of the National Education Movement*. (Calcutta, 1957), pp. 171-174, 404-409.

time to come.³⁵ Hardinge, impressed by Sir George Clarke's³⁶ arguments suspected that Gokhale and the educated Indians were not keen on technical education, because it would divert young men from the Universities and high schools into commercial and industrial lines, and thus reduce political discontent.³⁷ Absurd though it seems, he believed that Indian extremists were terrified at the idea of a huge grant for technical education, because it might buy loyalty and secure peace.³⁸ The gift of a crore of rupees from England to India for technical education was originally an idea of Chirol, the correspondent of the London Times³⁹, and Hardinge thought it an excellent suggestion. At the same time he wanted cotton excise duty to be ear-marked for technical education⁴⁰; it would answer the charge of those who accused them of exploiting India for the commercial interests of Lancashire. The Secretary of State, however, rejected the idea arguing that the British cabinet would never agree to it.⁴¹

The Government of India, however, made generous grants to technical education, including one single non-recurring grant in 1911 of Rs. 16 lakhs. During Lord Hardinge's administration, a fifth medical college was opened at Lucknow, a School of Tropical Medicine was established in Calcutta, a Bacteriological Laboratory at Parel near Bombay, and the Lady Hardinge Medical College was started at Delhi. Though new institutions were opened and more money spent, the men trained in these places still looked to Government for employment. This was true of doctors and more so of engineers. The Government of India appointed Lt. Col. Atkinson and Mr. Dawson to make an enquiry as to the means of bringing technical institutions into closer touch with employers of labour. The Atkinson-Dawson Committee came to the conclusion that there was practically no opening for those who possessed higher theoreti-

35. Hardinge to Crewe, 25.1.1911. (117).

36. George Clarke to Hardinge, 2.8.1911. Hardinge Papers (82).

37. Hardinge to Chirol, 16.2.1911. *Ibid.* (92) & Hardinge to Crewe, 92. 1911. *Ibid.* (117).

38. Hardinge to Crewe, 25.1. 1911. *Ibid.* (92).

39. Chirol to Hardinge, 16.12.1910. *Ibid.* (92).

40. Hardinge to Chirol, 16.2.1911. *Ibid.* (92). Hardinge to Crewe, 4.1.11. *Ibid.* (117).

41. Crewe to Hardinge, 16.12.1910; 30.12.1910. *Ibid.* (117).

cal training, but ample employment for the practically trained.⁴² The Report also said that it was "almost the universal opinion" of the employers they had interviewed that there was no opening for high grade mechanical and electrical engineers in India.⁴³

Engineering colleges were established and conducted with a view only to recruitment to the several branches of the Public Works Department and the Railways. The Imperial Engineering Service was reserved for Europeans, and to the Provincial Engineering Service nine to ten appointments were made each year from the four engineering colleges.⁴⁴ Even as late as 1919, a P.W.D. Re-organisation Committee suggested that one engineering college would suffice for the whole of India, since an annual output of about a hundred civil engineers was considered enough.⁴⁵ There were more engineers than jobs for them; the Madras Engineering College produced thirty graduates a year, but only twelve of them could be employed in the P.W.D., with the result that sixty per cent of them accepted subordinate posts carrying a salary of rupees sixty a month.⁴⁶ Elsewhere the situation was no different; graduates of Poona Engineering College and of Sibpur were also forced to accept posts which could easily have been filled by men less qualified.⁴⁷ Engineering graduates of Poona, even those who stood second or third accepted subordinate posts carrying salaries of Rs. 60/- per month. 46% of subordinate posts in Bengal were filled by B.E. graduates.

This recommendation of the P.W.D. Re-organisation Committee for a single engineering college was rejected as "a retrograde step" which would "spell development on wrong lines"⁴⁸. Yet, there was not much point in developing higher technical education without a corresponding development of Indian industries. In Madras⁴⁹ a

42. *Report on the enquiry to bring technical institutions into closer touch and more practical relations with the employers of labour in India*, E.H. de V. Atkinson and T.S. Dawson (Calcutta 1912), para 18.

43. *Ibid.* para 25 (a).

44. *4th Quinquennial Review*, Vol. I, para 745.

45. D.G. Harris, Notes, 18.3.1918, Edn. A. Jan. 1919, Prog. 36. (N.A.I.).

46. *Idem.* The annual requirements of Madras were as follows: Irrigation branch—80; District Board—62; Government Inspecting Staff—9; Municipalities—20; Miscellaneous—50; Surplus—79; Total 300.

47. Edn. A. Jan. 1919, Prog. 36.

48. C.H.A. Hill, Notes, Edn. A. Jan. 1919, Prog. 56, (N.A.I.).

49. A full account of the Madras Department of Industries is given in Appendix I of the *Report of the Industrial Commission*.

separate Provincial Department of Industries was instituted in 1906, with Sir Alfred Chatterton as "Director of Industrial and Technical Inquiries", in anticipation of the consent of the Secretary of State. The operations of the Department though eagerly welcomed by the Indian public, created alarm in European business circles, where they were regarded as "a serious menace to private enterprise and an unwarrantable intervention on the part of the state in matters beyond the sphere of Government".⁵⁰

Lord Morley, the Secretary of State, in his reply to the proposal put forward by the Madras Government took the view of the European business men, and rejected the scheme for the establishment of a separate Department of Industries. He wrote:

"The policy that I am prepared to sanction is that state funds may be expended upon familiarising the people with such improvements in the methods of production as modern science and the practice of European countries suggest; further than this the state should not go, and it must be left to private enterprise to demonstrate that these improvements can be adopted with commercial advantage."⁵¹

As a result the Madras Department of Industries was abolished. Morley wanted government funds to be spent on industrial schools but even this was not done as the Government of India had neither the organisation nor the equipment to give effect to even this limited policy sanctioned by the Secretary of State. Crewe, who succeeded Morley at the India Office, gave greater latitude to Delhi by expressing himself in favour of "the purchase and maintenance of experimental plants" by the Government.⁵² But the Indian Government were still unsure as to how far they were justified in directly encouraging industrial activity, and these doubts continued till the outbreak of the First World War.

There was obviously not much point in encouraging the growth of higher technical institutions, when there were no industries to absorb the men trained in them. The total capital invested in

50. *Report of the Industrial Commission*, para 170. See also V. Anstey, *Economic Development of India*, p. 211. P. Pillai, *Economic Conditions in India*, pp. 309-312.

51. Despatch No. 50, Revenue, 29 July, 1910.

52. Despatch No. 24, Revenue, 12 April, 1912.

Indian Industries in 1901 was Rs. 35½ crores, equal to the amount raised per week in England and Ireland. The joint-stock capital of these two together was £ 900,000,000 as against India's £ 23,600,000.⁵³ Given India's industrial backwardness, the opening for the qualified technical personnel was limited. What Curzon had hoped to encourage were industrial schools. There were two classes of such schools—technical schools which were established with a view to improve local methods and processes, and industrial orphanages and mission schools, the object of which was to train poor children to earn a livelihood. The majority of technical schools did little towards furthering the object with which they were founded and there was not enough co-ordination between the courses of instruction and the special local industries. In 1904, a bitter controversy raged in the Bombay Press over an additional grant to the V.J.T.I. Industrialists of the eminence of Sir Victor Sassoon, Vithaldas Thackersey, Dwarkadas Dharamsey and others were all of the view that the system of training at the Institute was not adapted to local requirements. It was urged that the Education Department should take steps to bring technical institutes into closer touch with the local industries.⁵⁴

Curzon also wanted high schools to bifurcate their courses so as to enable boys to study practical subjects instead of ordinary literary courses. This was of course not a novel proposal. The Education Commission of 1883-84 had recommended that "in the upper classes of high schools there should be two divisions; one leading to the Entrance examination of the universities; the other of a more practical character intended to fit youths for commercial or non-literary pursuits."⁵⁵ Since 1884 some schools did provide commercial and technical courses, but intelligent boys never took these courses and a certain stigma was attached to them.

The technical and industrial schools were in a poor condition and were largely engaged in teaching carpentry and smithy work to boys who never intended to be carpenters or blacksmiths.⁵⁶ To

53. Note of George Watt. Reporter on Economic Products to the Govt. of India, 11.9.1901, Curzon Papers (250).

54. Edn. A. Nov. 1905, Progs. 44-56.

55. Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1883-84, Vol. I, pp. 220-21 and 883-84.

56. Buck's Report on Industrial Schools, p. 33, in Edn. A. Dec. 1901, Progs. 20-21.

improve these schools ample funds were necessary. Though government grants for technical education increased from Rs. 2½ lakhs in 1905 to Rs. 15 lakhs in 1920,⁵⁷ the sum was not adequate to put technical education on a sound footing. The expenditure on this branch of education was bound to be high because of the expensive equipment required. While the average annual cost of educating a pupil in an arts college, in 1902, was nearly one hundred and fifty rupees, for a professional college the amount was two hundred and thirty-three rupees. The average cost per pupil in ordinary secondary school was Rs. 21.0.2, and in a special school Rs. 53.13.4.⁵⁸ To make real advance in technical education a much larger expenditure was necessary, than either London or the Finance Department were prepared to sanction. Even a minor project to establish a technical institute at Kanpur was delayed by more than twelve years because London thought the expense too great. The U. P. Government suggested in 1907 the setting up of a technological institute at Kanpur. The Indian Government supported the scheme and forwarded it to London. The Secretary of State in his reply stated that the scheme seemed too costly and suggested that it be revised. A modified scheme was submitted but the Institute was not started till 1920.⁵⁹

As far back as 1884, the Report of the Education Commission had drawn the attention of the local governments to the desirability of encouraging technical education. In 1888 the Government of India asked the local governments to appoint special officers to conduct industrial surveys with the view of stimulating local trades and manufactures and establishing industrial schools. The surveys were made and various suggestions were submitted for practical action. On receiving the reports, the Centre took no action, and of all the recommendations only one was put into effect⁶⁰. The education officers had no practical training, possessed no technical knowledge, and had no contact with industrial occupations. They had no clear notion of what industrial schools or the courses provided in them should be like. With their own liberal, classical

57. Edn. Despatch, Feb. 1920, No. 57.

58. 4th Quinquennial Review, Vol. II, pp. 18-19.

