

**THE
INDIAN ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL HISTORY REVIEW**

VOL. IV NO. 2.—JUNE 1967

X.2 N167

N67.4.2

222-566.

The *Indian Economic and Social History Review* is a quarterly journal edited by a committee representing three disciplines relevant to the study of socio-economic history: history, economics and sociology. To keep track of developments in Indian social-economic history and allied fields, publish results of research now in progress and emphasize a multi-disciplinary approach to this study are among the aims of the journal.

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Price : Rs. 5/- or 10 shillings or \$1.50 per issue ;
Annual subscription Rs. 20/- or 40 shillings or \$6.

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Published by K. A. Naqvi, Delhi School of Economics, Delhi-7.

Printed by Hindustan Publishing Corporation (India)
at Hindustan Scientific Press, Delhi-7.

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Vol. IV No. 2

June, 1967

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Estate Management and Estate Records in Oudh

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The last several years have seen an outpouring of books on British land policy in India, and on such related questions as tenant right, land sale, and rural indebtedness.¹ In almost every case these studies have been built out of the records to be found in the government archives in London, Delhi, and the state capitals. Indeed the direction of research has been determined to a striking extent by the availability of archival material. Those subjects have been explored most thoroughly, such as early settlement policy, for which extensive government records are readily available and conveniently organized. The result has been to introduce a marked bias, not so much British as administrative, into almost all recent work on the history of rural India. Because official records reflect the concerns and needs of the Government, they are full of information on land revenue and the problems affecting its collection, but they say almost nothing about rent rates, estate administration, or the allocation of political power within the village. Consequently we know a great deal about the relation of the landlord to the government, but very little about his relation to his tenants and his servants. To understand the working of rural society apart from its connection with the Government we must look at non-Governmental archives, in a way, and to an extent, which has not so far been done.

I should like here to examine some of the materials available for the study of estate management in the taluqdari district of Oudh. Our knowledge of the mechanisms of rental collection and estate administration in India is at present woefully inadequate. Everyone seems agreed that the landlords oppressed their weak and

1. See for instance S. C. Gupta, *Agrarian Relations and Early British Rule in India*, Bombay: Asia Publishing, 1963; Nilmani Mukherjee, *The Ryotwari System in Madras*, Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962; Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, Paris: Mouton, 1963; and Jagdish Raj, *The Mutiny and British Land Policy in North India, 1856-1868*, Bombay: Asia Publishing, 1965. There are also numerous articles, and chapters in larger studies, which deal with land policy.

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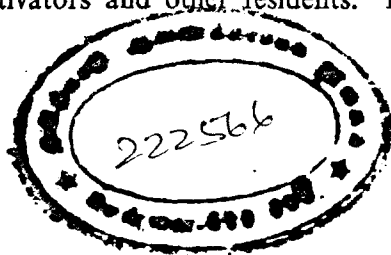
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impoverished tenantry. Rural folklore is full of lurid tales of financial exaction, of physical intimidation, of cultivators being strung up by their toes until they disgorged their hidden wealth. But we have no way of separating true stories from those which are the product of Congress anti-zamindar propaganda. Nor, and more importantly, do we have any studies of the way in which this machinery of "exploitation" operated. We must, that is to say, examine in detail the way in which authority was organized on the estate, and trace out its changing patterns over time.

Central to such an analysis is study of the size and composition of the estate administrative staff. What were their caste and communal ties, and their educational background? Were certain posts customarily reserved for members of certain communities, and did these, or other posts, have a tendency to become hereditary in a single family? Were the members of the administrative services drawn from the estate itself, from the surrounding area, or from distant places? How were these people remunerated, by salaries from the estate treasury, by fees and perquisites collected from the cultivators, or by allowances from their superiors? Beyond this there is the question of subordination and supervision. Were the estate personnel organized into a chain of command, with their duties precisely defined and their activities closely supervised, or were their duties allocated by custom and subject only to occasional and perfunctory observation? Did the landlord himself take an active part in the running of his estate? If not, who acted in his place and what powers were delegated to him? Was the imposition of British rule accompanied by, or responsible for, any fundamental changes in the structure of estate administration?

But the estate was not only an administrative entity, it was a socio-economic unit as well. In order to understand its working we must therefore examine the extent of its economic self-sufficiency and its links to the outside trading and mercantile world. Were, for instance, cash crops grown for export? If so, by the peasantry or on home farm (*sir*) land? Who made decisions on cropping patterns, and enforced village and agrarian customs? Did the estate staff, or did anyone, actively encourage agricultural improvement and innovation? We must also take account of the role of the estate as a locus of loyalties, and of social relationships, for the cultivators and other residents. How far, for instance, did the



landlord regard it as part of his duties to patronize local fairs and festivals, and to maintain estate temples and shrines?

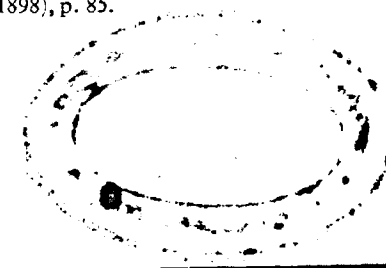
No doubt the answers to all these questions will vary enormously from district to district, from estate to estate, and from one period of time to another even within the same estate. Our analysis must take into account not only these local differences, but also the impact of such external forces as British land policy, famines and population growth, and the upheavals of the 1857 Mutiny and the nationalist movement. We cannot of course deal with all these problems at once. Nevertheless in view of the importance of the subject it is necessary to make a start somewhere, and to explore whatever sources of information we can lay our hands upon.

The most accessible, and commonly consulted, historical sources—published books and government records—are of limited but not altogether negligible value in the study of estate administration. Indeed because of their availability such materials provide a good starting place for research into the subject. Of government publications the most useful are district gazetteers and settlement reports. They often contain a good deal of information on rent rates, the nature and extent of rental enhancement, and the condition of the tenantry. Most of this is couched in very general terms applicable to the taluqdars as a body or the district as a whole, but there are sometimes brief references to individual estates. The Pratapgarh District Settlement Report of 1898, for instance, speaks of the taluqudar of Baispur as a man whose "management is good according to the ideas of the majority of the old school of landlords in Oudh", but who "has made few if any improvements and does little to help his tenants when times are hard."² The taluqudar of Bahlolpur, by contrast, is described as "a man of weak character, almost illiterate, and quite unfit to manage a large estate. He leaves everything to poorly paid karindas and other underlings, goes about in shabby clothing, and is habitually in arrears of revenue."³

As most estates at one time or another came under the control of the Court of Wards, the reports and proceedings of the Court should provide much valuable information on the condition of a property when the Government took it under their charge. Un-

2. N. W. P. and Oudh (Government), *Final Settlement Report of Pratapgarh District*, by J. Sanders, (Allahabad, 1898), p. 85.

3. *Ibid.*



fortunately, however, so far as I have been able to ascertain, there is much less of this material than one might expect. The proceedings of the U.P. Court of Wards have been largely dissipated⁴, and those which are incorporated in the Board of Revenue papers comprise mostly tabular statements of estate receipts, charges, and liabilities, and lists of estate employees. Although such material is of considerable value, it is difficult in isolation to make much use of it for analytical purposes.

Published histories of estates, and biographies of individual taluqdars, are very few in number. Literary activity of this sort was not part of the cultural tradition of the province, and the modern educated classes, who might have produced historical works, were rarely connected with the taluqdari estates. Those works which do exist were written in most cases under the patronage of the family whose fortunes they tell, and with the aim, often explicitly stated, of displaying the "glorious past" and present munificence of the family. Saiyid Aqa Husan Rizvi, author of a four volume Urdu biography of Maharaja Digvijai Singh of Balrampur (1818-82), described the process of composition in these terms. "I got the facts from the Maharaja... The Maharaja dictated to me and I wrote.... I used to read out to the Maharaja what I had written and he directed it to be printed... He made some corrections, additions, and suggestions [and]... comments with his own pen 'How nice this story is, what a nice passage this is, and so forth.'"⁵

A work composed in this fashion is hardly objective history, but it is not on that account without value. Outright falsifications are rare, and the fulsome exaggerations can easily be discounted. What is more significant, and more disconcerting for the student of estate management, is the author's invariable preoccupation with political and ceremonial events. The working of the estate administration is only infrequently alluded to, and then often in a most uninformative manner. The Balrampur biographer, for instance,

4. Those files which remain are stored in the library of the Board of Revenue, Allahabad. They are uncatalogued, and appear to have been regularly weeded, so that very little of importance still exists.

5. Statement of Saiyid Aqa Husan, dated 24 September 1885, in Civil Suit No. 83 of 1883, as quoted in Thakur Baldeo Singh, *Life of Maharaja Digvijai Singh of Balrampur*, (unpublished MSS in possession of Maharaja of Balrampur), p.ii. See also Bishambar Nath Tholal, *History of the Sombansi Raj and Estate of Pratapgarh in Oudh*, (Cawnpore, 1897), pp. i-ii.

mentions the appointment of an estate Advisory Committee (*niit sabha*) in 1863, but nowhere in his voluminous pages is there any discussion of how the committee actually functioned.⁶ Nevertheless these biographies and estate histories provide a good starting point for the study of some of the more prominent taluqdari families, and occasionally even include valuable material from lost family archives. (We would not even know of the existence of the Balrampur *niit sabha* were it not for Saiyid Rizvi's account).

Far more useful for the study of estate administration are the management manuals (*dustuur-ul amul*) published from time to time by various landlords for the use of their estate staff. Two such manuals prepared by the Raja of Pratapgarh in 1826 and in 1900, which I have seen, give a complete table of organization of the estate administration, with a detailed description of the duties and powers attached to each post. According to these *dustuur* the estate employees were divided into three general categories, officers (*kaarpardazaan*), officials (*ahlekaaraan*), and other employees. The first group comprised the estate Prime Minister (*diwan-i-riyaasat*), the *naib diwan*, and the officers in charge of the revenue, law, and treasury departments. At times they worked together as an Administrative Committee, while on other occasions they acted solely within their respective jurisdictions.

Beneath these executive officers were a large and diverse lot of "officials". Highest in status were the supervisors (*girdawaraan*) of the various regions (*halqa*) of the estate. These men were responsible for the efficient functioning of the estate administrative machinery in all its aspects on the local level, and had under their charge the subordinate revenue officials (*tahsiildaraan* and *zileedaraan*) who collected the revenue (*tahsiil wasuul*) directly from the cultivators. The estate also maintained a large staff of officials for the conduct of its judicial business. These men, known as *muxtaars*, were charged with the preparation and pleading of estate cases in the British courts. They were posted both in the *sadr kachehrii* of Pratapgarh and in the subordinate *tahsiil* headquarters. In addition the estate *ahlekaaraan* also comprised the assistants to the *diwan* and the treasury officers, and the officials of the Raja's private secretariat (*daftar-e-hamraah*).

6. Saiyid Aqa Husan Rizvi, *Ahsan-ut-Twarikh*, (Lucknow, 1886), Vol. IV, pp. 474 and 515-17.

Among the "other employees" (*diigar mulazimiin*) the first in order of importance were the petty clerks in the various estate offices. These clerks, known collectively as *mutasaddiyaan* and *muhaarriran*, seem to have been as numerous, and as bound by bureaucratic red tape, as those in any British Indian district office. The 1900 *dustuur* devotes fifteen pages to an elaborate description of the duties of each man, together with a detailed listing of the registers and papers for which he was responsible.⁷ Finally there is the host of menial servants and craftsmen, from camel drivers and buttermakers to masons and barbers, which an extensive and largely self-sufficient agrarian enterprise had to employ. Again the duties of each are specified in elaborate detail. The estate washerman (*dhobi*) is instructed, for instance, to wash clothes only in the tanks specially constructed by the estate for this purpose, to drain the water once a week in order to keep it clean, to keep the clothes of the ruler separate from those of other persons, to use great care in the washing of woollen and silk clothes, and to keep on hand an ample supply of soap and other washing materials.⁸

Despite its vast array of detail a Management Manual by its very nature does not tell us much that we would like to know. The names of individual office holders, the methods of recruitment, salary schedules, the character and extent of factional alignments and feuds, are all omitted. Above all we have no way of knowing to what extent the incumbent office holders at any time actually carried out their duties in accordance with the *dustuur*. One might reasonably argue that the administrative structure of the *dustuur* is an idealized model, a product of the traditional Indian penchant for classification and abstract logical order, and that it bears little resemblance to a functioning estate administration, with its caste favoritism, its palace intrigue, and its subservience to the arbitrary whims of a ruler. One could of course hardly expect to find the innermost workings of an estate administration, and the clash of personalities within it revealed in a manual printed for the use of its employees. We must therefore look elsewhere, in the archival sources, if we wish to see the estate in its social and historical context.