59. Despatch No. 110 (Public), J & S, 3666/13, Vol. 1, 1262, 1913. Edn. A. March 1920, Progs. 6-39.

60. Edn. A. Dec. 1901, Progs. 20-21.

and non-specialised educational background, English civilians or educationists were hardly the persons to divert a new generation of Indians into technical education. Neither were the high caste Hindus, who had almost a monopoly of collegiate and secondary education, interested in a non-literary education for their sons.

Hence progress of technical education, despite all the conferences and resolutions on the subject was slow. As Curzon himself admitted the "plant of technical and industrial education" in India subsisted mainly on "platitudes in viceregal and gubernatorial speeches"⁶¹. The question had been before the government and the public since the 1880s, yet little had been accomplished till 1920.

TABLE 1
GROWTH OF ARTS COLLEGES AND PUPILS IN
THEM, 1896-97 TO 1916-17

	1896-97	1901-02	1906-07	1911-12	1916-17
Arts Colleges	120	145	136	140	134
Pupils in Arts Colleges	14,420	17,655	18,918	29,648	47,135
Professional Colleges	40	46	46	46	61
Pupils in Professional Colleges	4,263	5,358	6,250	6,636	11,504

[Source: **Progress of Education in India*, 1912-17, 7th Quinquennial Review, Vol. II, p. 99 and p. 101].

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF PUPILS IN VARIOUS COURSES,
1896-97 TO 1916-17

	B. A.	B. Sc.	M. B.	L. M. S.	B. of Law	B. E.	L. C. E.
1896-97	1,354	12	8	64	411	5	24
1901-02	1,476	14	2	106	582	16	73
1906-07	1,565	38	19	131	580	19	41
1911-12	2,235	280	26	156	74	29	16
1916-17	4,468	439	219	34	1,228	74	...

[Source: *Progress of Education in India*, 1912-17, 7th Quinquennial Review, Vol. II, p. 111].

61. Edn. A. Nov. 1905. Progs. 44-56, Curzon, Notes, 29.7.1905,

Growth Pattern of a 'Rural' Town (1851-1961): A case study*

CHITTAPRIYA MUKHOPADHYAY

I

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the pattern of urban growth that was taking place in India (and more particularly in Bengal) had two different streams. The "factitious stimulus," provided by the Army and the Court, "to the excessive congregation in the capital, of professions and industries,"—"a state of affairs that was fatal of course to the growth of the smaller towns,"—was, "not likely to continue under the plain utilitarianism of the British system of government."¹

On the other hand, "the stimulating presence of the foreign element in the centres of trade," which was "turning the scale in favour of the middle classes," was promoting the growth of "the sea ports, the manufacturing centres and the great produce markets in touch with the coast."² Side by side, "the spread of railways and other means of communication and the general development of the trade of the country" fostered the growth of new marts and 'market towns.'

At this time, just as the "great city of Murshidabad" which once was "graciously pleased to allow Calcutta to exist, but forbade it to grow"³ was reduced to no more than a "Large village," so were there many earlier population centres along trade routes and rivers which began to decline in importance.⁴

At this stage of the emergence of new population centres,—when occupational pattern as well as class composition of the inha-

*Numbers used under brackets [], indicate the serial numbers of books, records, etc., as per accompanying bibliography.

1. Page 46 [2] and page 106, Vol. I [25].

2. Pages 45, 46 [2].

3. Page 46 [2] and page 50 [1].

4. Pages 409-423 [3]; pages 245-250 [6]; (compare, pp. 283 etc., [37]).

bitants in these places were undergoing transformation,⁵—there was, quite naturally, the difficulty “to decide what places should be treated as ‘towns’.”⁶ The title of ‘town’ as it was then felt, was “conventional in most countries.” As “population standard” was liable to be “as delusive as the constitutional test,”⁷ various norms based on “purely statistical” considerations or on “purely social and economic comparisons” were tried in order to ascertain which of these places had “a really urban population.”⁸

After about a century a large number of population centres⁹ are there, which, as in 1891 [10], still present considerable doubt about their categorization as ‘towns.’ In most of the cases, as Mrs. Ruth Glass observes,—“the precision in the distinction between ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ places and people,—made in and taken over from, censuses,—is more apparent than real.”¹¹

On the eve of her massive industrialisation programme, which would accelerate urbanisation, India has before her “a variety of problems of spatial implication.”¹² In the years to come, just as our country would have to decide on “how much urbanization, and where,” she would also have to keep in view that “the many model cities, exemplary city districts and redevelopment projects do not keep pace with the growth of the ‘tin-can cities’ and the slums... Calcutta—now the world’s largest concentration of misery and sorrow,—will be the ever-recurring city type of tomorrow. A turn

5. Pages 42, 45, 48 [2].

6. Page 30 [1].

7. Page 42 [2]: *Report on Municipal & Taxation Expenditure in Bengal 1873-74* (Pro. 2 and 3 File 19 B (i), dated 18.2.1875, Pages 39-93, Municipal Department, : Judicial, March 1875.—This report contains a detailed account of the population, revenue and living conditions in 187 towns governed under Act XXVI of 1850, Act XX of 1856, Act III of 1864, and Act IV of 1868.—[10].

8. Page 30 [1], and page 42 [2]; pp. 55-56 [22]; Chapter V, pp. 121-135 [23].

9. P. 43 [2]; pp. xl, xlvii, liii, and lvi [6]; pp. 425-428 [3]; p. 218 [5]; pp. 36-38 [22]; pp. 157-181 [21]; p. 44 [38].

10. “The stage of social aggregation at which a community ceases to be ‘rural’ and passes into the category of ‘urban’ can nowhere be sharply defined”—p. 42 [2].

11. “However equivocal the criteria of ‘urban’ or ‘rural,’ there is no difficulty in recognizing a large city as a city, or an agricultural village in open country as a village. In such cases, there is no dubiety of definition. But there is considerable doubt in the categorization of small towns...” P. 9 [22] and page 6 [22].

12. P. 355 [20]; “It is estimated that about 23 per cent of the population might live in the urban areas by 1981 as against 18 per cent in 1961. We shall be adding in all probability 80 million to the urban population in two decades.”—Also see p. 52 [38]; p. 310 [34].

for the better may be expected at best for the day after tomorrow.”¹³

II

With Calcutta holding a predominant position,—possibly the position of a ‘Primate City,’¹⁴—in West Bengal, the high proportion of urban population¹⁵ of the state obscures wide zonal variations in respect of rural population, and so also in respect of occupational pattern and the level of income.¹⁶

The district of Birbhum, suffering during the last century from famines, epidemics, occasional floods etc., had a very feeble growth in its natural population.¹⁷ Before the Partition, it was not amongst the districts where ‘available means of sustenance’¹⁸ had attracted people from other districts or from other states of India.

With its southern end a little less than a hundred miles from Calcutta by rail, the district of Birbhum¹⁹, (like the other districts of the Western Agricultural Zone, Midnapore, and Bankura)²⁰, is a predominantly agricultural region. Recent improvements in communications, and a steep rise in population during 1951-1961²¹ have

13. P. 337 [34]; also, p. 207 [33]; p. 549 [27]; the Ford Foundation Team, invited to study and comment upon the Basic Development Plan, Calcutta Metropolitan District, 1966-1986, commented, ‘we have not seen such human degradation on a comparable scale in any other city of the world’ (*Hindustan Standard*, 4.2.67)—The Jain Committee on Rural-Urban Relationship, it is understood, (summary, published in *Hindustan Standard*, January 29, 1967) has made various suggestions for coordinating developmental programmes of small towns.

14. Pp. 403-405 [35]; pp. 225, 313 [34]; p. 2 [22]; pp. 529 etc. [36]; pp. 140; etc. [40]; pp. 549, 551 etc. [27]; p. 169 [38]; p. 202 [33]; page 406 (para 3), [3].

15. Pp. 134, 162, 163, 425-428, etc. [3]; pp. 352-353 [6].

16. Page 76 (Table 23) of [42]; pp. (i) and (v) of [44]. As compared to Rs. 320-00 for West Bengal in 1960-61, average income for Birbhum was Rs. 267-00.—“...the association of urbanization, industrialization and per capita income is definitely positive and marked,” Simon Kuznets, in ‘Consumption, Industrialization and Urbanization,’ p. 102 [33].

17. Pages 214, 420, 138 etc. [3]; pages 160-161 [5];—“...of all the workers employed in registered factories in the entire state, 24.5 per cent find employment in the city of Calcutta. Another 29.3 per cent work in 24 Parganas, 20.3 per cent in Howrah, about 10.0 per cent in Hooghly, while the rest of the state accounts for only 16.0 per cent of the workers.”—page 17, para 61 [43].