7. *Dustuur-ul Amul* of the Qila-e-Pratapgarh Estate, (Pratapgarh, 1900), pp. 93-109.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-59.

Extensive collections of estate records are very rare in India. Both the climate and the conditions of rural life have long conspired to make preservation difficult, while zamindari abolition destroyed all incentive to keep up what were at that point quite useless collections of estate papers. Pressed for funds and for storage space, many former landlords during the 1950's sold off for waste paper whole rooms full of their records; and where the sanction of the Raja was not forthcoming, unscrupulous estate employees, no longer closely supervised, often made off with the records for their own enrichment. The most notorious case of such dispersal is that of the Balrampur estate in Gonda District. There a huge and well-organized archive, divided into some 60 departments with each file carefully indexed, was so thoroughly sacked in the early 1950's that today scarcely a dozen files remain.

Nevertheless by no means all estate manuscript records have disappeared. Some indication of what does exist can be gathered from the papers I found in the possession of the family of the Raja of Pratapgarh. At the heart of this collection, and its most valuable portion, are the papers of the taluqdar who held the estate from 1889 until 1921. A man well educated in Indian languages, and methodical and orderly in his habits, he carefully preserved in large scrap books all of the letters he received. These letters, written in Urdu, touch upon a wide variety of subjects, among them his work as an Honorary Magistrate and as a member of the Oudh taluqdar association, and include correspondence with many different people, including his own servants and estate officials. His wife, who knew English, kept further scrapbooks containing her correspondence with the wives of various British officials, with English educated Indians, and with Calcutta jewellers and other merchants. Furthermore the Raja kept up for many years a diary in Hindi in which he meticulously recorded the routine of his daily life; and in 1921 just before his death he wrote a series of confidential memoranda with his views on the current state of political affairs in the province. In addition there are further scattered papers from the estate archive itself. These include an Urdu petition of 1859 regarding the settlement of the estate, a large number of loose rent receipts (*kubulyiat*) for various years, several bound *khatouni* registers of cultivators, called *basaghat*, and a number of stray reports and papers on estate affairs prepared by the secretariat staff.

Although we cannot from this material write a comprehensive history of the estate, or even answer all the questions that interest us for any one period, still we can gain some insight into the private life and views of one prominent taluqdar and also, at least to a limited extent, examine a functioning estate administration in its actual social context. Indeed in this particular instance we can even test some of the statements found in the Pratapgarh *dustuur-ul amul*, for the archives contain the orders issued to organize the executive committee under the 1896 *dustuur*, together with the names of the members and their salaries. In addition there is a large file of letters from one Hakim Qamar Ali, an officer of the executive committee, who spent the entire year 1896 on tour inspecting estate properties in Hardoi and Kheri districts. This remarkable series of letters, written for the Raja's eyes alone, gives us a revealing glimpse into the workings of the estate administration.

From this correspondence it is clear, first of all, that the Raja did his best to insure that the estate was managed in an orderly and efficient way. Qamar Ali spent much time investigating the character and reliability of the subordinate staff in each *halqa*, and reported his findings to the Raja in detail. The *tahsiildar* of the Hardoi property, Thakur Raghunath Singh, he reported, was a very intelligent and able person, but he left his subordinates unchecked. "From this one can conclude either that the *tahsiildar* is lazy and so doesn't notice any of their activities, or else he is so much under the way of his subordinates that he turns his head for fear of his own complicity being revealed. In any case he should be careful in future." With regard to *zileedar* Parmeshri Deen Singh, Qamar Ali commented that :

I have always framed these charges against him : that he did not try to collect the revenue (*wasuul*), that he did not demand it on time, and that he did not attach the property [of defaulters]. But if the Committee members consider his case with justice in view, these charges cannot fairly be levied against him. There are only five *sipahiis* in his *halqa*. One of them, Moti, a *chamaar*, is incapable of doing any other work than bringing grass for the *zileedar's* horse. Another *sipaahi* named Yar Mohammed is stationed in Alipur. Of the three that remain one should always be

present at the district headquarters. How is it possible that five *sipaahis* should do the *tahsil wasuul* of seven *mauzaas*?

Negligence was often compounded by embezzlement. Qamar Ali was convinced that several estate *zileedars* were in the habit of taking money from cultivators without giving them receipts or entering the proceeds in their registers of accounts (*siaaha*). He conscientiously reported all the details to the Raja, but he was unfortunately not always able to prove his charges. The result was, as he ruefully admitted on one occasion, that he was himself "considered a liar."

Qamar Ali also spent a good deal of his time on tour handling estate legal and judicial affairs. He sentenced a burglar to jail, investigated several boundary disputes with a view to settling them by negotiation, and arranged the sale of several outlying and unremunerative villages to a neighboring taluqdar. He kept close watch over the Government survey parties engaged in field measurement and settlement revision, and saw to it that the estate registers were properly revised by the head Recordkeeper, Munshi Mata Pershad, who was travelling with him. In spare moments he attempted, unsuccessfully, to sell an elephant the Raja was anxious to dispose of, and he managed to turn aside the insistent attempt of one Munshi Husamuddin to sell the Raja a horse. The Munshi, it appeared, did not insist upon a high price, but was willing to send the horse to the Raja and accept whatever price was given. "I replied to him as far as I know the estate has no need for a horse, and that in any case the Raja Saheb would probably not buy it because all these matters are handled by the Executive Committee. If the Committee thinks there is a need they will buy it, otherwise not."

Judging from this correspondence, Qamar Ali was not much interested in agriculture or the conditions of the peasantry. There are occasional brief references to the state of the crops in the villages which he passed through. On one occasion he gave a village feast, in which flour, pulses, wood, ghee, and sugar were distributed. What pleased him most about the feast, however, was the fact that it was better in popular estimation than the one arranged by the neighboring taluqdar, Raja Amir Hasan Khan. Where the Raja gained nothing in prestige, Qamar Ali did nothing to improve the lot of the cultivators. Agricultural improvement was mentioned

only in connection with raising the quality of the mangoes supplied to the Raja's table. "In the orchard of Lala Daya Krishen I liked one particular mango very much, and I am going to take a graft of the same." Obviously for Qamar Ali agriculture was a source of revenue for the estate and little more.

It may be unfair to assess the administration of an entire estate on the basis of a few letters written by one officer during the course of a year's tour. It would be even more unwise to look upon the Pratapgarh estate as a kind of microcosm of all Oudh taluqdari properties, for there is much that is unique in the Pratapgarh administration. The Raja was clearly far more orderly in his habits, and more concerned with efficient supervision of his staff, than many of his more easy-going contemporaries. The British regarded him as exceptionally solicitous of the welfare of his tenantry.⁹ And the mere fact that his estate was relatively large forced him to develop a more complex administrative structure than would be found on smaller and more compact properties. It must further be remembered that both Qamar Ali's letters and the *dustuur-ul amul* describe the administrative system of the 1890's, an era of quiet and uncontested taluqdari authority, and should not be taken as necessarily depicting the state of affairs in the years just after the Mutiny or during the 1930's.

Yet the study of even such a limited body of records as these throws a good deal of light on the general problems of estate administration, and opens up several useful avenues of inquiry. One is to look upon the estate as a mirror in which is reflected the assumptions and values of the society outside. Seeming unrelated bits of information as, for instance, the inability of Moti the *chamar* to do more than carry grass for the *zileedar's* horse, while a Muslim rose to a post of great responsibility under a Hindu Raja, reveal a great deal about the differential character of social mobility, and the nature of communal ties, in late nineteenth century rural India. Such inferential statements are of course no more than tentative, and may well even be misleading. Further research into other sets of records will alone enable us to test and revise our initial conclusions, and to set the subject upon the solid basis which its importance demands.

9. J. Sanders, *Pratapgarh Settlement Report*, p. 85.

Dutch Commercial Policy in Ceylon and its effects on the Indo-Ceylon Trade (1690-1750)

S. ARASARATNAM

University of Malaya

A study of Dutch commercial policy in Ceylon is of interest in revealing the problems attendant on the application of the monopolistic ideas of the Dutch East India Company to a free trade area with its interlocking patterns of trade with many regions of India. The Dutch acquired political sovereignty over coastal Ceylon in 1658 and soon assumed exclusive jurisdiction over the seas that washed its shores. An increasingly closer view of the potentiality of the island's trade with Malabar, Madura, Coromandel, Golconda and Bengal made them succumb to the temptation of giving effect to their position of naval command. And in 1670 they took the fateful step of declaring a monopoly of all the major articles involved in the export and import trade of Ceylon. This monopoly now engulfed the following articles of trade: Cinnamon, elephants and elephant tusks, arecanut, chanks and pearls for the export trade; cotton goods, pepper, tin, zinc and a number of other minerals for the import trade. Rice was the only major item of import which for obvious reasons was left out of the monopoly. The implications of this step, its immediate effects and its results to the country's economy have been shown in an earlier study¹. It was seen there that the trade, by its very nature, was not something that could be easily monopolised. It spread over a vast coastline, went into tiny creeks and shallow beaches and as such could not be operated from a few major harbours in India and Ceylon. It also took in a wide variety of articles of daily consumption, some of which could not be centrally marketed but had to be effectively distributed to every

1. S. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon 1658-1686* (Amsterdam 1958), pp. 159-177.

village where it was consumed. These conditions were not fulfilled by the Dutch who had disturbed the traditional trading ties but could not put anything in its place. It was further seen in that study that the net effect of the decline of trade was to impoverish the community and in the long run to deprive them of the little purchasing power they had, thus contracting the volume of trade and business in the country.

After these initial setbacks, a partial liberalisation was started under Governor Pyl in 1680. The rigorous rules of monopoly were relaxed and freedom was given to trade in certain restricted spheres.² This was a hesitant step taken in fear and suspicion. The Court of Directors (*Heeren Zeventien*) was inclined towards restriction and monopoly. They had an instinctive aversion to permitting a large number of private traders coming into ports where the Dutch had sovereign rights. One infers from the letters of the Directors to Ceylon and Batavia that they were really concerned about the opportunities for corruption opened by the close contact between Dutch Officers and Indian traders. The Company's Officers in the East varied in the views they held on the merits of restricted trade as opposed to untrammelled free trade. Some were strict monopolists, asserting the right of the Company to enjoy exclusively the fruits of trade. Others were more liberal in their view of trade, some of them to an extreme degree, taking the view that free and unrestricted trade was the essence of economic welfare. These views were reflected in both the Councils of Batavia and Ceylon, sometimes one view would predominate at other times the other. This partly accounts for the inconsistency of Dutch policy towards trade in these years. The inconsistency is also due to the unpredictability of the economic situation and condition inherent to the nature of the trade itself. The earlier study referred to dealt with the period up to 1690. Now an attempt is made to trace the changes in Dutch policy in the subsequent period and assess its impact on the various sectors of Indo-Ceylon trade.

The traffic from Bengal had been a profitable one, both to the Bengal Moors who indulged in it, as well as to the people of Ceylon. It was indulged in both by the Nawab of Bengal and other parts of Eastern India through their agents as well as by rich

2. S. Arasaratnam, *op. cit.* pp. 176-7.

and powerful *nachodas* trading on their own in large vessels. These ships generally called at the ports of Jaffna and Galle. Their main article of import was rice which they sold to retail traders of Ceylon and other foodstuffs such as sugar, butter and vegetable oils. In the earlier days they had also brought painted and dyed cloth of finer varieties as an important item of their cargo, but this was not permitted to them after the orders of 1670. In return these merchants would purchase elephants, arecanuts, *chanks*³ and pearls. They would have dearly loved to buy cinnamon but this was strictly not sold to them. When cloth and arecanut became articles of Dutch monopoly, the balance of this trade was upset. The merchants were not allowed to bring in cloth any more. They could not buy arecanuts privately but had to procure them from the Company's stores. Neither the price nor the quantity was suitable to the traders. Thus the profits of this traffic were drastically reduced. Rice and elephants were the two main items of this trade left over. Not all ships were suitable to transport elephants and not many traders were prepared to submit to the inconvenience of this transport. From the 1680s this Bengal traffic declined and fewer and fewer ships arrived from Bengal. This had adverse consequences in Ceylon. The Bengal traders had brought the bulk of the rice needed by the community. Very often even the Dutch bought their requirements in rice from these traders. This caused an important change in Dutch policy towards this trade. Its value was now appreciated and in 1694 the Batavian authorities ordered that the Bengal traffic to Jaffna and Galle be reactivated by offering every incentive.⁴ This included greater freedom to trade with Ceylonese private retail traders and some restricted permission to import certain varieties of cloth not traded in by the Dutch. This had its desired effect and the supply of rice was improved. It was reported that the arrival of a large Bengal vessel with rice to Jaffna, belonging to the Nawab of Cuttack brought down the price of rice from 6 *fanams* to 4 *fanams* per *parra*.⁵

In 1697 there was a major change in Dutch policy. After a great deal of discussion and controversy it was decided to liberalise

3. Sea-shells (Tamil *Sanku*) used in making ornaments.

4. *Memoir of Hendrick Zwaardcroon*. Translated by Sophia Pieters (Colombo 1911) p. 15.

5. *Ibid* p. 94. A *parra* was about 40 Dutch pounds; a *fanam* was worth about 8 Dutch Stuivers.

trade restrictions on many fronts.⁶ This specially applied to the arecanut and cloth trade. On payment of a toll, traders could purchase arecanuts and sell cloth in any port on the island. All ships had to be provided with a pass given from the Dutch factory nearest to their port of origin. This new policy gave a further impetus to the Bengal traffic. They could now bring in large quantities of cloth together with their cargo of rice and take back any amount of arecanut. This freedom was, however, shortlived. The Ceylon Government complained that the market was soon glutted with cotton goods. The Company's sales of cloth were badly affected as was also its collection of arecanut for its own trade. Besides, most of the trade was passing through ports over which the Company had little control, such as Puttalam and Kottiyar, which had been traditional outlets for the Kandyan Kingdom.⁷ They were backed by the Directors who ordered them to reintroduce the earlier restrictions and reimpose the monopoly on these articles.⁸ This was put into effect in 1706. In the exercise of the monopoly rights, however, some freedom was allowed. It was partly motivated by the desire to keep the necessary Bengal traffic flowing. The Batavian administration was not in agreement with this reimposition of control. They tried to delay and modify this order but were directed from Amsterdam to give full effect to the policy.⁹

In spite of the new restrictions, the Bengalee traders were given concessions and attracted to the trade. They were permitted to sell a certain amount of cloth. They were provided with all the arecanuts they wanted from the Company's store houses. In 1704 it was decided to sell them spices and pepper and even a small quantity of cinnamon at prices that would not affect Company's sales in Calcutta.¹⁰ There were some occasional difficulties. The toll on imported cotton goods in Jaffna was 20 per cent while that in the rest of the island was 7 per cent. This was in order to keep the

6. *Realia. Register op de Generale Resolutien van het Kasteel Batavia*. Part I (Hague-Batavia 1882) Sv 16 October 1697.

7. Governor General and Council to Governor and Council of Ceylon, 4 November 1701. *Koloniale Archief* (The Hague) 839 ff 1125-5.

8. Directors to Gov. General and Council, 23 July 1706 *Kol. Arch.* 462.

9. Gov. General and Council to Gov. and Council of Ceylon, 3 June 1707 *Kol. Arch.* 850, p. 363.

10. Gov. General and Council to Gov. and Council of Ceylon, 29 October 1704 *Kol. Arch.* 844, p. 1392.

popular Jaffna market for the Company's sales. A ship belonging to the Nawab of Bengal coming into Jaffna with cloth refused to pay this increased toll and would pay only what the Company paid in Bengal for its goods. So the tax on cotton goods for this ship and of other Bengal vessels was reduced to 7½ per cent.¹¹ Sometimes these ships were caught smuggling cinnamon and the merchants were very severely punished. In the 1720s even ships from Bengal carrying passes of other European nations were permitted to come in.¹² In this way this trade continued well into the 18th century, though in dwindling volume because of the difficulties in Bengal and the restrictive regulations of the Dutch.

The trade between Ceylon ports and ports on the Southern Indian coast was of a totally different nature. It was carried on in ships varying from small one masted *dhonies* to larger vessels. The ports from which it originated were the large and small havens along the coast stretching from Canara, north of the Malabar coast, right round to North Coromandel. Thus it engulfed a number of Malabar principalities, the kingdoms of Travancore and Madura, the Principality of the Thevar of Ramanathapuram, the kingdom of Tanjore and the lands administered by diverse Moghul Nawabs and generals. In Ceylon these boats would sail into the larger harbours of Colombo, Galle, Jaffna, Trincomalee and Batticaloa as well as into smaller inlets and creeks and do business with the large scale brokers as well as with retail traders and even with individual peasants who brought their produce to the shore. The persons who plied this trade came from many merchant communities of the coast. From Malabar there were the Malabari Muslims who had for generations dominated the trade of that coast. There were also some Malabar Hindus in the trade. In the far South, there were the Muslims of Kayalpatnam and the seven ports of the pearl fishery coast together with Hindus of Chetty as well as other castes and the Paravar, a sturdy race of fishermen and sailors who had embraced Christianity. In the Thevar's principality, the coast Muslims had a dominant position in the trade. In the Kingdom of Tanjore and further to the north along the Coromandel coast the composition was the same, with rather a bigger proportion of Chettiar and

11. *Memoir of Hendrick Zwaarddecroon*, p. 125.

12. Gov. General and Council to Gov. and Council of Ceylon, 31 July 1723 *Kol. Arch.* 879, p. 276.

Telugu Komatties. In all these places the rulers were interested in this trade and had their own vessels which frequented the shores of Ceylon. In the Ceylon end these traders had intimate and excellent contacts and this was their strength. All along the coast there were settled Muslim trading communities, some of which were connected by ties of blood especially to the Fishery Coast and Malabar Muslims. These communities were concentrated in Colombo, Galle, Puttalam, Mannar, Kottiyar and Batticaloa. Some of them were very mobile and would reside for some periods in Ceylon and then in South India. This is especially true of the Puttalam and East coast Muslims. In time some of the older established Muslim communities had moved into the interior of the island and settled in the Kandyan kingdom. They were in an ideal situation to operate as retail traders, collect the produce of the country from village to village and peddle in cotton goods and other items of import. Their contacts with the boatmen enabled them to dispose of easily their goods as well as to procure imports for sale. This group of Muslim traders was very well entrenched with the Kandyan power hierarchy and in our period is seen to work closely with them in commercial deals. They had achieved respectability in the kingdom, acquired status through honorary titles and the acquisition of land and were close to the king and the nobles of the realm. They were being increasingly used as contact-men to get in touch with the coastal Muslim trader who in turn was used as a courier to carry important messages for the Kandyans to native princes of South India. Besides Muslim merchants there was also a substantial number of Hindus, some of whom were immigrants of relatively recent origin and others drawn from the older settled Tamil communities of Jaffna, Mannar and Batticaloa. Chetty communities from South India were settled in Colombo, Galle, Kalpitiya and Kottiyar. They too were a very mobile people and had, as it were, a dual domicile, many of them having residences in their South Indian towns as well as in Ceylon. They too had good connection with the Kandyan kings and functioned as couriers on their behalf. The Tamils of Mannar, Jaffna and Batticaloa also did some sailing, mainly from port to port within the island in small boats, but some of them went to Coromandel and Malabar as well.

The articles taken in by this trade are a wide assortment. Rice was the major item of import. It was brought from the two chief

rice producing areas of Tanjore and Canara and from other areas whenever there was a bumper harvest. Before the restrictions of 1670, cotton goods, largely of coarse variety for the use of the rural population, were brought from the weaving villages of Madura and Coromandel. Then there was a wide variety of other food grains and food-stuffs grown in India and demanded by the Ceylonese population. The export trade also consisted of many types of goods. Arecanuts, the produce of the palmyrah palm, coconuts and coconut oil, tobacco, precious stones, Sinhalese wood work and other products of Ceylonese handicrafts were the articles of export.

The imposition of monopoly over arecanuts and cloth in 1670 affected this trade very adversely. These were the most profitable commodities taken in by this trade. During the period when this monopoly was enforced with cruising of the seas the trade was disturbed. The disruption of this trade had serious economic consequences. As with the stoppage of the Bengal traffic, this too affected the supply of rice in many parts of the country. It also affected the welfare of many nationals who had lived on this trade and of many individual peasants and producers who had benefitted from it. Dutch officials noted widespread destitution in the country in the 1680s which is directly attributable to cutting this economic lifeline.¹³ But if the Dutch realised soon that the Bengal traffic was essential to the island, they also realised that the Southern Indian trade was impossible to control. During the season of the northern monsoon, it took only about four or five days for these vessels to sail from the ports of the far south to the island. They could sail into any one of the many rivers and dodge the Dutch cruisers. With the limited freedom given in 1680 many of these vessels came back. In the 1690s this trade was again in full swing and showed its resilience through every change in Dutch trade policy.

Though the Dutch could not dispense with this trade, it was made inconvenient in many ways and hedged in with so many restrictions. Arecanuts could not be bought by the merchants direct from the suppliers in the land but had to be bought through the company's store houses. These were located in the main harbours where the trade could be well supervised. There

13. S. Arasaratnam, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-6.

was a toll of 1/5 Rix Dollar per *amanam* on these nuts.¹⁴ They were not permitted to sail to the King's ports of Puttalam and Kottiyar and could not deal directly with the Kandyans. And they were still not allowed to import cloth. These were pretty stiff restrictions and served to reduce the volume of traffic. The amount of arecanuts they were able to get from the Dutch was not half as much as they could have collected if given a free hand. The vessels had to carry passes which would be issued only to the Company's ports of Colombo, Galle and Jaffna. The passes would also state the quantity of goods they carried. Sometimes these boats would secretly call at the King's ports and buy arecanuts which they would smuggle out of the country together with the legally bought nuts mentioned in the passes. If stopped on the seas by Dutch cruisers they would be cleared because their passes were valid for the articles they were carrying though the quantity would be in excess of what was carried. There was no means of checking this at sea. The Dutch soon discovered a means of preventing this. All boats sailing due north from ports such as Mannar were forced to go through the narrow channel between the island as Mannar and the mainland of Ceylon. The Dutch had a Fort on the Mannar side of this channel. Now the water here was so shallow that boats fully loaded could not go through. So the cargo had to be unloaded and transported overland for a few hundred yards. At this point the Dutch had a customs check, measuring the cargo and comparing it with the figure stated in the passes.¹⁵ In this manner they were able to prevent a lot of smuggling. But there were still boats that avoided going through the Mannar channel and sailed due west and crossed through the Pamban channel. Cruising was done here too but not so strictly as in Ceylon. These were all hindrances to the trade and the fact that it continued in spite of these obstacles shows the staying power of the traders.