18. Page 139 [3].

19. Page i. [4]; page 27 etc. [9]; *Report on Rural Police* by D. J. McNeille, Magistrate or Special Duty (Proceedings 4 and 5 dated 29.8.1866, Appendix A; government of Bengal [10] gives a detailed account of the early history of the district.

20. Page 312 [3].

21. Compared to 32.8% for West Bengal, Birbhum had, during 1951-61, an increase in population by 35.5%. During 1941-51, 13.2% & 1.8% respectively. During 1931-41, 22.9% & 10.6%. See pages 164-165 [5].

no doubt hastened the pace of urbanization in the district. But, with six urban centres²² (covering only about 7 per cent of the district population) and more than two thousand two hundred villages,²³ Birbhum has a much larger ratio of village to town than either West Bengal or its neighbouring district, Burdwan. So again, while the ratio of rural to urban area in West Bengal is 51, it is 31 for Burdwan, and at the other extreme, as wide as 98 in Birbhum.

III

In this paper,²⁴ an attempt has been made to throw sidelights on some aspects of the growth pattern of an area of Birbhum that is predominantly rural and agricultural and has, in its centre, a 'town' that was, till recently, just an 'over-grown village'²⁵ and a market place. As a consequence of the Partition, and so also of a combination of various other forces,²⁶ it is coming up to figure prominently

22. Population, during 1951 & 1961 in (A) Municipal towns:—Suri, 18138, 22841; Bolpur, 14802, 23355; Ramporhat, 15144, 19897; (B) non-municipal towns, Dubrajpur, 12205, 13917; Sainthia, 8707, 12096; Nalhati ('town' in 1961) 8663. Earlier records of Sherwill (1851-52) and others show different patterns of growth during the last century.—Average size of towns in Birbhum is 2.9 sq. miles (Bolpur, 5.1 sm), for W. B. 3.6 s.m., Burdwan dist, 4.4. s.m.) compare, p. 58 [37] & also, pp. 275-278 [34], also see pp. 194, 215 [3].

23. Of the 2234 'villages' or mauza's 57.5% had, in 1961, 24.1% of rural population of the district. Comparable figures for West Bengal, 58.0% and 18.2% respectively. For West Bengal, 209; Burdwan dist. 140; Bankura 711; Midnapore, 758.

24. A comprehensive analysis of the growth pattern of the town, as mentioned in [45], has been made recently.

25. "None of the towns in the district are more than overgrown villages... Bolpur was on the fringe of the 'Burdwan Fever' area in 1872, but lost density heavily between 1881 and 1921 for other reasons. These were the extinction of indigo, and the decay of the lac industry. It has been picking up since 1931, due to the establishment of the rural university of Santiniketan, and of rice and oil mills" p. xx [4].—Also, see p.537 [27], and pp. 191, 170, 194, 408, 284-5, [3].

26. About half a century back, it was observed in the report of the Industrial Commission, "... the few changes which have already taken place in rural areas were due to 'economic' rather than to 'industrial' developments, that is, changes in prices and marketing conditions rather than to any marked tendency towards industrialization" Quoted in Anstey, p. 218 [31].—Although there has, as in many S. Asian countries, "War time mixing of ideas" (UNESCO Social Research and Problems of Rural Development in S. E. Asia: p. 68), the general and local changes,—disappearance of malaria, abolition of 'zamindari,' better roads and faster transport, assured agricultural prices, irrigation facilities, abundant consumers' goods, the process of the "acquiring new images" (p. 291 [33]) due to wide use of radio, etc.,—which have taken place, do not yet seem to have brought out a "structural" change in the society. Because of the "traditionalistic admixtures" (and "tradition does not exclude change") in different parts of our country, "generalizations concerning the evolution of social structures during economic and social development" cannot be made. In regions in and around Bolpur, reactions to recent changes have been quite varied. See, Hoselitz, p. 15, and Smelser, p. 34, [33]; also Vol. I, p. 105 [25], pp. 133-134 [26]. Also, pp. 180-181 [27].

in the map of West Bengal.

Having a pattern of its own as the focal point of several hundred villages within the region defined in the census of 1951 as Rural Tract 10 (covering about 450 square miles), the place under study, Bolpur, has another characteristic feature that has fostered its growth; it has grown and is growing side by side with 'Bolpur Brahmacharyasram,' now the seat of the internationally known, Visva-Bharati.

With no place in the historical records prior to the opening of the Sahibganj Loop Line through the district of Birbhum in 1859,²⁷ and a population of about 4500 at the turn of the century, Bolpur became a 'town' under the census definition in 1921.²⁸ After being declassified in 1931, it was enumerated, again, as a 'census town' in 1941 and acquired the status of a 'municipality' in 1950.²⁹ As an inevitable effect of the Partition, Sahibganj Loop Line came to prominence, consequently did the Bolpur station. During the decade 1951-1961, the place had a steep rise in population.

It was a mere coincidence that Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, father of Rabindranath, made frequent trips to Raipur,³⁰ the home of the then famous landlords, the 'Sinhas,' even before the opening of the railway line, and decided to purchase from the Sinhas a plot of land in 1863 at the spot where the Visva Bharati is now situated. Subsequent growth of the Visva-Bharati, synchronising with, or running parallel to, the growth of the town, has had its

27. "The Loop Line of the East Indian Railway was opened as far as the Ajai river on October 1858, and was extended through the district in the following year." page 80 [9]; also, page 217, para 155 [3], and p. 313 [27].

28. Pages 79, 214, 232 [5]; also pages 121-135 [23], and pages 55-56 [22].

29. Village Chowkidar Act VI (BC) 1870 was extended to the villages of Birbhum in 1871 (vide Pro. 59-67 Judicial Deptt., 1871; Pro. 17-19, March 1871 and 26-27 of May 1871).—Union Committee was established in Bolpur in 1912. (File L. 0-8 Progs. B. 107-16 of June 1.15.1912.—Union Boards under the L.S.G. Act of 1919 were formed in Birbhum in 1920.—Along with Rampurhat, Bolpur also became a municipality (with 5.1 sq. miles) in June 1950. Its area is slightly different from, and smaller than, the Bolpur Union Board. Possibly due partly to local ambitions to achieve municipal status (UNESCO page 9 [22] the area of the 'urban' centre seems to have been drawn rather arbitrarily. There is a considerable overlapping of areas which are under municipal jurisdiction but in effect are under the Visva-Bharati.

30. Raipur, the seat of the landlords, the Sinhas, was, as all earlier records indicate, a prosperous village in the latter part of the 19th century also (References,—O'Malley, *Adam's Report on 'State of Education in Bengal' 1835-38*; Proceedings 102-103, Education Dept., June 1862; Proceedings 168 Annual General Report of Burdwan Division 1876-77 etc.)

tangible and intangible impacts on the way of life in the entire region around it.³¹

In describing 'tentative stages in the development of a city with a population over 50000,' Griffith Taylor³² mentions that in the first stage of growth "the first nearby villages become submerged by the growing city. University colleges are founded..." Growth of the towns connected with old universities³³ or the newly established Universities (such as Kalyani)³⁴, is to some extent, different from what is observed in the growth pattern of Bolpur.

While the economy of Bolpur is largely enriched by the considerable amount of 'imported' money that the University spends in the locality, the rice-milling industry, and also the marketing centre of the town depend on, and are considerably sustained by the large number of people inhabiting the 'hinterland'.³⁵

Several offices of the government,—the Munsiff's Court, Police Station, Registration Office, Health Centre, and others, have been serving the area since the seventies or eighties of the last century. Additional offices like Food & Supplies Department, Irrigation Department, Block development office, Road Construction, Land Settlement etc.—have been located in more recent years, in and around this town.³⁶

Thus, two streams, one emanating from or converging to the

31. In addition to such studies as *'Reconstruction and Education in Rural India'* by Prem Chand Lal (1932), or Hashim Amir Ali's *'Environs of Tagore'* or even earlier studies like *'Au Pays de Tagore'* (In the Country of Tagore) by Arthur Geddes (1921-1927) (vide Spate, 537 [27]), or materials available in the Annual Reports of the Visva-Bharati (15), other sundry materials, collected from a local 'weekly paper' published from Suri, have been used (since 1908) to prepare a chronicle of events etc. From all these materials, the impact of the Visva-Bharati on the surrounding areas, over years, can be effectively studied.

32. Pages 154, 422 [35].

33. Pages 57, 164, 188, 289 etc. [34]; P. 487 etc. [37]; page 134 (para 10), [3].

34. "The establishment of a University may be the first step in making the area hum with new activity which may have a snowball effect," pp. 90-91 [41].

35. Using the different concepts like the 'catchment area' or the 'area of influence' of a town, or that of 'retail hinterland' etc. (such as discussed in pp. 120, 121, 130, etc. of Turner [21], pp. 21, 22 etc. of UNESCO [22], or W. J. Reilly's *Law of retail gravitation*, or that defined in *'Role of Bullock Carts and Trucks in Rural Transport: case studies'*, by Programme Evaluation Organization, 1963; and so also our own enquiry about the flow of 'daytime population' [45] and other studies it can broadly be said that the 'hinterland' of Bolpur covers the villages in Rural Tract 10, parts of the Sainthia PS on the north, and part of the Burdwan district in the south.

36. The 'urban core' extends beyond the 'urban' area of Bolpur. Visva-Bharati with its pronounced 'urban' characteristics, is still in the 'rural' area because it is spread over several 'mauza's.—Many of the offices and commercial establishments are located outside the municipal area. (Incidentally, compare, p. 66 [37].

Visva-Bharati, the other in the town itself, have been contributing to the growth of Bolpur.