The *placaat* of 1697 which gave considerable freedom in the trade of Ceylon was a tremendous boost to this section of the trade. Boats could now sail to any of the ports of Ceylon provided they had Dutch passes and paid the tolls. Cloth and arecanut were freed

14. Gov. General & Council to Directors, 30 November 1697 *Kol. Arch* 1475 ff 196-7. The Rix Dollar was worth about 2½ Guilders; an *amanam* had about 24,000 nuts.

15. *Memoir of Hendrick Zwaardecroon*, p. 79.

from Dutch monopoly. The tolls payable were 1/5 Rix Dollars per *amanam* of arecanut, 7½% on cotton goods (except in Jaffna where it was still 20%) and 1% on grain and foodstuffs. The traders could purchase arecanuts from private individuals both in the large ports as well as in other smaller havens. The effects were immediate. With the northern monsoon of 1710, a total of 108 vessels came to Colombo and Galle and brought 1800 *lasts* of rice and paddy.¹⁶ They also sold a good quantity of cloth to retail traders and this affected the sale of the Company's cloth from its warehouses. In the following year 125 boats arrived with 2522 *lasts* of rice, more than abundant for the supply of the local community as well as the Dutch establishment.¹⁷ From the Dutch point of view, freeing the trade had succeeded too well. Much of the trade had gone to the King's ports of Puttalam, Kottiyar and Batticaloa. Dutch sales of cloth in competition with private traders were adversely affected. In fact on the East coast the Dutch had to close down their warehouses and suspend their trade altogether.

It was these unexpected events that resulted in a quick tightening of controls in a short period. These controls were primarily aimed at the Southern Indian traffic. Now again passes were to be given only to Colombo, Galle and Jaffna. So that the traders might not be completely alienated, the Batavian Government suggested that these traders, having first come to one of these three ports and had their goods inspected and tolls paid, might then be allowed to proceed to any of the other ports to do their business.¹⁸ They were worried that the new restrictions might put an end to this traffic and put Ceylon in distress for rice. The toll of 1% on imported rice was abolished. At this time the Batavian Government was favouring greater freedom in trade than either the Ceylon officials or the Directors would allow. They were suggesting several concessions that would ensure the continuance of the Indo-Ceylon trade which in their opinion was essential for the welfare of the island. They were convinced that the Company could not carry on the entire trade in cotton goods and arecanut that Ceylon could handle. But, though

16. Gov. General & Council to Gov. and Council of Ceylon, 4 November 1701 *Kol. Arch*, 839, f 1125.

17. Gov. General & Council to Directors, 30 November 1702 *Kol. Arch* 1543 f 196. A *last* was 3000 Dutch pounds.

18. Resolutions of Gov. General and Council, 20 October 1704 *Kol. Arch*, 619, pp. 491-2.

they were the supreme policy-making body for the Dutch Asian possessions, in this matter they could not have their way. The Ceylon Government was reluctant to make any concessions to private trade and in this respect they were in tune with the thinking of the Court of Directors.

The Court of Directors seems to have been worried about two problems and this determined their attitude towards commercial policy in Ceylon. In the first place they were bothered that the opening of trade in all the island's ports, including those which gave access to the Kandyan kingdom, would provide opportunities for external contact for the rulers of this kingdom. Both the coast Muslim traders and the Chetties had contacts with the chiefs of Kandy and there were dark rumours that these people were acting as couriers for this or that European power. The English and the French were suspected not without reason, and both had their interest in this region. These traders were favourably disposed particularly towards the English whose open trade policies fitted in with their own interests. With the freeing of trade in 1697, Kandyan King and his Chiefs, who had so far not shown much interest in trade, were now said to be using these traders' good offices to enter the trade on their own and to equip some vessels on their behalf.¹⁹ The Dutch were very alert to nip these efforts in the bud. Such rumours and such activity were enough to make the Directors nervous for they did not want a repetition of the situation of 1672 when the French, on the invitation of the King of Kandy, established themselves in Kottiyar and it took about three months of strong protests and finally the use of force to dislodge them from there.²⁰ The second problem that worried them was the possibility of corruption among Company's officials through the carrying on of private trade. This could become easier if a number of traders were admitted to trade in Ceylon in a multiple number of articles. Smuggling in these boats of cinnamon, the prize monopoly of the Ceylon trade, had already been encountered. It was obvious that such smuggling must have taken place with the connivance of the officials. All these problems could be avoided by lessening the frequent visits of private vessels and thus reducing the temptation for

19. Gov. General & Council to Directors, 31 December 1701 *Kol. Arch.* 1534, ff 1079-80.

20. S. Arasaratnam, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-66.

corruption. Thus by a series of regulations the trade was again strictly controlled.

Under this system that remained in force for the rest of the century, these Indian boats could only call at Dutch ports. They could not go to the ports on the East Coast. They had to purchase their arecanuts from the Company's store and could not bring in any cloth. They were also sold some pepper and minerals from the Company's store and could deal in any of the other articles in which the Dutch were not interested. The products of the Kandyan kingdom could only be bought by the Dutch who in turn sold these to the traders at a considerable profit. A system of passes and the checking of goods at certain points sought to regulate the trade. But it was obvious that such a trade could not be successfully controlled. There were a number of points at which smuggling was carried on. Puttalam was a veritable smuggler's nest because of the Kandyan lands in the hinterland and the active assistance to these merchants of the Kandyan Vanniyar (Chiefs) of this area. In Jaffna, the boats used to land at points on the shore other than the Dutch strong-holds where they would sell their goods to retail traders. Points Pedro and Kayts were the authorised ports of call for these traders and there was a move to force them to call at either of these to sell their rice.²¹ The ports where smuggling was rife were on the East Coast. Here the Dutch had only two strong-holds in Trincomalee and Batticaloa from where the long stretch of coastline could not be adequately policed. This was the reason for banning all Indian vessels from this coast, though it led to the disruption of all trade in this area. Throughout this period there is every evidence that considerable trading was going on here without the Dutch being able to do anything about it. The Muslim merchants and the Chetties had their own people settled here who gave them every assistance. This led to a move to expel both these communities from the Trincomalee area, without much success.²² It took a long time for the Dutch to discover a smuggler's outpost in a sheltered bay, a few miles north of Trincomalee, in Mullaitivu where, with the active assistance of the Vanniyar, a trade in cloth and the products of the Vanni was being carried on. It was

21. *Memoir of Hendrick Zwaardecroon*, p. 31.

22. Gov. General & Council to Gov. and Council of Ceylon, 29 October 1704 *Kol. Arch.* 844, p. 1387.

discovered by Governor Becker (1707-1716) in the course of an expedition into the Vanni in 1715. Subsequently he had a redoubt constructed in Mullaitivu where he stationed some Dutch soldiers and native lascarines.²³ Quite often Indian vessels were caught with smuggled goods. Some of these belonged to prominent merchants of Malabar and Coromandel, and even to native rulers such as the Thevar of Ramanathapuram. In such cases no drastic action was taken; the contraband goods were taken out and the boats let free.

A trade that went on without being subject to any great changes in policy was the elephant trade. It was flourishing throughout the 17th century. The powerful rulers of India were keen buyers of Ceylon elephants. But towards the end of the century, the political troubles in North and Central India caused some difficulties to this trade. It was not as consistent as before and in the 18th century showed signs of decline. In the period discussed the chief buyers were merchants from Bengal, Golconda and Tanjore. The Nawabs of Bengal, Nawabs of North Carnatic and the Nayaks of Tanjore had a continuing interest in the trade and always came to the market to buy. They either sent their own ships with their officers or commissioned merchants and *nakhodas* who usually plied the Bengal-Ceylon trade to buy for them.

The elephant trade was carried on through brokers who established themselves in Jaffna. By far the most influential of them was Thimmerasa with whom all the Golconda merchants had dealings. Another who comes to our attention in this period is Sangarapulle. Thimmerasa, referred to by the Dutch as a Brahmin, was as the name signifies probably a migrant from the Telugu Country and this explains his rapport with Golconda merchants with whom he could deal in their own language. The brokers inspected and pre-selected the animals on behalf of their principals and arranged for their transport. The long-standing merchants, through their influential brokers, were given first choice over the animals available for sale, which they selected and purchased before the sale was opened to other merchants.²⁴ They paid their cash into the Company's treasury at one of the Coromandel factories and brought bills of exchange with them. As the capital involved was quite large,

23. *Memoir of Hendrick Becker, 1716*, Translated by Sophia Anthonisz (Colombo 1914), p. 15.

24. *Memoir of Hendrick Zwaardcroon*, p. 12.

this was to obviate the risk of carrying large sums in cash on the ship. The brokers would advance them money if they needed it and got a commission on each animal they negotiated for their principals. The main market for sales was Jaffna, but there were also some sales at Colombo and Galle. The merchants preferred to buy at Jaffna. For this purpose the elephants caught in south Ceylon were transported to Jaffna, at first in boats and later by land through a road specially constructed for this purpose. The harbour of Kayts, an off-shore island a few miles from Jaffna, had an excellent pier suitable for loading the animals into vessels.

In 1697 a major change was introduced in the system of sales. The method of effecting sales through Jaffna brokers was abolished and public auction of elephants was adopted.²⁵ The change caused some difficulties and estranged some of the older buyers. The broker had been very useful to them in selecting animals and arranging for their maintenance and transport. Their bills of exchange were drawn in favour of these brokers with whom they kept accounts, thus facilitating payment. The dismissal of these brokers did away with all these advantages. But even more than this, the merchants of long standing lost their advantage of first choice and were very much upset. They showed their dissatisfaction in the first year of the introduction of the new system. In 1697 all the merchants were present at a public auction. Some Golconda merchants who had been long in the trade and were well known to the officials of Jaffna attended the auction but were not satisfied with the system. So they appealed to the Governor to hold a special sale among themselves for 13 pre-selected elephants. As they had come with considerable capital, and had not been aware of the new policy of sales, they were allowed this concession. A similar request was granted to the agents of another well-known Golconda merchant named Babul Khan.²⁶

It was apparent that the new system was disadvantageous to the regular and long-established merchants but was favourable to the old buyer who turned up off and on. The former had established good connections with the machinery in Jaffna and knew how to secure for themselves the best animals with least effort. Now they

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Diary of Gerrit de Heere, Governor of Ceylon . . . July to September, 1697*. Translated by Sophia Anthonisz (Colombo 1914), pp. 14 ff.

found this system disrupted and they had to compete with a number of other merchants on equal terms. They thus lost interest in the trade. This is reflected in the declining sales of the period 1702-6. In 1702, for example the agents of the Daud Khan, Nawab of North Carnatic, arrived to purchase elephants. They did not like sale by public auction and so they bought only 15 animals, while usually this ruler bought many more.²⁷ A further factor in the decline was the troubles in Golconda towards the end of the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb. Very soon the Dutch officials realised that the new policy had alienated the older merchants and changed to the method of fixed prices. The trade improved in 1707 and this kept on till 1710. In 1711 there was again a fall in the trade. This was because Governor Becker discovered a great deal of corruption connected with the sale. Brokers had managed to stage a come-back after they were weeded out in 1697. They were making quite a good deal of commission on sales and causing inconvenience to merchants. So he dismissed them in 1710 and appointed three interpreters to assist the merchants. At the same time he increased the price by 20 per cent. But it was soon discovered that even the interpreters were indulging in corruption. So he took the major step of moving the market to Colombo where the officials could keep a strict watch. This move further alienated the merchants who kept away in spite of messengers being sent to them with price lists and measurements of elephants available for sale.²⁸ They replied that they were not prepared to go to Colombo but would rather trade in Jaffna. In 1711-13 the sales were poor and in 1713 the Batavian Government ordered the re-transfer of the trade to Jaffna. This had its desired effect and in 1714 the trade showed a marked improvement. In 1715 it topped the f200,000 mark which it had not done so far in the 18th century.

The elephant trade again hit the ground in 1716. For two years there were no sales. Emissaries were sent to Coromandel but to no effect. This special circumstance seems to have been related to factors in Coromandel. A price reduction of 25 per cent was effected and the trade improved gradually. But after 1720 the trade

27. Gov. General & Council to Directors, 1 December 1703 *Kol. Arch.* 1560, f 166.

28. Gov. General & Council to Directors, 29 December 1710 *Kol. Arch.* 1763, f 243.

was definitely on the decline. Sales very seldom went above f100,000. The main factor behind this decline was the situation in India. The disintegration of the Moghul Empire and its division into many warring entities reduced the number of powerful and affluent rulers who had been the chief buyers. Their ships stopped coming and their purchases were much less. Succeeding Governors tried to improve this trade by reducing prices and contacting merchants in Coromandel factories to persuade them to come over. But the demand was simply not there. Thus the elephant trade which had once provided over 20 per cent of the total income of the Dutch Government of Ceylon now amounted to much less than 10 per cent. By 1750 sales had dwindled to around f25,000 per year.

The tobacco trade to Malabar was left unmolested by the Dutch. This was probably because of the special nature of the organisation of this trade. The demand for tobacco in Jaffna came from one particular district of Malabar and the trade was traditionally carried on by merchants from Quilon on behalf of the King of Travancore, whose monopoly it was. A description of the trade towards the end of the 18th century says that about 3500 to 4000 half bales (of 288 Dutch pounds each) of the best variety of tobacco were sent annually to Malabar. The tobacco merchants of Quilon had their own people staying in Jaffna who went to the producing areas in April, when the tobacco was ready for harvest, and made advance payments for the harvest to be sold to them at market price. When the tobacco was harvested in the same month the price was fixed and the Quilon merchants bought up as much as they could. The tobacco was then carried to their warehouses in August and September where it was sorted out and bundled in bales. All the tobacco the merchants took was sold to the king of Travancore who paid them in pepper and fixed the price for its sale.²⁹ None of the merchants of Jaffna were able to handle this trade because of the royal tobacco monopoly in Travancore. This particular trade went on unaffected by The Dutch commercial policies.

There was a regular trade with the Maldivé Islands. The most valued article of trade from there was *cowries*, small sea shells used in making ornaments. These used to be obtained through Malabar

29. Schreuder to Van der Graaf, 7 October 1784. *Mackenzie Collection* (India Office Library) Private 72, pp. 61-65.

Muslim traders who called at Ceylon while returning from the Maldives as well as from Maldivian native traders who came to Ceylon in their own craft. Both the Sultan of the Maldives and his subjects carried on a flourishing trade with Ceylon from where they would obtain all their necessities. These vessels sailed to Ceylon in the months September to November and left in December and January. They brought *cowries* and dried fish, the former they sold to the Dutch and the latter to the people. The Sultan sent an annual present of *cowries* to the Dutch, a traditional obligation he had performed to the sovereigns of the island. The traders bought rice, arecanuts and diverse food-stuffs on their return journey. After some years the Dutch thought this trade was important enough to equip an annual voyage to these islands. The ship would take rice and spices and return with *cowries*.³⁰ A Muslim interpreter was taken along to help in transacting business with the Maldivians. A small present was given to the Sultan and to each of the principal chiefs. The *cowries* were sent to Europe as well as used in the Indian trade. In the returns of 1733, a quantity of 105,811 pounds of *cowries* were sent to Europe. Later when they did not fetch good prices in Europe the voyage was stopped. The restrictions on the trade of Ceylon was irksome also to these Maldivian traders. They were used to sailing into all the ports of Ceylon to sell the sea-products they brought and to buy large quantities of arecanut. One of the vessels belonging to the Maldivian Sultan was caught loading arecanuts in Batticaloa in violation of regulation and the nuts were confiscated.³¹

From the outset it was very clearly laid down by the Directors that no European ships should be admitted in any of the ports of Ceylon. For the first few years this rule was strictly adhered to. But in the 18th century, though this prohibition was often reiterated, there are several instances of English, Portuguese, Danish, and later, French ships calling to trade in Ceylon. In fact some of these ships visited Ceylon quite regularly. Whenever a ship was permitted to enter a Ceylonese port, the officials had to justify their action to their superiors in Batavia. Usually the excuse was that the ships were in distress for lack of water, or for repairs and

30. Gov. General & Council to Directors, 30 November 1730 *Kol. Arch.* 2037, f 3889-90.

31. Gov. General & Council to Directors, 25 January 1741 *Kol. Arch.* 2382, f 197.

as such were allowed to come in. Having come in, it was said that they had some goods to sell and were permitted to sell them on payment of tolls. By regulation such admission was allowed only at the ports of Colombo, Galle or Trincomalee. In 1702 there is a record that two English ships came to Colombo with a variety of fine cloth called *Salamporie* and were allowed to sell these. On hearing this, the Batavian Government disapproved of the action of the Ceylon officials and ordered that henceforth all European ships and Indian vessels carrying their passes were to be denied entry to any of the ports.³² After some years this was again relaxed. And from 1715 onwards there is record of English vessels coming and buying arecanuts. The need for rice was so great that the Ceylon officers started buying from these European vessels. There were French, English and Portuguese ships that called. Sometimes they would come in for genuine repairs, such as the loss of an anchor or broken mast and use the opportunity to do some trading. It was suspected by the superiors that these frequent callings were pretexts and that the Dutch officials were engaged in private trade with these Europeans. So a circular order was sent again in 1734 not to admit foreign European ships into Ceylon ports.³³ The reply of the Ceylon Government was that quite often ships of nations allied to the Dutch coming from Bengal on the way to the Maldives asked to put into a Ceylon port for repairs because they could not go any further. The arrival of Portuguese vessels was a regular annual event and was condoned. These vessels returned from Macao via Manila with goods from the Chinese trade and called at Galle on the way to Goa. Imhoff suggested that an annual voyage be made from Ceylon to China via Batavia so that this trade could be taken over by the Dutch. These Chinese goods could be supplied for the Bengal and Coromandel trade as well. The Batavian government turned it down as too risky a venture.³⁴ Thus European vessels engaged in the country trade of South Asia were able to break into the Ceylon trade in spite of the Directors' regulations to the contrary.

There was a great deal of justification in the fear that the permis-

32. Gov. General & Council to Directors, 30 November 1702 *Kol. Arch.* 1543, ff 194-5.

33. Gov. General & Council to Directors, 30 November 1734 *Kol. Arch.* 2190, ff 1390-1.

34. Gov. General & Council to Gov. and Council of Ceylon, 20 September 1737 *Kol. Arch.* 893, pp. 593-4.

sions of private trade in Ceylon side by side with the Company's trade would lead to corruption among their officers. Time and again such corruption was discovered and the miscreants severely punished. It took several forms. In the first place there was the use of the Company's vessels to transport articles for the private trade of officers. The extent of smuggling may be gauged from the fact that the Company's ships were used sometimes to smuggle cinnamon and spices, an offence which was punishable with death.³⁵ But this was a practice prevalent all through the Company's Asian factories and Ceylon was no exception. Another avenue of illegal trade was the controlled arecanut and cloth trade. Here the officers could easily engage in private deals with the Indian traders over the quantity and price of nuts and over the permission granted to import cloth. The discretion given to these officers to accept cloth from Bengal traders who brought rice paved the way for illegal trade in cotton goods. Smuggling of arecanuts with the officer's connivance was possible in the remote centres of the country trade such as Kalpitiya and Trincomalee. Governor Becker discovered that in Galle the chief officers had formed a partnership which they brashly called the 'Small Company' to carry on illegal private trade in cloth. It appears that the Company's warehouses were used to stock this cloth and separate accounts of this illegal trade kept by the officers. He took stern measures against this.³⁶ The resilience of the private Indian trader and his ability to keep his foot in the Ceylon trade in spite of severe restrictions is explicable only on the basis of his clandestine dealings and unlawful relations with a large number of Company's officers in the many ports of this trade.

In the Company's attitude towards the export trade of Ceylon, a general change is visible in this period. In the early stages, there was an overwhelming desire to master and keep under their control all the staples of the export trade. The intention was that the shipping of these goods to the various Indian factories where they were wanted was to be done by the Dutch. This would enable them to keep the entire profits of the trade to themselves as well as to dictate prices in these markets. This was attempted till the beginning of the 18th century. With the exception of elephants, all the

35. *Memoir of Jacob Christian Pielat, 1734*. Translated by Sophia Pieters (Colombo 1905), p. 16.

36. *Memoir of Hendrick Becker*, p. 20.

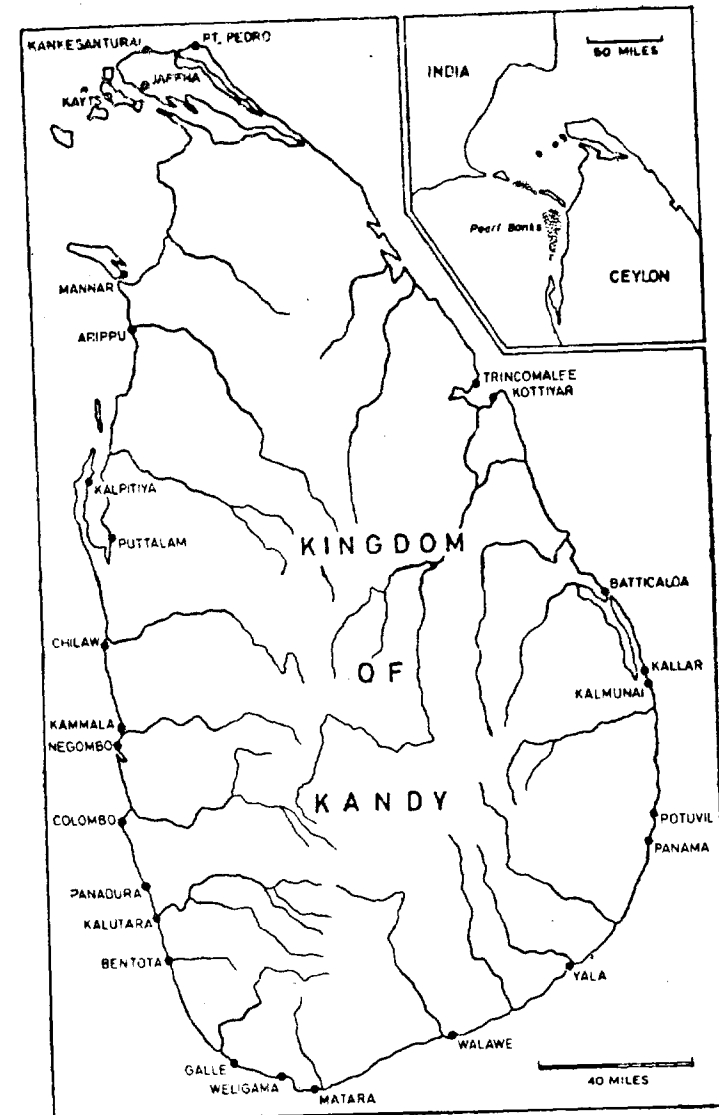
articles of export such as cinnamon, pepper, arecanuts, chanks and pearls were transported in the Company's vessels to Bengal, Coromandel, Surat and Gamron, as far as it was possible to do so. The errors of this trade policy gradually became clear. In the first place, there was the sheer magnitude of the task when taken together with the Company's trading commitments in all its factories sprawling over the Asian continent. Very often Ceylon products required in other factories could not be sent due to lack of shipping space. Secondly, conditions in India made this venture no longer as profitable. Sale of these products was not as assured as this was earlier. Demand for them was not steady and prices could not be fixed. Thirdly, there are the adverse effects it had on the trade of Ceylon. Very few merchants would sail to the ports of Ceylon to carry on only the import trade, if the export was denied to them. There was a reduction in the total volume of Ceylon's trade and this meant that goods of common usage were short of supply. If the Dutch were going to carry on the full export trade of the island, they had to conduct its import trade as well, which they were obviously not in a position to do. So from the 1720s this policy was relaxed in most articles except cinnamon. Pepper brought from Malabar as well as grown in Ceylon was sold to merchants. Arecanuts were mostly disposed of to these traders, reserving only some quantities for markets such as Surat and Gamron which were not fed by the Indian merchants. Later on articles brought from the Southeast Asian and the Far Eastern trade were sold in Ceylon. The spices of the Archipelago, Japanese copper, Malayan tin, pewter, zinc and lead were the most important of these articles. Prices were fixed in such a way that the Indian trader buying these articles could not resell them in India in a manner that would affect the sales in Dutch factories there. Yet there were complaints for example by the Coromandel officers over the sale of pepper and copper from Ceylon, that it was affecting the trade in their own factories.³⁷ Governor Imhoff (1736-40) extended this policy and encouraged wider sale of these commodities from Ceylon, so as to attract private trade there.³⁸ Increasingly these items of re-

37. Opinion of Jacob Mossel, Governor of Coromandel, on the consideration of van Imhoff, Governor of Ceylon, delivered to Gov. General & Council, 12 September 1739. *Mackenzie Collection*. Private 60, p. 56.