To this may be added the influx of a large number of East Pakistan 'Refugee' families, which infused a new tone in the life of the town and adjoining places.³⁷

There are again other factors largely arising out of the developmental programmes of the State. Of these, of course, the Mayurakshi canal system is the most important.³⁸ A road-bridge across the river³⁹ that separates the districts of Birbhum and Burdwan, has brought Durgapur—Raniganj-Asansol area,—the 'Ruhr' of West Bengal,—much closer to Bolpur than to some other towns of the district. Telephone⁴⁰ and electricity,⁴¹ while reaching other towns as well, got a sort of priority in Bolpur mainly because of the needs of the Visva-Bharati. Construction of a Tourist Lodge⁴² or a

37. The influx of 'refugees' from East Pakistan to West Bengal, may, to some extent, be compared with that of the Huguenots to Britain (C. M. Waters, *'An Economic History of England, 1066-1874'*; p. 281).—Out of 6885 persons from East Pakistan settling in Rural Tract 10, only 1787 live within the 'urban' area, and as many as 3449 in the 'rural' areas of Bolpur PS. (1961). Comparing the settlement of East Pakistan people in Dorajpur area (a very much depressed area in recent years) and in Bolpur area, it is observed that Bolpur PS (covering an area of 7.4 per cent of district area, and 7.3% and 7.8% of district population in 1951, 1961 respectively), with a density per sq. mile of 601 and 269 in the two years, accommodated 23.5% of people 'born in Pakistan' and settling in the district. On the other hand, Dubrajpur PS (8% of district area, covering 7.1% and 6.8% of district population in '51 and '61; and with a density of 549 and 704 in these two years) accommodated only 6% of settlers from East Pakistan.—More 'town-orientated' in their outlook and in their pursuits, they visit the town,—as our traffic survey analysis has indicated,—more frequently than many groups of 'local' inhabitants.

38. Pages 216 (para 154), 354 (para 432), pp. 379-380 (para 484), p. 399 (para 23) etc. of Census 1951 [3].

39. Bridge across Ajoy river near Ilambazar (constructed in 1962) has removed a long-felt need of the district otherwise isolated from Burdwan district.

40. "Santiniketan became linked by telephone with the rest of India on July 26, when Rabindranath inaugurated the trunk telephone connection..." *Visva Bharati News*, August, 1940 (16).—The service was also extended to Bolpur, and at present the town has about 200 lines; this service in other neighbouring towns is still much less.

41. "To the many of life amenities in the institution, day and night electricity service is going to be added in a few months time." VBN, April '40 [16]. Visva-Bharati had its own arrangement even earlier. (vide p. 117 [4]). During the early phase of the Second Five Year Plan, electricity came to many 'towns' and villages of Birbhum including Bolpur.—Per capita consumption of electricity is higher in Sainthia (1262-63) than in Bolpur town. Industrial use of electricity in Bolpur again, is much below that in Sainthia.

42. "During the year under review, 569 guests (91 from outside India) visited Santiniketan from different parts of the world. In addition to the above nearly 1000 people attended the 'Pous Utsava' (anniversary and the fair) in December."—RAYB, 1927 (15). In 1962-63, number of guests in the Visva-Bharati (excluding private visitors, or 'daytime' visitors) was 2932.—After the opening of the bridge across Ajoy (note 39), tourists from other places have immensely increased in number.

Youth Hostel, similarly, received more urgent attention of the State due, to a large extent, to the growing importance of Bolpur as the 'urban adjunct' of the Visva-Bharati. Tourist income consequently is much larger in Bolpur than in other towns of the district.

In the field of educational facilities also,—which in the near future will be a "major factor ... determining ... rural to urban migration"⁴³ Bolpur town is building up its own record of progress; the impact of the Visva-Bharati in this respect is particularly high.⁴⁴ The overwhelming influence of the Visva-Bharati in the field of education and in the various fields of hitherto unknown Rural Reconstruction work (which, incidentally, covered Bolpur as well), particularly since the early 'twenties, was felt in the area that was considered backward even by the standards of other districts of undivided Bengal.⁴⁵ Recognition of the Visva-Bharati as a Central University in 1951 brought in its trail a tremendous spurt in its developmental activities; these in their turn continued to exert immense influence on the local economy and on the pattern of life.

The present comparative advantage of Bolpur over some of the other neighbouring towns of the district which are served by railways and had almost the same level of population about two or three decades ago, has no doubt arisen out of, amongst others, revival

A Tourist Lodge, under joint auspices of the Governments West Bengal, and India has been opened in December '66 (*The Statesman*, 24 Dec. '66 and Advertisement in 15 January 1967) which is attracting large number of visitors.—("The increasing amounts of leisure coming to urban workers is bringing about an unprecedented rural-urban relationship... This trend has kept pace with the evolving idea that that urban people have a 'right' to recreation space outside the cities. The country is less identified as the source of food supply and more associated with the concept 'outdoors.' "P. 175 [38]; also see p. 107 [38], p. 5 [22] etc.

43. Page 75 [22].

44. Along with other programmes of rural reconstruction in the early 'twenties' Visva-Bharati started its programme of adult literacy etc. also. At present the collaboration is much closer.—The girls' school had a phenomenal growth after the 'thirties, and the college was opened in 1950.—Excepting Suri, the district headquarters, which received state patronage much earlier, Bolpur has a higher literacy level than the other towns of the district.—Even now however, the literacy percentage is not very spectacularly high.

45. The chronicle of events etc. relating to the town and also for the entire district clearly show the backwardness of the region in almost all respects. Epidemics, famines, and other natural calamities were common features; and as the history of political movement in the district shows, it was least responsive to the different movements that swept over the country from the beginning of the century.

and modernisation of some of the important routes⁴⁶ connecting earlier population centres. Its proximity to commercial centres and roads of earlier days has also its share in hastening the growth of the town. The other obvious explanations are, of course, the rapid growth of the Visva-Bharati, and also the numerical superiority of rice mills.⁴⁷

IV

Consisting predominantly of 'upper caste' Hindus⁴⁸ who shifted their venue of trade from the earlier commercial centres of Surul, Supur of Ilambazar,⁴⁹ (and who still continue to have considerable interests in agriculture),⁵⁰ Bolpur town has about a fourth of its population which is classified as 'scheduled caste'.⁵¹ Chronic poverty and disease in the rural areas during the latter part of the

46. A comparison with the traffic survey of AJ King (*Comprehensive Report on Road Development Projects in Bengal, 1940*: Government of Bengal) was made at the time of our traffic survey on March 1, 1964.—The change during the three decades is quite pronounced. Several metalled roads now connect Bolpur with (i) Suri through Surul, a road important at the time of John Cheap (ii) Kirnahar, Naoor and other prosperous villages on the eastern side, (iii) Panagarh, Ilambazar, Raniganj, Burdwan, etc.—Refer to "Daytime population in a Rural Town: A Traffic Survey, "*Khadigramodyog*" October 1964.—Also, pp. 139, 189, 201, 395 etc. of [3].

47. According to *Statistical Abstract*, West Bengal (1960), Burdwan Division (covering 59.4% of area of West Bengal, and 57.7% of its rice-crop area,) had 65.4% of total rice mills of the state and 65.9% of workers engaged by the rice mills of the state. Birbhum district alone, covering 7.5% and 9.2% respectively of total area and rice-crop area of the state, had, immediately after World War I, brought in the first phase of 'industrialization when paddy-husking mills were set up. In Bolpur were also established in quick succession, 19 rice-mills with an aggregate, as in the rest of West Bengal, far in excess of what the hinterland could supply.—Reference, (a) *Minimum Wages (rice mills) Committee Report 1949-50*, (b) Nistaran Chakravarty "A Design for Development of village industries in West Bengal" (Govt. of West Bengal) (c) and also [18], [19] etc.

48. In the entire district of Birbhum, 35.6% of population in 1961, consisted of 'non-scheduled caste' people. In urban areas they comprised 64.4% of total urban population. In Bolpur town, 73% of population is 'non-scheduled' and in the rural sector, this group forms 36.1%. 'Scheduled caste' people on the other hand, comprise 250.1% of rural population of Bolpur PS and 21.4% in urban Bolpur.—Details regarding the interest of the non-scheduled caste people in business and also in agriculture, are analysed in my Paper on "Some Economic Aspects of Urban Growth: A Case Study," where other source references are also given.—(refer, incidentally to p. 204 [33], p. 133 [21] etc.)

49. Details available, amongst others, in O. Malley [9]. Ilambazar, being now located on a trunk road has the possibility of revival (See p. 398 [3]).

50. An analysis of the data collected from the Agricultural Income Tax Department indicates the intensity of the interest of 'urban' residents of Bolpur in agriculture.

51. Pages 711-714, Third Five Year Plan; pp. 132, 398 etc.. 4th Plan [20]; pp. 8-10 and p. 51, Census 1961 [5]. In my paper on "Buyers and Sellers of land in a Rural Town" (unpublished) I have analysed, by reference to Registration Department records, the nature of transactions in land carried on amongst or by scheduled caste people in the town of Bolpur.

nineteenth and the early part of the present century, led to the inevitable 'push' from the villages, of those 'scheduled caste' and landless people who were 'spill overs' from the rural areas. The employment that was available to this class—though not more remunerative than that in the villages,—was essential for, or the natural concomitant of the trade that flourished in the town.⁵² While this group of 'urban' residents,—socially fragmented, economically depressed, and physically weak,⁵³—still carries on all sorts of unskilled and manual work of the town, sturdier 'up country' men have been steadily taking up the petty trades and all those sundry items of work that call for hard manual labour.⁵⁴ 'Migratory labour' from other states is also on the increase.⁵⁵ Simultaneously, as trade in rice is gradually assuming importance and is requiring investment of larger volume of working capital, local millers,—often former landlords, lawyers or petty businessmen with small capital,—prefer leasing out or selling the mills to wholesale grain merchants of Calcutta (mostly immigrants from other states), and investing their limited capital in trading.⁵⁶ Similarly,

52. The occupational pattern, living conditions, level of literacy etc. in the town, as available from census data, municipal record of holdings, registration records of department of sale/purchase of land etc.,—all indicate the miserable level of poverty amongst the scheduled caste people who are living in the town.