38. *Memoir of Baron van Imhoff, Governor of Ceylon, 1740*. Translated by Sophia Pieters (Colombo 1911), pp. 39-40.

export took a prominent place in the trade of Ceylon. This also meant that the export of many of the products of Ceylon was also transferred to the private trade, though with controls over quantities and prices. Even with regard to the import of cotton goods, a monopoly very tenaciously held by the Dutch, some concessions were given to these traders in special varieties the Company did not import.

By the middle of the 18th century, the Dutch had a realistic appraisal of the position regarding Ceylon's trade. Experience had shown that, though they had sovereign rights in the island and were the paramount power there, they could not use this position to master its entire trade and channel it according to their interests. Though its actual trade was not very big in volume, its strategic location in relation to western and eastern India brought it into contact with many interlocking trade systems of South Asia. It was vital for the Bay of Bengal trading pattern and it made its contribution to the trade systems of the Arabian sea. Many trade routes passed through Ceylon, bringing to its shores traders of many nationalities. These factors gave diversity to Ceylon's limited trade and made it impossible to subject it to the monopoly by a single power. Despite these factors, however, the Dutch made attempts to impose monopolies on certain important sections of the trade. The working of these monopolies shows that they were, with the exception of the cinnamon monopoly, a great failure. The cinnamon monopoly succeeded because of the special circumstances surrounding the collection and supply of cinnamon. Its peeling was the work of one caste (and of no other) which was kept under close surveillance and worked exclusively for the Company. Extremely punitive measures and strict guard of the cinnamon woods made it impossible for cinnamon to fall into any other hands. Of the other monopolies, the two most important were those in cotton goods and in arecanuts. Here we see that by 1750 the monopoly existed only in name. Part of the trade was gradually conceded to the private sector. Statistically the Company's profits on these two articles are seen to decline. In the 10 years period 1707-1717 the annual average profit on arecanuts was £142,000 while for the 10 years 1745-1755 the average profit was £100,000. Similarly the profit on cloth for 1707-1717 was £90,000



while in 1745-1755 it had gone down to f 36,346.³⁹ A good part of the trade had again fallen into private hands both by concession and by clandestine means. Many of the old and established traders continued in the trade though on a lesser scale. There is evidence that the total volume of trade declined both in the quantity of arecanuts exported and in the cloth imported. There was a greater reliance on locally produced cloth. Some of the native castes took to the weaving of cloth as a side occupation. For the Dutch Government of Ceylon, the income on trade was now negligible and much smaller than its income on land revenue. Correspondingly is seen a shift of emphasis in the second half of the century to agricultural and land revenue policies as opposed to trade and commerce which had occupied their attention in the first part of their rule in Ceylon.

The British India Society and its Bengal Branch, 1839-46

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Early in 1839 the *Friend of India* noticed the prominent attention being given to India by the Aborigines Protection Society in England,¹ especially the activities in its behalf of the eloquent advocate of negro emancipation, George Thompson,² and remarked: 'His [George Thompson's] proceedings take away every lingering hope, that any of our old-school politicians might still be cherishing, of a return to the dark system of secret counsel and silent submission in India. It can no more be, and they must stomach the certainty as they best can.'³

While the ravages of the terrible famine of 1837-38 in the North Western Provinces had aroused the sympathetic interest of the Aborigines Protection Society in India, other causes were also at work at this time which served to disturb the traditional indifference of Englishmen in general to their great dependency in the East. Steam navigation and a free press had brought India closer to England. The recent agitations against 'the Black Act' and the resumption of rent-free lands had made some impact.⁴ The movement of the British arms in the north-west and the rupture with China had drawn attention to India. The closure of European markets to British goods had made manufacturers in Britain take an interest in developing their Indian market. The still active spirit of philosophical radicalism in Britain was not satisfied with the

39. Beschryvinge van het Government Ceylon door Jan Schreuder, 19 July 1756. Hooge Regeering 571.

1. Formed in 1837 by T. F. Buxton, T. Hodgkin and other philanthropists for securing justice for the indigenous populations of the various British possessions.

2. B. 1804; orator and philanthropist; M. P. 1847-52; visited India 1842-43 and 1856-57; d. 1878.

3. *Friend of India*, 9 May 1839. See also *ibid.*, 7 March 1839.

4. See S. R. Mehrotra, 'The Landholders' Society, 1838-44', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, December 1966, pp. 358-75.

Charter Act of 1833 which had done no more than 'clip the wings of the chartered monopolists of India'. Having secured the abolition of slavery in the West Indies, British philanthropy directed its attention to India where a different kind of slavery prevailed and a nefarious 'coolie trade' was growing. The emancipationists in Britain looked upon India not only as a new client but also as a possible ally: she could, by producing more cotton, end the dependence of British manufacturers on American slave-grown cotton and thereby strike a blow at the institution of slavery in the United States of America.

Towards the middle of 1838 certain members of the Aborigines Protection Society, notably Joseph Pease⁵ and William Howitt⁶, joined hands with some prominent emancipationists, such as Thomas Clarkson⁷ and George Thompson, and Anglo-Indians, like Sir Charles Forbes,⁸ Robert Montgomery Martin⁹ and Major General John Briggs,¹⁰ to agitate Indian questions in England. The support of Lord Brougham¹¹ and Daniel O'Connell¹² was secured. After some preliminary campaigning in the provinces, a provisional committee was appointed on 27 March 1839 to establish a new broad-based metropolitan association in London, named the British India Society, 'for bettering the condition of our fellow-subjects—the Natives of British India', and a prospectus was issued.¹³

The formation of the British India Society was blessed by the Society of Friends, to which some of the initiators of the movement, for example, Pease and Howitt, belonged, at their annual meeting on 1 June 1839 at Devonshire House, Bishopgate Street, London.¹⁴

5. B. 1772; philanthropist and businessman; d. 1846.

6. B. 1792; author and philanthropist; d. 1879.

7. B. 1760; philanthropist; d. 1846.

8. B. 1774; connected with the mercantile firm of Forbes and Company, Bombay; M. P., 1812-32; d. 1849.

9. B. 1803; historical writer and statistician; d. 1868.

10. B. 1785; Indian military and political officer 1801-35; d. 1875.

11. Henry Peter, Baron Brougham and Vaux (1775-1868); Author and statesman.

12. B. 1775; Irish politician; d. 1847.

13. John Hyslop Bell, *British Folks and British India Fifty Years Ago: Joseph Pease and His Contemporaries* (London, 1891), pp. 58-60.

14. *Addresses Delivered before the Members of the Society of Friends at their Yearly Meeting, Devonshire House, Bishopgate Street, on the 1st of June, 1839* (London, 1839).

The British India Society was formally inaugurated on 6 July 1839 at a great public meeting at Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, with Lord Brougham in the chair.¹⁵

Speakers at the Freemasons' Hall meeting, which was attended by many distinguished British public men and Anglo-Indians and about half a dozen Indians, severely criticized the Company's government in India for its 'wicked wars', its 'ruinous' system of taxation, its failure to develop the resources of the country, its neglect of public works, its salt and opium monopolies, and its system of patronage. They drew attention to the poverty, misery, and discontent prevailing in India and called upon the British people to discharge their responsibility towards the welfare of their Indian fellow-subjects. They underlined the enormous present and potential value of India to Britain. They pointed out how by encouraging and consuming the free produce of India they could not only promote the cause of negro emancipation in America but also provide increased employment for the workers in Britain. Lord Brougham emphasized the duty of the British people to intercede on behalf of the people of India as the latter were denied any share or voice in the government of their country and all their affairs were 'managed behind their backs'.¹⁶ Daniel O'Connell pleaded for 'Justice to India'.¹⁷ 'The crimes that have been committed in India', he said, 'are matters to weep over . . .'.¹⁸ The tale of India's suffering was, in his view, of much greater complexity than even that of Ireland.¹⁹ He advocated 'a fixed and reasonable rent'²⁰ for India and concluded by saying: '... from this moment I adopt the Natives of India as my clients'.²¹ John Crawford²² dwelt upon the injustice and iniquity of the resumption of rent-free lands by the Government in Bengal.²³ George Thompson remarked that

15. *Speeches Delivered at a Public Meeting for the Formation of a British India Society; Held in the Freemasons' Hall, Saturday, July 6th, 1839* (London, 1839).

16. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

22. B. 1783; orientalist; d. 1868.

23. *Speeches Delivered at a Public Meeting for the Formation of a British India Society . . .*, pp. 45-49.

'by bettering the condition of our fellow-subjects—the Natives of India, we shall be advancing the prosperity of our own country, and conferring incalculable benefits upon other parts of the world'.²⁴

The meeting at Freemasons' Hall on 6 July 1839 adopted four important resolutions, which read as follows :

1. 'That the present condition of our Native fellow-subjects, in British India, estimated at 100,000,000, wholly excluded from the privileges of representation, and under the dominion of a Government, in whose appointment they have no voice, and over whose acts they have no control—demands the active sympathy and constant vigilance of the British people.'²⁵

2. 'That it is established by ample evidence, that there exists throughout British India a great amount of poverty, misery, ignorance, and discontent ; —that immense tracts of land are suffered to lie waste ; —that the revenue is declining ; —that the people are oppressed by grievous monopolies, extending even to the necessities of life ; —that the ancient public works are perishing—that the internal communications have been neglected, and that dreadful famines frequently devastate the land.'²⁶

3. 'That these evils exist in a country of vast and great fertility ; whose inhabitants are docile, intelligent and industrious ; whose ancient institutions might be made instrumental to good Government—a country capable of supplying many of our demands for tropical produce, and the desire and capacity of whose population to receive the manufactures, and thus stimulate the commerce of Great Britain, would, under a just and intelligent rule, be incalculably developed.'²⁷

4. 'That for the purpose of obtaining and diffusing information —of directing more efficiently the public attention to a subject involving no less our commercial and political interests, than our social and moral duties—and of suggesting and giving effect to such measures as are likely to improve the circumstances and provide for the happiness of the people of British India, an

24. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Association be now formed, to be called "The British India Society", for bettering the condition of our fellow-subject—the Natives of British India.'²⁸

A representative committee of twenty was appointed to draw up the rules, etc., of the Society, with F. C. Brown²⁹ and George Thompson as secretaries and John Briggs as treasurer.

Launched under such distinguished auspices, supported by such varied interests and served by such earnestness, experience and eloquence, the British India Society held out the hope of a long, active and beneficent career. But the hope was cruelly belied. All went well for the first few months. Lectures were delivered and branch societies were organized at many towns.³⁰ George Thompson, whom even Lord Brougham described as 'the most eloquent man, and the most accomplished orator I know',³¹ toured the country and hundreds flocked to hear him wherever he went. In the autumn of 1839 he delivered a series of six lectures on India at Manchester in which he appealed equally to the commercial and philanthropic instincts of his audience. The lectures were reported by the *Guardian* and afterwards reprinted in a handsome volume at the cost of Lord Clifford.³² Petitions and remonstrances were addressed to Parliament and the Court of Directors. Information was proffered on Indian questions arising in Parliament to such members—William Ewart, Daniel O'Connell, Joseph Hume, Charles Lushington, and others—as were pledged to the views of the Society. Communications were opened with persons in India, where the formation of the Society had already aroused great interest, and an Indian Committee of the Society was selected in October 1839.³³ The Landholder's Society of Calcutta formally allied itself with the British India Society in December 1839³⁴ and later sent a contribution of £500 to it through its London agent, John Crawford.³⁵ From Bombay,

28. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

29. B. 1792; owner of an estate in Malabar and writer on Indian subjects; d. 1868.

30. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

31. *Speeches Delivered at a Public Meeting for the Formation of a British India Society* . . . , p. 62.

32. George Thompson, *Six Lectures on the Condition, Resources, and Prospects of British India* . . . (London, 1842).

33. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

34. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 14 and 16 December 1839. See also Mehrotra, *op. cit.*

35. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

Cowasji Jahangir, Jamshedji Jijibhai, Jagannath Shankarseth and other prominent citizens wrote in September 1839, promising their 'best and most unqualified support' to the Society if it contemplated no interference with their religion or customs.³⁶ In January 1840 a Bombay Committee of the Society was established to furnish the parent body with funds and information.³⁷ It included the leading representatives of the various communities in the town—Hindu, Moslem, Parsi and English. The formation of the Society aroused interest in Ireland and even in far-off America. In Dublin lectures on India were delivered by Robert Moore of the Irish Bar and a branch of the Society was organized.³⁸ Prominent American abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips hailed the Society as a potent ally and offered to cooperate.³⁹ Garrison reprinted George Thompson's Manchester lectures in America, prefaced by an introduction in which he underlined the lecturer's remark: 'The battleground of freedom for the world is on the plains of Hindostan.'⁴⁰

But the British India Society was hardly a year old when it was threatened with disintegration. Early in 1840 a serious difference of opinion developed amongst the members of its London Committee over the opium question. John Crawford, in particular, who was involved in the opium trade, threatened that if the Society persisted with its agitation over opium and did not prevent George Thompson from lecturing on it, he would walk off with the Calcutta remittance of £500 in his pocket and quit the Society altogether.⁴¹ Briggs, who was speculating in teas, was afraid of a speedy peace with China and planned to start with Alexander Rogers⁴² a separate journal.⁴³ 'I begin to be very suspicious', wrote William Howitt to Joseph Pease on 5 March 1840, 'of the moral soundness of Anglo-

36. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

37. *Bombay Times*, 11 and 29 January 1840. We have no information about the future activities, if any, of the Bombay Committee.

38. Bell, *op. cit.*, pp. 139, 143.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-77, 104-12.

40. *Lectures on British India* ... with a preface by W. L. Garrison (Pawtucket 1840), p. vi.

41. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

42. Sheriff of London and Middlesex 1841-42; assistant protector of emigrants in Bengal till his death in 1852.

43. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

Indians in general. They have been in a bad school.'⁴⁴ These internal dissensions had already paralysed the activities of the London Committee. In April 1840 Crawford carried out his threat and almost wrecked the organization.⁴⁵ In June 1840 Briggs and Rogers launched their rival monthly paper called the *Indian News*.

Faced with the prospect of disintegration, Thompson had proposed to Pease in March 1840 that the rump of the London Committee of the British India Society should be handed over to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society on the condition that the latter association should take decided action to advance its objects—the abolition of slavery in India, the institution of a permanent settlement of the land revenue, the development of the resources of India, and a speedy end to the salt monopoly and the opium trade, etc.⁴⁶ Pease, instead, favoured an alliance with the free trade party.⁴⁷ He also suggested that the headquarters of the Society should be shifted from London, which was honeycombed with the East India Company interests and military predilections, to Manchester.⁴⁸

The Society, however, survived the split and apparently rallied its diminished forces. The London Committee was reorganized and strengthened with the addition of William Adam⁴⁹ as a secretary. On 6 July 1840 the first anniversary meeting of the Society was held in Freemasons' Hall, with Sir Charles Forbes in the chair.⁵⁰ It was attended, among others, by several leading American abolitionists who had come to London in connection with the first World's Anti-Slavery Convention in mid-June. Both at the Convention and at the anniversary meeting of the Society, American speakers again and again reiterated the argument, that as a means of checking the slave traffic in the Southern States of the American Republic, no available method could equal that of a speedy development of cotton cultivation in India. They also joined the British speakers in condemning the Company's administration in India. The most

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 92-94.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Author of the famous reports on vernacular education in Bengal and Bihar (1835-38); Unitarian; friend of Rammohan Roy.

50. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 23 September 1840. Also *The Times*, 7 July 1840.

notable speech at the Society's anniversary meeting was made by O'Connell. He appeared there, he said, 'as the advocate of one hundred and fifty millions of human beings in India, who were bound worse than slaves, and rendered beggars by oppression'.⁵¹ He came there 'to prefer a bill of indictment against the East India Company' and to 'arraign them before the tribunal of the nation for establishing and upholding in India a system of government productive of misery, injustice and poverty to the people'.⁵² He roundly condemned the salt monopoly, the opium trade and the resumption of rent-free land in India. He made a glowing appeal to the British public to 'raise the shield of humanity round the Natives of India, in order to vindicate our common Christianity and promote the blessings of peace and prosperity in that long-oppressed quarter of the world'.⁵³

Among the resolutions adopted at the first anniversary meeting of the Society on 6 July 1840, the following deserve mention:

1. 'That the Government and the people of this empire are responsible to the civilized world for the maintenance and administration of British rule in India, on such principles as shall promote the happiness and improvement of the native population'.⁵⁴

2. 'That the employment of proper means to call forth the resources of British India will greatly increase the resources of England, give activity to her industry, and add to the comfort and prosperity of all classes of her population'.⁵⁵

3. 'That the development of the resources of British India is calculated to produce important moral and social effects, both on the people of the British West Indies and on those of the United States of America; on the former, by supplying the deficient quantity of sugar required for the consumption of England, and thereby confirming and securing the salutary effects of the act of Emancipation; and on the latter, by enabling the free-grown cotton of India successfully to compete with the cotton of America, and thereby leading to the natural and peaceful extinction of trans-Atlantic slavery'.⁵⁶

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*

53. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

54. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 28 September 1840.

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*

4. 'That this meeting is of opinion, that the oppressive and fluctuating amount of land revenue; the general resumption by the Indian Government demand on lands hitherto held rent-free; the imperfection and corruption in the administration of police and justice; the maintenance of vexatious monopolies, are evils which ought to receive the immediate attention of the Government of this country, as tending to produce distrust and discontent among the native population; to unsettle the tenures of property, and to endanger the public peace; to cramp the exertions of industry and the progress of improvement; to lessen the production of exportable commodities and by necessary consequence the capacity of extending commercial relations with Great Britain and other nations, and to diminish the force of the example which England has set by the abolition of slavery in the West Indies, and thus perpetuate the existence of slavery in the other countries of the world'.⁵⁷

On 26 August 1840 a great public meeting was held at the Corn Exchange, Manchester, to organize the Northern-Central British India Society, with which the provincial British India Societies were to be affiliated.⁵⁸ Manchester now became the centre of gravity of the British India Society. In January 1841 the Society launched a monthly paper of its own, called the *British Indian Advocate*. It was edited by William Adam, and after his departure to the United States in the autumn of 1841 by George Thompson. The paper bore the motto: 'Justice to India—Prosperity to England—Freedom to the Slave'.⁵⁹

Free trade was not one of the specific planks of the British India Society, but the general drift of its campaign was unmistakably in that direction. Moreover, the leaders of the Society were almost to a man free traders. The only exception—who proved the rule—was Sir Charles Forbes. Similarly, many leaders of the free trade party, including Richard Cobden⁶⁰ and John Bright,⁶¹ were members of the British India Society.⁶² On the eve

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*, 17 November 1840.

59. *British Indian Advocate*, 1 January 1841.

60. B. 1804; statesman; d. 1865.

61. B. 1811; orator and statesman; d. 1889.

62. See Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 92, and *British Indian Advocate*, 1 January 1841, p. 7.

of the 1841 General Election in Britain, the British India Society entered into a formal alliance with the Anti-Corn-Law League. A 'definitive treaty'⁶³ was concluded in June 1841 which was signed by Joseph Pease and F. C. Brown on behalf of the Committee of the British India Society, and by Richard Cobden and John Brooks on behalf of the Council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League. It read as follows:

'The Committee of the British India Society agrees that Mr. George Thompson shall render his gratuitous services to the Council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League in its efforts to promote the establishment and secure the recognition of the principles of free trade.

'The Council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League recognises the legitimacy and importance of the objects sought by the British India Society, and approves of the principles of the Society as stated in the address adopted at its constitution.

'The Council regards those objects as kindred to its own, and as inseparably connected with the establishment of free trade and the promotion of the best interests of the British Empire; and the Council pledges itself, as far as it is competent, upon the settlement of the question of the Corn Laws, now pending, to co-operate with the British India Society for the attainment of its great object, Justice to India.'⁶⁴

The leaders of the British India Society no doubt believed that, in concluding this treaty with the Anti-Corn-Law League, they had struck a good bargain. They had secured for their cause the promise of support of the powerful free trade party—'the enlightened friends of industry and trade at home'—on apparently no worse terms for them than that they should hand over George Thompson's services gratuitously and temporarily to the platform work of free trade agitation.⁶⁵ But they were mistaken. The alliance in fact proved disastrous to their organization and to their cause.

One important immediate result of their resolve to make common cause with the Anti-Corn-Law League was that Sir Charles Forbes withdrew in protest from the London Committee of the

63. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 137. See Also *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular* 16 June 1841, and *British Indian Advocate*, 1 July 1841, pp. 57-58, 64.

65. *British Indian Advocate*, 1 July 1841, pp. 57-58, 64.

Society.⁶⁶ Sir Charles was in home affairs a Tory of Tories, but his deep piety, quenchless human sympathy and love of justice had made him an ardent reformer in all matters affecting the welfare of India, where he had spent a good many years of his life and earned for himself the sobriquet of 'the Benevolent Father of India'.⁶⁷ He was the most generous contributor to the funds of the Society.⁶⁸ The defection of such a man could not but undermine the stability of the Society and its prestige both in England and India.

By identifying itself with the Anti-Corn-Law League, the British India Society had to bear more than its share of the aversion and hostility of gentlemen of the 'landed interest' in England to whom it was in nowise necessarily opposed.⁶⁹

Though the treaty between the British India Society and the Anti-Corn-Law League did not mention the fact, it was the result of an understanding arrived at between the leaders of the two organizations that the British India Society would suspend its agitation on behalf of India until the corn laws were repealed.⁷⁰ Even without this understanding it would have been difficult for the British India Society to engage any large portion of attention to the question of distant India at a time when the great domestic question of the corn laws increasingly concentrated upon itself the attention and the feelings of all classes of the people throughout Britain. Nor can the leaders of the British India Society be blamed for giving precedence to an all-important issue at home and deciding that India must wait. As George Thompson put it:

'Not that we love India less,

But that we love England more.'⁷¹

But they certainly miscalculated that after securing 'a speedy triumph in the war now waging with the bread monopoly', the leaders of the Anti-Corn-Law League would at once direct their energies to bring relief 'to the natives of much wronged India.'⁷²

66. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

67. *Speeches Delivered at a Public Meeting for the Formation of a British India Society* . . . , p. 69.

68. In 1839-40 Forbes contributed about £1,000 to the funds of the Society.

69. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

70. See *Free Trade with India* (Kennington, 1847) pp. 3, 19-20.

71. *British Indian Advocate*, 1 January 1842, p. 179.