53. About a century back, Buckland, Commissioner of Burdwan in his annual report on education. (Proceedings 27-28, 5.10.1871, General Department, October, 1871), wrote about the now-devitalized, Bauris, an important group amongst scheduled castes.—"there are a large number of 'Bowries and other semi-aboriginal tribes in the Beerbhoom district whose ethnical proclivities are in favour of the spear and shield rather than of the reed and plam leaf."—The transformation of this class of people has been quite marked.

54. During the decade 1951-1961, large number of immigrants,—mostly from rural areas of other states,—have come and taken up different professions, rickshaw-pulling, milk supply, petty shops, workers in building or road construction, in electricity department's works, etc.—In all these spheres, their predominance is quite marked. Ration card records of the town for 1964 show that most of these immigrants belong to the lowest income group. On the other hand large business, such as wholesale shops, rice mills, etc. are also passing into the hands of the immigrant merchants. (See pp. 45, 51 [21], pp. 317, 413 etc. [3], etc.)

55. Apart from a large number of less permanent settlers from Santhal Parganas (who still are, 'bilingual'), there are, a large number of workers, like bricklayers, masons, rickshaw pullers, and a host of other kinds of workers, who are 'casual' or 'semi-permanent' migrants to the town.—(also refer to amongst others, pp. 294-295, 366, [3] ; p. 34 [23] ; pp. 36, 312, 318 331 etc. [33].

56. Our analysis of the working of business units in Bolpur, which are registered under the Sales Tax Act ("Business Trends in Rural Towns of Birbhum": *Khadigramodyog*, October 1965), and so also of list of municipal trade licences, and local enquiries, confirm the steady decline in the shares of business by 'local' merchants and businessmen. Traders and merchants, who are "ethnically separate", have gradually been taking over the trading functions of the towns. (See pp. 128, 21, 121, 26, etc. [33]).

again, with gradual, and perhaps inevitable, slackening in the conventions regarding transfer of tenancy rights in land to immigrants from other states, the share of these immigrants in the sale and purchase of land in and around the urban area is steadily on the increase.⁵⁷

If the "unpopularity of town life among the people of Bengal" in the earlier decades of this century, was not a possible "reason for the decay of those towns which are now called residential or "country towns",⁵⁸ the present decline in the the number of 'local' people in various economic activities (that require either business acumen or physical labour...) in so small, and a growing town like Bolpur (or for that matter, in other towns of the district) requires to be explained in some other way.⁵⁹

Bolpur town,—like the other towns of the district,—is leaning more towards the functions of wholesale or retail distribution of industrial goods,—produced in the larger, industrial cities,—than towards any effective industries.⁶⁰ While the "social motivations" in the policy pronouncements of government with regard to 'rural industrialization' programme, are, according to William Brado, clearly laid out, "it is not clear" according to him, "to what extent the government has taken economic considerations into account."⁶¹ If the 'terms of trade' between agriculture and industry need a balancing, there is the imperative necessity for a reappraisal of both 'social and 'economic' motivations underlying the idea of dispersal of some industries or of 'regional development'. It is true that "a lot of little towns,"

57. Page 315, para 342 (3) ; the extent of sale and purchase of land by immigrants from other states, in Bolpur, has been discussed in my article, "Buyers and Sellers of Land in a Rural Town" (unpublished).

58. Pages 413-413 [3] ; (compare, pp. 42, 45 [2] ; pp. 62, 91, 93 etc. [26] ; pp. 125, 242, etc. [33].

59. Partly because of the physical weakness of 'local' people, and also partly due to contacts with 'urban' influence, there has been a distinct disinclination on the part of the local people to go for hard, manual work ; preference for 'soft' jobs in offices is again evident. Occupational pattern and level of literacy, also suggest a higher proportion of non-workers amongst those who are literates with junior/basic level.

60. During the last two decades, there has been a tremendous increase,—as Sales Tax registration data and municipal records of license show—in the proportion of trading, particularly in wholesale dealing in grains, cloth shop etc. Also, of course, there has been some amount of diversification in industrial activities,—spun pipes, welding machine shops, automobile repairing shops, bakeries, etc. On the whole, leaning towards trade is quite pronounced.

61. pp. 240-241 [21].

cannot "accommodate and generate the same amount of development at the same pace, as one large city with the same sum total of population,"⁶² it is at the same time correct to assume that the programme of a balanced regional growth would have to be carried through some of these small towns which are considered to be "economically ready for growth".⁶³

Simultaneously with the growth of trading functions in the town, secondary sector occupations in the villages around Bolpur, particularly during 1951-1961, have perceptibly been on the decline.⁶⁴

VI

Villages around Bolpur have a high proportion of Santhals, the predominant group of 'scheduled tribe' people in the district. But the town has only a very small number of them. Except those who live on the fringes of the urban area, others have much remoter contacts with the town as compared to other groups of people of the hinterland; the process of 'acculturation', or that of 'detrribalization' of the Santhals is much slower than is the case with several 'semi-aboriginal' tribes of the area who have been 'Hindu-ised' earlier.⁶⁵ Muslims, only a few in number in the town, form a substantial segment of population in some regions of the Rural Tract 10; their better health in general is reflected in their performance in agriculture and allied functions involving heavy manual work and dexterity. In spite of their smallness in number in the urban area their participation in various activities in the town is quite pronounced and is, as all evidence suggests, more than what the number warrants. The new settlers in the region, —the migrants from East Pakistan,—though obliged to settle mostly outside the 'urban' area, have been contributing effectively to the changing pattern of life of the town.

62. Page 8 [22].

63. Page 46 [22]; also p. 179 (J. P. Lewis, *Quiet Crisis in India*); p. 373 [26] etc.

64. With introduction of single-huller, paddy-husking machines in rural areas during the First and the Second Plans, female employment has further declined. On the aggregate, secondary sector occupation in the entire Rural Tract 10 has declined during the decade 1951-1961. Also, see pp. 514, 520 etc. [3].

65. Pp. 18, 19, 21 [38]; p. 318 [33]; p. 72 [1]; also pp. 97 etc. [13].

66. P. 165 [41]; also see p. 176 [38]; 124 [33].

With "growing importance" of Bolpur, it has received the attention of the state and will naturally receive more in the years to come. So far, however, 'departmental myopia'⁶⁶ of the various departments, apathy of the 'elite' society of the town, and so also the inadequacy of funds and restricted authority of the local-self government organisation⁶⁷ have not only stood in the way of a comprehensive town-planning, but have created some problems for the future as well. In the meantime new problems are being created, both by the ever-increasing number of residents and by the flow of 'day time' population from surrounding villages.

Amidst contrasts that characterise the stratified life of a 'semi-urban' society, Bolpur of today is undoubtedly quite different from what it was when large-scale absorption of 'evacuees' from Calcutta at the peak of the Second War, a boom in the rice market⁶⁸ during 1942-43, the reverberations of the Quit India movement⁶⁹ and so also the excitements and expectations over the construction of an air-strip (a scheme abandoned half-way) near the town stirred up life in this small, placid market-town. The chain of socio-political upheavals that followed during the next two decades, many of which brought, as elsewhere, a 'revolution in expectations,'⁷⁰ need not be recounted here.

With all the changes that have come to the town during the last twenty five years or so, it largely reflects the pattern of rural life that surrounds it. Even now, the literacy level amongst workers

67. "As regards the inhabitants of towns, there can be no doubt that taxation in any form is unpopular with them, and that in many towns, were a free voice allowed them, their first measures would be to abolish all municipal rates." (Pro. 2 and 3 etc. of 1875, vide note no. 7).—This seems to be still the case in this small town. Accumulating arrears of municipal tax, diminishing per capita tax over the decade 1951-61, inadequacy of municipal services,—these are the common features. Much of the open space, considered by the local people as the 'lung' of the town, is in the process of being distributed, and the open space that will be left out is far below the norm accepted for a healthy urban growth.—On the other hand whatever funds that are available from the government; are not generally being used for the benefit of the entire urban population. (Compare, pp. 204, 208 etc. [33]).

68. "It is a strange anomaly of fate that at Bolpur, one of the biggest rice markets in the district, rice should be sold at Rs. 32 per maund. The market rate as it prevails now is eight to ten times more than what it was in pre-war years" (VBN July '43 [16]).

69. "The repercussions of the mass upheaval in the cities are beginning to reach the villages, and we cannot say with any assurance that they will not affect the normal working of our institution..." Sep '42 [15]. The 'Quit India' movement was quite prominent in the area largely because of the participation in it by people who were, however, not residents of Bolpur.

70. P. 212, 291 [33]; p. 62 [62].

and non-workers of both sexes is particularly low ; industrial and commercial establishments are diminutive in size, seasonal in character, and predominated by 'self-employed' and 'family workers'.

About two-thirds of households have an extremely low level of income ; and so also mud-built thatched houses, with extreme congestions in some sectors, predominate the landscape of the town.⁷¹ Water scarcity is still an acute problem⁷² with inevitable outbreak of epidemics on occasions ; so also is there the problem of water-logging due to indiscriminate construction of houses. With the influx of large number of people from nearby villages, and from other places, land price is soaring high⁷³ and the land use pattern is devoid of all considerations for the present, and even more so for the future. Social tension that is invariably generated in a place where a motley assembly huddles together with least consideration for a corporate life, is evident in Bolpur as well, though softened to some extent under the impact of the Visva Bharati.

VII

Earlier history Located very near Surul,—the 'head factory' of the East India Company⁷⁴ during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Bolpur had, according to the Settlement

71. Illiteracy amongst females is particularly high ; and so also, that amongst males is not, as stated earlier, on the high side. Many of the industries, as the survey report of the Industries Deptt. shows, have a very small number of workers per unit and seasonal fluctuation is quite pronounced. Thatched house covers about 65% of all houses. Ration card records show that an even higher proportion of population has monthly family income below Rs. 100/-. (Compare, pp. 46, 47 etc. [38], pp. 58, 59 [21]; p. 181 [27]).

72. Even as late as in 1962, the town could not get grant from the government for tube-well, as it was considered to be a 'rural municipality.' Very recently, deep tube-well has been bored. It is anticipated by many that with the same level of under-ground water as that of the Visva-Bharati, the town may not continued to have uninterrupted supply of water for the entire population.—The scheme of bringing water from the river-bed was abandoned earlier.—Compare, note 9 on page 180 of [38]).

73. The steep rise in land price in the town from 1880's, has been analysed in detail in my paper, "Trend of Land Price in a Rural Town," *Khadigramodyog*, October 1966. The second part of this article, entitled "Buyers and Sellers of Land in a Rural Town" is to be published shortly.

74. In addition to other references to Surul, such as O'Malley, *District Handbook, 1951*, or E. G. Drake-Brockman's *Notes on the Early administration of the district of Birbhum* (1898), an interesting account of the place, as prevailing in 1873 is obtained from the letter that the 'zamindar' of the place wrote, applying for opening of Sub-registry office in the place. (Proceedings, 10-12, 25-11. 1873, File 17G, Judicial Dept. (Judicial Branch)).

Survey maps of Captain Sherwill (1851-52) only 163 'kutchas' or mud-built houses. Together with the three other villages that now form 'urban' Bolpur, there were, in this area, only 332 'kutchas' houses. Surul, on the other hand, had as many as 744 houses (of which 14 were "pucca" or masonry buildings). Situated either on the side of the river Ajoy or by the side of the three 'trunk roads' that crossed near, or connected Surul with (i) Sonamukhi⁷⁵ in Bankura district and Berhampore in Murshidabad district (ii) with the district headquarters, Suri and Burdwan, and (iii) with Katwa,⁷⁶ there were, according to Hunter, several 'well-built' villages with silk, sugar or indigo factories, 'abkari' outposts, or government offices like Munsiff's Court or the Police Station.⁷⁷

Just on the north/north-west of Bolpur,—an area now largely covered by the Visva-Bharati,—there was, as Hunter wrote in 1876:

"...a patch of high gravelly soil, which is hopelessly sterile. It occupies an area of 4424 acres (i.e. app. 7 sq. miles) in the western portion of the Pargana (Barbucksingh) and extends as far as Soorool, a large village situated close to the high ground and near the ruins of an old commercial residency of the East India Company."

(*A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. iv)

With the commercialization of agriculture that followed the setting up of the railway network in the country, trading activities of Bolpur,—and so also in other places along the railway line in the district,—centred around rice, the staple crop of the area.⁷⁸ As rice became important, cultivation of other crops,—indigo, mustard, grams, cotton etc.—gradually declined.

In 1876, Hunter made the following reference about the growing commercial importance of the "villages in the vicinity of the

75. P. 412, 413, 416 [3]; pp. 13, 70 [3]; also p. 66 [21].

76. P. 343 [8]; pp. 412, 416, 420 [3].

77. Hunter [8]; Ghosal [30], and also Sherwill's *Village and Pargana Maps*, and O'Malley [9].

78. In the Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition of Burdwan Division held in 1865 (Pro. 136-153, General Department, August 1865.) Birbhum won prizes in various types of products including silk, cotton, lac dye, turmeric, ginger, etc. Monoculture and decline of crafts took place later.

railway station."

"Bolpur, Ahmadpur, Synthia and Mollarpur; railway stations on the loop line of the East India Railway. These villages have rapidly risen in importance within the last twenty years, since the opening of the railway and have attracted a great deal of trade which formerly went by river to Katwa and other trading towns of the Bhagirathi and Hugli" (*A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. IV. page 343).⁷⁹

The process of shift, during the initial stage was somewhat slow. Superiority of railway over river borne trade or transport by roads was not immediately established,⁸⁰ and the earlier seats of population, particularly those having influential 'zamindars' or landlords, as in Surul, continued to hold on to their position of strength for some time; this however continued for a few decades only. With the decline of the river-borne trade,⁸¹ many of the villages of Birbhum, thriving on the side of the river Ajoy were, like Katwa and similar other big towns, depopulated. One such important trading centre in Birbhum was Ilambazar.

The inevitable structural change in the trading pattern of the district is reflected in the following report of the General Department of the Burdwan Division for 1876-77: ⁸²

"Silk, lac, indigo, are chief manufactures but the former two are declining and latter cultivated on a small scale... The trade in rice is reported to have been unprecedentedly large and the cart traffic is said to have poured the rice far faster into the depots at Sainthia, Ahmadpur and Bulpore than the railways have been able to carry."

79. In pp. 374 of [8] Hunter made further reference, "— . . . Bolpur and Synthia have already become large trading villages and are rapidly rising in importance."

80. Proceedings 191-193, Judicial Dept. November 1871, : circular to "enquire about the falling railway traffic of the East Indian Railway Company",

81. General Department Proceedings, November 1896 ; Annual General Administration Report of Burdwan Division indicates the steep rise in Railway traffic and decline in river-borne trade.

82. Proceedings 168 dated 24.11.1877, Annual General Report of Burdwan Division, General Department. In the same report it is further noted: "In the districts through which the rail passes, the railway company could not supply trucks enough for transit of rice. In January last, the Collector of Birbhum reported that vast quantities of Calcutta-bound rice had been lying heaped in bags in railway stations of that district, waiting for carriage.

The effect of the glut of rice in the export centres, as can be guessed from this Report (and as is also indicated by other contemporary records)⁸³ was naturally not quite favourable to the producers. This trading pattern of the new 'marts' of Birbhum, as many subsequent studies indicate, is more or less the same now as it was in the seventies of the last century. The only material difference, since the end of the First War, is the concentration of the processing of paddy (the only major 'industry' in Bolpur and in other towns) in the rice mills of these centres. In the District Gazetteer of 1910 we come across only a passing reference to weaving as an industry, amongst other places, in Bolpur also. Other contemporary records indicate the existence of trade in export of hide and hand-pounding of tobacco-leaf.⁸⁴

VIII

According to the Census of 1951, "Bolpur was on the fringe of the 'Burdwan Fever'⁸⁵ area in 1872, but lost density heavily between 1881 and 1921 for other reasons". There were, however, as we have stated earlier, a little over 4500 persons in 1901, in the four villages now constituting 'urban' Bolpur, which had, in 1851, only 332 houses. A comparison of the number of houses in 1851 and the number of inhabitants in 1901 in the villages neighbouring Bolpur indicates that, in spite of the extremely insanitary conditions prevailing in Bolpur also,⁸⁶ there was considerable inflow of population mainly from places situated within the present jurisdiction of the Bolpur PS area (Police Station area, administrative and revenue boundary). The sex-ratio in these places, in 1901 and 1911, again

83. Price of rice per rupee in Birbhum in 1871/72 was, on the average 22 seers ; in the next year, it was about 12 seers ; in 1875-76 again price dropped to 22 seers per rupee and prevailed around that in 1876-77 also. Such downward trend are seen from Annual General Reports of Burdwan Division.

84. P. 76 [9], also '*Birbhum Barta*' (weekly of Suri) 6.8.1910, and enquiries with Dr. B. D. Sarkar, old resident of Surul village.

85. "The history of the decrease of population in Burdwan Division" which was "a quarter of a century ago . . . considered one of the most salubrious in the province," is the history of the famous Burdwan Fever." p. 57 [1]—Also, pp. 200, 202, 212, 215—, 369, 376 etc. [3].

86. Proceeding 29-32, Medical Department, pages 78-82, General Department November 1872. The proceedings relate to the proposed help that the British Indian Association tried to give, with the help of the 'respectable local people of Surul, Supur, Raipur, Bolpur . . . '—for medical relief in the area.

suggest⁸⁷ that, apart from distress immigration, large number of the 'upper caste' trading communities shifted their place of work and left their families in villages. Other records⁸⁸ also confirm that the early settlers in the town, still retaining considerable interest in land, and gradually changing their profession and so also the order of precedence about their 'principal' home, were mainly weavers; many of them had settled earlier in Sural, Supur and other places during the days of flourishing trade by the East Indian Company... The "practice of keeping up two establishments"⁸⁹ that was observed in respect of migration from 'rural' to 'urban' areas during these years, was evident in the Bolpur also, which however was not a 'town'. Other places in Birbhum on the railway line also indicated similar variations in sex-ratio vis-a-vis that in 'ruralized' villages away from the railway line. Unlike the business communities of other states,—considered to be ethnically different,⁹⁰ and migrating in numbers to these small towns in latter years,⁹¹ the early settlers had a preference for trading, rather than for industries.

It was only during the decade 1951-1961 that Bolpur had some amount of 'population mix'⁹². Proportion of population in the town, enumerated as 'born in Birbhum,' declined during the period from 85 per cent to 71 per cent, and so again, the percentage of population born in other districts of West Bengal moved up from 3.6 to 11.3. Immigrants from other states of India covered 2.7 per cent in 1951 and 10.9 per cent in 1961.

During this decade, Bolpur crossed over to the sizegroup III (20000-49999) and thus acquired a level of population which, as

87. Village census papers of 1901 show that Bolpur had a sex-ratio of 741 females per 1000 males, while Surul had 1085, Supur 1116, Raipur 1134, Chandanpur 1070, Dwarkanathpur, 1150, Ilambazar 1142 etc. In 1911, Bolpur had 738 females per 1000 males.—Ahmadpur and Sainthia, two other places along the railway line, had similar low proportion of females in this period.

88. Record of landholdings in the Land Settlement Office; record of sale and purchase of land as maintained in the Registration Department,—and also, an enquiry in the locality.

89. P. 413 [3]; also pp. 127, 134, 172 etc. [21]; p. 315 [33] etc.

90. P. 201 [2]; pp. 21, 121, etc. [33].

91. Partnership Registration records however indicate that a few immigrants from other states had started business in different towns of Birbhum including Bolpur as early as the eighties and nineties of the last century.

92. "Neither density nor heterogeneity of the Indian villages has brought about the cultural transformation that is associated with urbanization" P. 225 [21]; also p. 48 [2]; p. 136 [26].

early as in 1891, was "selected as being about the smallest that may be presumed to have any considerable influence on the rural tract of which it is the centre."⁹³

Within the 130 square miles (Bolpur PS area) around Bolpur, however, shift in population towards Bolpur during 1851-1951 was quite pronounced.

Admitting possibilities of difference in the definition of 'houses' in 1851 and 1951,⁹⁴ and also taking into account some of the available assumptions about persons per house in Birbhum,⁹⁵ a comparison of the number of houses in all the 155 'mauzas' of the present jurisdiction of Bolpur PS shows, among others points of interest, that density of houses per square mile in the entire PS area was almost static at 128.6 in 1851 and 129.1 in 1951.⁹⁶ Having the full blast of the 'Burdwan Fever' during the decade preceding 1872,⁹⁷ Bolpur PS maintained a particularly low density (much lower than the district average) during 1872-1921⁹⁸. Evidently, the PS area, which had quite a few populous villages in 1851 had, at that time, a level of population that was about the same as was attained, again in 1951.

A closer look at comparable figures for different village-clusters (regrouped for our analysis according to the 'Anchal Panchayats') suggests that concentration of houses in and around Bolpur town

93. P. 43 [2]; also, p. 102 [33]; p. 6 [22]; pp. 7, 161, 198 [21]; pp. 32, 152 [23].

94. Sherwill enumerated 'pucca' and 'kutcha' houses separately. Obviously no distinction between 'house' and 'household' was made. For census definition of 'house,' see 1951, WB Census, pp. 143-145 [3], and 1961: pp. 34, 84 [4].

95. Proceedings 125-126 (Burdwan Division, Crimes Department) 1870: dated 20.11.1871, (Pages 88-91); and p. 12 [13]. Also pp. 149, 156, 163, 215, 284-285 279 etc. [3].

96. Classifying Sherwill's Survey Report maps for the present Bolpur PS (worked out from Chandra's Jurisdiction List, and map "compiled in 1916. Compiled from Mr. R. Chandra's Jurisdiction List. D.O. Bengal R.S. No. 454 of 1917. Scale 1"=1 miles..." and the current 'mauza' and Thana maps) it is seen that there were 13960 houses in an area of 69400 acres (i.e. app. 108.4 sq. miles). Taking into account the possible loss of life during the Burdwan Fever, it seems likely that the density of population in Bolpur PS area in 1851-52 was around 600 per sq. miles.

97. "Decrease in population during 9 years which preceded 1872 was much greater than that which has occurred during the 9 years 1872-1881." p. 59 (census, 1881) [1]. In the same Report it is observed that Birbhum lost around 350000 persons in Burdwan Fever. Density of Burdwan District in 1872 was 550 per sq. mile, and likely density before the Fever, according to the Report, was around 750... (also see Note 85).

98. Density of Birbhum declined from 490 in 1872 to 456 in 1881. and in 1921, it stood at 489. Density of Bolpur PS declined from 427 in 1872 to 378 in 1881, and in 1921 it stood at 375.

in 1951 was at a much higher peak than what had prevailed in the prosperous village clusters in 1851. Distribution of population was evidently more even in different parts of the PS area than what is observed in 1951. Compared to the highest density of 240 per sq. mile (when the lowest was 58) in 1851, that in 1951 in Bolpur, was 592 (rising to 856 in 1961), while the area with lowest concentration in this year had density of only 87 houses per square mile. From what is available from these figures, it is observed that the pull of the 'town' on the surrounding villages during the one hundred years was considerable.

With varying rates of growth during the six decades 1901-1961, —and displaying in the earlier decades a rate of urbanization to some extent different from what was observed in the rest of the country,⁹⁹—Bolpur had a population of about 16000 in 1951 and about 25000 in 1961. Immigration from villages within the Bolpur PS was relatively high during earlier decades, while people from the 'outer ring' of the hinterland,—the three other PS areas of Rural Tract 10,—came in larger numbers during the latter decades. Other sources,¹⁰⁰—confirm that, with recent improvement in roads and in means of transport, while there has been steep increase in the 'day time population,' wealthier cultivators of remoter villages have, in larger numbers, resumed setting up 'urban wing' of their establishment in Bolpur. Educational and medical facilities, freedom from the feeling of insecurity in remoter villages, facilities for investment of surplus funds in petty trades and landed property,—and added to all these, the air of 'urbanity' in Bolpur, have been encouraging 'selective' migration of the 'upper class' villagers.

IX

Transfer of government offices from their old sites started from 1870 and by the end of the last century, the process of shift

99. P. [158 21]; p. 155 [23]. A Table prepared for Bolpur area (comparing the decennial growth rate of 'urban' population vis-a-vis population of the 'inner' ring Bolpur PS and the 'outer' ring of Rural Tract 10), and comparing the same with the Table of Hoselitz it is observed that when in the entire country, urban as percentage of total population declined from 10.9 to 10.6 (i.e., per cent variation over the decade by -3.1%) an opposite trend took place in Bolpur area. 'Urban' as per cent of total population of Rural Tract 10 increased from 2 to 2.5 (i.e., +25%). Comparing 'urban' with total population of Bolpur PS, the change was from 8.6 to 11.7 per cent (i.e., +37%). Such variations were observed in subsequent decades also.

100. Vide note 88.

was almost complete. This centralization,—a part of the general policy of the time necessitated by better communications along railways,—in its turn caused further pull on the local population.

Existence of once-prosperous business centres, and administrative centres in the vicinity of Bolpur provided an initial advantage over adjacent population centres along the railway line.

Awareness about the likely effect on growth of population due to location of government offices encouraged residents of such centres to make representations for shift of an office from Bolpur.¹⁰¹ Leaving aside the possibilities of some decisions turning out to be wrong or influenced by 'pressure groups', the role of the government in fostering the growth of a region was certainly not very insignificant during this period. Under quite different conditions now, when the 'readiness' of a locality to expand and to serve its hinterland is considered, the part that the government can play in promoting the growth or retarding the unhealthy features of growth of a locality assumes further significance.

In recommending the transfer of the Munsiff's court at Amdahara,—a village on the road from Sonamukhi (Bankura dist.) to Berhampore (Murshidabad dist.),—the District Judge, who had to reach the place "through the fields and over hedges and ditches from the railway station at 'Bolepore'" wrote in 1867, "Bholepore is greatly increasing in importance and requires a commodious court..."¹⁰² About a decade later, when land for the court in Bolpur was purchased "at Rs. 40/-per bigha" the District Judge mentioned about the 'bazar' which was "thickly populated" and was of "some

101. Proceeding 'B', Judicial Department, Pro. 247-248 February 1871.—The petition of some residents of Ahmadpur, (railway station twelve miles to the north of Bolpur and then the next station after Bolpur) submitted petition for removal of Munsiff's Court from Bolpur to Ahmadpur. It was rejected by the government.—In 1876 Hunter wrote about 'growing commercial importance of Bolpur, Ahmadpur, Synthia...' Several decades later, in 1955, there was a "strong public demand for having a direct rail link between Ahmadpur and Suri." ('Birbhum Barta,' Suri 19.11.55). It stated, '(the mistake committed earlier, not to have routed the main line through Suri, was partially rectified at the beginning of the century by opening Ondal-Sainthia Line...' (See p. 217 [3]). In 1871, again, the convenience of Rampurhat as the sub-divisional headquarters of the northern sub-division of Birbhum, in preference to Sainthia, which was "struggling off at one extremity" had to be settled by C.T. Buckland, Commissioner, Burdwan Division.—Proceedings 55-58. Judicial Department, February 1871.

102. Judicial Department Proceedings 217-247 of February 1871. Proc. 233, letter of O. Toogood, Sessions Judge Beerbhoom, to the Registrar, High Court of Judicature at Fort William in Bengal, Letter dated 11.3.1867.

commercial importance."¹⁰³

Surul,—taking pride in its past glory,—and still being stated by the Inspector General of Registration as having the “advantage of being situated on the trunk road from Burdwan to Sooree, and the centre of a number of prosperous towns and villages”—was able to locate the ‘rural sub-registry office’¹⁰¹ in 1873. The inevitable pull of the new ‘town’ of Bolpur led to the shifting of office there in 1876.¹⁰⁵

Because of the “central position (of Surul) with regard to several villages which have now become important from the fact of their being situated near the railway station at Bulpore”¹⁰⁶ the government approved, in June 1876, the proposal of the Inspector General of Police “regarding the transfer of the police Station of Kusba¹⁰⁷ to Soorool...” But in December 1876, an order was passed “sanctioning the transfer of the Police Station at Kusba to Bulpore instead of to Soorool”. Obviously the same set of considerations—proximity to the railway station—which favoured shifting of the registry office, prevailed in the present case also.

More or less at this time, educational facility,—yet another important factor promoting growth of a town,—was extended to Bolpur. The English High School was opened at Bolpur in 1878; as elsewhere, this was accompanied by decline of the ‘vernacular schools’ in the smaller villages.¹⁰⁹

103. Proceedings 66-67, Judicial Deptt. (Judicial Branch), December 1880; letter no. 773 dated 23.11.1880.

104. Proceedings 341-343, Judicial department (Judicial Branch), November 1873. Two other subregistry offices were, at the same time, opened; one at Labpur, and the other at Hetampore.

105. Noted from ‘Distribution List of Sub Registrars’ (corrected up to 1.1.1917). “For Official Use only,” govt. Publication.—“sub-registry office at Bolpur transferred from Soorool in 1876.”

106. Proceedings, 133-135 of June 1876 and 32/3 of July 1876: Political Department (police Branch) file 322 of 1876.

107. Kasba was one of the ten Police Stations when the district was reconstituted in 1793. (D. J. McNeille: Police Proceedings, Sep 1866)—According to Proc. 133-135, Police Dept., June 1876. “Kasba Police Station was transferred to the Bengal Police from the Old Police.”—Regarding education, pp. Lxxiv. and ccxxxiv (4); regarding postal services in the central office at Kusba, Proc. 47-55, General Department, August, 1870.

108. ‘B Proceedings, Police December 1876.’

109. Regarding Education Department Report on indigenous schools,—Proceedings 59-60, 23.5.1862; Proc. 102-103, June 1862; Proc. 24-26, June 1862: General Department (Education Branch), February 1873; pro. 27-29, 5.10.1871...etc.

Much before the opening of a dispensary by the state in Bolpur (1894) when “condition was precarious owing to unusual prevalence of fever in the locality”¹¹⁰ and when “a local missionary stirred up interest in the institution and lent a small pucca building for its location,” the Methodist Episcopal Church had opened a centre in Bolpur (1878).¹¹¹

Closely following the centralisation of various offices in Bolpur, postal services were shifted from its former zonal office at Kusba to Bolpur. As late as in 1870, Bolpur was not connected with other places by any one of the 13 ‘district lines,’ but was served by one of the five ‘short lines.’¹¹²

There is an old saying, “if you would be known, and not know, vegetate in a village; if you would know, and not be known, live in a city.”¹¹³ With its added advantage of being the ‘urban adjunct’ of the Visva-Bharati from the days of its ‘infancy,’ Bolpur remained till recently one such ‘rural’ town; in its agrarian setting Bolpur was, as Spate has put it, “little more than a large market village, with some very local administrative functions added...”¹¹⁴

In the mid-‘sixties, Bolpur, with its plague spots, ruralised ‘pockets,’ wide economic and social stratifications, and a predominating proportion of people without literacy, has become a place where people from hundreds of villages daily come not only to carry on a wide range of functions connected with their livelihood, but also, as it is said, “to breathe the air of freedom.” A re-orientation in the approach of the state to all that is understood by ‘regional development,’ can make it a better place to live in and a more useful agent for dissemination of culture, and implementation of its rural development programme.

110. Annual General Administration Report of Burdwan Division, 1895-96. November 1876, Genl. Dept.

111. Memorandum to me by Rev. P. R. Malik of the Methodist Church, Bengal Conference (dated 13.5.1963). The Mission was started in Bolpur, as elsewhere in Birbhum, in 1878. By 1934/35 (according to Registration Dept. record of land sales) most of the landed property of the Mission was sold out. According to P. R. Malik, the Mission had to wind up, amongst other reasons, due to the increasingly important role of the rural reconstruction department of the Visva-Bharati.—An area in Bolpur is still known as ‘Mission compound.’

112. Proc. 47-55, General Dept., August 1870.—For earlier records of ‘cross dak through Surul...and ‘Zamindari Post,’ Brockman (Notes on Early Administration of Birbhum: 1898).

113. C. C. Colton: ‘Lacon,’ Part 1, no. 334.

114. P. 182 (2 [77]).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Francis G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence : British Imperialism in India* (Princeton University Press 1967, 52 sh.).

Professor Hutchins has written a stimulating essay on the ideas and attitudes which sustained British imperialism in India in the 19th century. His starting-point is the Evangelicals and Utilitarians, who, while they disapproved of the ways by which the British had conquered India, did not recommend withdrawal but sought either to convert or to reform the Indians. Both believed in the depravity of Indian society and hoped to change it, the Evangelicals in a spirit of condescension and the Utilitarians by regulation. Thereafter, with the growth of doubt about Christianity, the cult of good conduct developed. Of this the most representative figure in India was Henry Lawrence. This school was convinced that India was destined to be governed by the British because the British were a morally superior race. There was no interest now in 'improving' India or the Indians ; India was merely the scene where the virtues of Englishmen were tested. The Indians themselves were beyond redemption.

The cult of good conduct justified vengeance in the face of evil, which was what the Mutiny was regarded as being. "The final stage" writes Professor Hutchins, "in the transformation of Christianity from a potential bond between Englishmen and Indians into English tribal creed was reached with the conception that the Christian God was fighting side by side with the English against 'Heaven-detested slaves'." The abolition of the Company was in a sense a triumph for the members of this cult, for it marked also a rejection of the promise of Indian self-government. J. S. Mill and others had many reasons for objecting to the assumption of power by the Crown ; one of the better ones was the fear that Indian interests would be subordinated to those of the British. By taking over the administration the British Government were assuring the British settlers in India that their interests would be safeguarded. The words of the Queen's Proclamation were meaningless from the start.

In the years after the Mutiny, the belief in the British right to rule was strengthened by superiority in technology and armed force. The high-priest of this doctrine was Fitzjames Stephen. The commitment to the permanence of the British empire in India was reconciled with the principle of national self-determination by the argument that India was not a nation. The new class of Indians demanding national progress was dismissed as unrepresentative. Rather than pay heed to this new sector of society, the British preferred to pamper the old feudal nobility and to claim to rule in the interests of the voiceless millions. They sought, as Professor Hutchins observes, to create a kind of 'traditional society' which had never existed before. The illusion that the *raj* would last for ever was complete, and found its fullest expression in Curzon, a figure whom Professor Hutchins does not consider in detail.

The book is full of ideas which the reader will be able to test against his own knowledge. It is only when dealing with Indian nationalism that the author sometimes falters. To say that most Indian nationalists at some stage in their lives sought acceptance in English society and all could testify to the formative effect on their ideological development of some small act of British exclusiveness, is to be naive. It is also too simplistic to attribute much of the sympathy that grew up between the Indian nationalist movement, the Irish independence movement and the British labour movement to the fact that they were all treated in a similar manner by the British upper classes.

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S. GOPAL

George Blyn, *Agricultural Trends in India, 1891-1947: Output, Availability, and Productivity*. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966, 370 pp.)

Dr. Blyn's 1951 study, "The Agricultural Crops of India, 1893-1946", has long been the basis of nearly all discussions of agricultural trends in India since the end of the nineteenth century, even though it was available only in mimeograph or in a summary form in Daniel Thorner's well-known paper on long term trends in output in India. This book will, therefore, be welcomed by all

economic historians of modern India. It is not a reproduction of the former work but contains revised estimates of agricultural output; also the 1951 study dealt with all India, the 1966 work only with British India. Dr. Blyn has narrowed his scope in the interests of statistical accuracy, since the data on crops for the Indian states are especially unsatisfactory.

He has also revised some of his methods of estimation, particularly those which may have given a downward bias to his former estimates of growth of output. His revised estimates should lead to a revision of some widely held views. Many writers have talked of a fifty or sixty year decline in the output of food per head from the 1890's, but according to Dr. Blyn's figures, the decline started only in 1911. I have worked out the following table from his Appendix Tables 4D and 5C; the gross availability being the sum of output and net trade flow. Since 1891 was a famine year so I have also put estimates for 1892/93, but using the population of the previous year, since there is hardly likely to have been any significant growth in population between the two years.

Food Output Availability, British India, 1891-1941

	Output Food grains		Gross Availability	
	lbs per head	Index	lbs per head	index
1891/92	405	90.4		
1892/93	477	106.4	466	102.4
1900/01	470	104.9	470	103.3
1910/11	565	126.1	497	109.2
1920/21	535	119.4	544	119.5
1930/31	448	100	455	100
1940/41	363	81	365	80.2

Dr. Blyn also shows how important special regional features are: the fact that per capita output fell is very largely due to the absolute fall in rice output in Bihar and Orissa. If Greater Bengal be excluded, the disparity between output and population growth is much less marked: the output of foodgrains increased by 0.47% per annum, and population by 0.64% between 1891 and