72. *Ibid.*, 1 July 1841, pp. 57-58.

By the time the corn laws were repealed in 1846, the organization of the British India Society, which was allowed to fall into disuse, had disintegrated, and the cause of Indian reform, which was deferred and subordinated, had been almost forgotten. And in 1847 when William Howitt publicly reminded the leaders of the free trade party of their solemn pledge of 1841,⁷³ his reminder went unheeded. On the eve of the renewal of the Company's charter in 1853, 'the friends of India' in England had to improvise a new organization, called the India Reform Society and rather belatedly Richard Codben and John Bright, the Castor and Pollux, the David and Jonathan, of the free trade movement came forward to redeem their promise of 1841. Nothing, however, could make up for lost time. The Company was put on its trial but escaped conviction. The petitions submitted to Parliament by the political associations in India were disregarded and Indians began to despair of getting justice from England. Things were allowed to drift in India until they culminated in the terrible tragedy of the revolt of 1857.

The British India Society represented the first significant attempt at organized agitation on behalf of India in Britain.⁷⁴ Various causes contributed to its early collapse. It had to contend against widespread apathy and ignorance and against powerful vested interests. It failed to organize a broad-based movement. Internal dissensions crippled its London Committee soon after its birth. Its doctrinaire and declamatory tone alienated friends and created enemies. Instead of working for the people of India, some of its prominent members wasted their time and energy in taking up the cause of the deposed Raja of Satara or that of the captive Emperor of Delhi. The Society could not compete with the Anti-Corn-Law League for the attention of the British public and by entering into a formal alliance with the latter organization in 1841 it unwittingly signed its own death-warrant.

But the British India Society did not labour entirely in vain. It tried to bring together 'the friends of India' on a common platform and served as the prototype for later organizations, such as the

73. See *Free Trade with India*, pp. 19-20.

74. In 1826-27 James Silk Buckingham, the famous Anglo-Indian journalist, had made an unsuccessful attempt to establish a 'British-Indian Association' in England 'for the promotion of improvement in our Anglo-Asiatic possessions'. See 'British-India Association', *Oriental Herald*, January 1827, pp. 1-9.

India Reform Society, the East India Association, and the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. It awakened some interest among the British people in Indian affairs and reminded them of the great responsibility which devolved upon their shoulders as the rulers of that distant dependency. It put the East India Company on the defensive. It was partly as a result of the Society's efforts that the Company encouraged the cultivation of cotton and the investment of British capital in India, abolished slavery and mitigated the severities of the resumption laws. The most notable achievement of the Society, however, lay in the fact that it stimulated political agitation in India.

In 1842, when Dwarkanath Tagore⁷⁵ first came to England, he persuaded George Thompson to visit India.⁷⁶ As an apostle of humanity and civilization, as the secretary of the British India Society and as an eloquent advocate of Indian causes, Thompson's reputation had already reached India. His arrival in Calcutta, along with Dwarkanath Tagore, early in January 1843, therefore naturally created a stir in the country. While one section of the press hailed him as a prophet and a liberator, another dubbed him as a stipendiary agitator and a grievance-monger.⁷⁷ With a view to instruct and guide the warm hearts and intellects of Young Bengal in the path of self-improvement and public usefulness, Thompson delivered a series of weekly lectures in Calcutta which were attended by hundreds of people and widely reported in the press throughout India. In these lectures Thompson called upon educated and intelligent Indians to discharge their duties of enlightened subjects and citizens. He advised them to rouse themselves and become the narrators of their own grievances. 'India', he told them, 'had foreign rulers, foreign councillors, foreign historians, foreign defamers, and, I am sorry to say, foreign advocates. Call a meeting at the Town Hall upon a question exclusively affecting the natives and the speakers are foreigners. Let a cause require an agent in England, and though it be one altogether affecting the natives them-

75. B. 1794; landlord and merchant; close associate of Rammohan Roy; visited England 1842 and 1845-46; d. at London 1846.

76. See *Scotsman*, 26 October 1842, cited in *Bengal Hurkaru*, 20 January 1843.

77. See, for example, *Bengal Hurkaru*, 3 January 1843; *Agra Akhbar*, 14 January 1843, cited in *ibid.*, 23 January 1843; and *Bombay Times*, 14 January 1843.

selves, that agent must be a foreigner.⁷⁸ And he asked his audience: 'Ought it to be so?... Shall it continue to be so?... When will it be otherwise?'⁷⁹ He told them that they were themselves to blame for the evils of legislation and administration. 'You offer no advice, you threaten no opposition, you recommend no modification.'⁸⁰ He advised them to direct their intelligence, education and influence to patriotic ends and to combine for the good of their common country. They should collect and carefully digest information on the various topics of interest around them and bring it to a focus. They should call meetings, memorialize, send representations, knock at the door of justice, again and again harder and harder, and if not heard by the local authorities, they should appeal to the people and Parliament of Britain who were the real rulers of India. So much did he desire, he said, to see a man of their own nation stepping forward as the pioneer in their cause, that he could wish himself a Hindu, that he might consecrate himself to the good of his countrymen, and set an example of fearless and self-denying devotion to their cause. But he did not despair of an Indian patriot coming forward and saying: 'I will henceforth live, not unto myself, but for the sake of my own, my native, my beloved land.'⁸¹ He told Indians that by isolated effort they could do little, but by the power of voluntary association and well-directed general effort, they could achieve much. He, however, enjoined upon them the duty of deep study, of patient industry, of mutual assistance and forbearance, of full, fair and impartial representation of the condition and claims of the various classes of the population, of moderation and charity in criticism, and of employing only pure, peaceful and constitutional methods. He exhorted them to know India and to study the history of England. 'Judge not of our country', he urged, 'by the acts of a few. Judge us rather by those deeds of universal charity, which have gained us an unsullied fame, even at the ends of the earth. Our national power has been abused—our honour too often tarnished—our resources too often prostituted—and our religion too

78. George Thompson, *Addresses Delivered at Meetings of the Native Community of Calcutta and on Other Occasions* (Calcutta, 1843), p. 43.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

often disgraced—but the heart of England has not been turned from the love of justice, nor her arm paralysed in the cause of the poor.'⁸²

George Thompson's oratory cast a spell over the rising generation of Bengalis. Nothing like it had been heard before in Calcutta. The *Bengal Herald* wrote that 'no man who ever came to this country ever made such an impression on the native mind as has been produced by Mr. Thompson's addresses.'⁸³ His visit marks a landmark in the history of political agitation in India and it is not without justification that he has been called the 'father of political education in India.'⁸⁴ His addresses prepared the way for the formation of the Bengal British India Society on 20 April 1843.⁸⁵ The nucleus for the formation of the Bengal British India Society already existed in Calcutta. In March 1838 some English-educated and liberal-minded young men had established in Calcutta a literary association, called the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge.⁸⁶ This Society had risen on the ashes of Derozio's Academic Association and included many ex-students of the Hindu College who met once a month to discuss some question of general interest. It had about 170 members from Calcutta and the mofussil and between 1840 and 1843 published three volumes of selections from the papers read at its meetings.⁸⁷ The Society for the Acquisition of General knowledge was 'in a languishing condition'⁸⁸ when George Thompson arrived in Calcutta, but it provided him with the first platform to inaugurate his series of lectures and its leading members played a prominent role in the formation of the Bengal British India Society.

Noticing the crowded meetings addressed by Thompson in

82. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

83. *Bengal Herald*, 18 March 1843.

84. Raj Jogeshur Mitter (ed.), *Speeches by Mr. George Thompson, Father of Political Education in India* (Calcutta, 1895). See also *Hindoo Patriot*, 4 November 1878, and Bholanath Chandra, 'An Old Leaf Turned Back, or Recollections of George Thompson, M. P., in India', *Calcutta University Magazine*, November 1895, pp. 146-50.

85. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 24 April 1843.

86. *Ibid.*, 3 March and 19 May 1838.

87. See *ibid.*, 16 January 1843, and *Selections of Discourses Read at Meetings of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge*, 1838-43, 3 vols. (Calcutta 1840-43).

88. George Thompson, *Addresses Delivered at Meetings of the Native Community of Calcutta and on other Occasions*, p. 4.

Calcutta, the *Friend of India* remarked: 'We can well remember the time, when, if he had landed in India, not five natives would have been found in Calcutta, able to comprehend a single sentence delivered by him. Accustomed as we are to periodical reports of education, we become in a measure insensible of the progress of improvement effected by the labours of Government and private associations; till it is suddenly presented to the mind by some unexpected association like the present, when we find hundreds of educated natives listening with admiration to that eloquence which has produced so powerful an effect in our native land.'⁸⁹

The rapid spread of English education had generated new ideas of public spirit and patriotism, born of familiarity with the writings of European poets and philosophers. Young men left college with fair ideas of the political degradation of the people of India and very ardent desires to raise themselves and their fellow-countrymen above their fallen state. Having read, they wrote and they spoke and they tried to act. Already they were playing at patriotic associations. For example, on 9 February 1839, some Eurasians and Indians had assembled at the Calcutta Town Hall to establish a society to be called the Patriotic Association (later designated 'the United India Association')⁹⁰. The object of the Association was to secure the full implementation of the Charter Act of 1833 and the removal of all disabilities and grievances under which the people laboured by lawful and constitutional means. C. A. Fenwick,⁹¹ who presided over the meeting, took the Company's government to task for depriving them of their birthright of freedom and of all those privileges which as Her Majesty's subjects they had a claim to. He dwelt at length upon the disabilities, grievances and hardships under which they suffered, especially their exclusion from higher employments and the denial of any voice to them in the legislature. 'No nation, no civilized nation', he said, 'would quietly submit to such enormities, and the object of the Patriotic Association is to show that the natives of India are a nation.'⁹² The Association was, however, still-born.

89. *Friend of India*, 23 February 1843.

90. *Englishman*, 11 February 1839 and *Bengal Hurkaru*, 12 February 1839. As early as 1828 the Eurasians in Calcutta had tried to organize a 'Commercial and Patriotic Association' to promote their welfare. See *Bengal Hurkaru*, 2 February 1828.

91. Head clerk to the collector of Tejpur.

92. *Englishman*, 11 February 1839.

Two years later—on 3 October 1841—another political association, called the Deshabitaishini Sabha or Society for the Amelioration of India, was established in Calcutta at the initiative of some 'conductors of the native press' and old Hindu College students.⁹³ The public meeting at which the Deshabitaishini Sabha was established was convened by an advertisement in the popular Bengali daily *Sambad Prabhakar*—a fact which, according to the *Calcutta Christian Advocate*, indicated 'that the native press has already obtained so potent an influence over the intelligent portion of the Hindu community'⁹⁴—and it was 'numerously and respectably attended'.⁹⁵ The object of the Sabha was to co-operate with the British India Society in England for the welfare of India. Its membership was open to all men, without distinction of colour, creed or sect. It was to establish an English journal for advocating the rights of the natives and to present a petition to Parliament for the redress of their grievances. A committee of twenty-four was elected for carrying on the concerns of the Sabha.

A Bengali translation of an address written in English by one Sharada Prasad Ghose⁹⁶ was read to the meeting. The address gives us a fair indication of the sentiments which were animating Young Bengal at the time. It commenced thus: 'Ever since the commencement of British supremacy in this country, the policy of our present rulers has been to deprive us of the enjoyment of political liberty... The administration of the Supreme Government of this country has, a few years since, been entrusted to the hands of six gentlemen, who compose the council of India. These gentlemen enact laws for the government of millions of human beings, who acknowledge subjection to British sway, without taking their opinion as to the tendency of those laws which purport to be conducive to their welfare. We are thus rendered ignorant of what passes within the council-chamber; and hence is the reason that we are so often governed by laws which have a pernicious tendency to occasion and perpetuate our political degradation... Our deprivation of the enjoyment of

93. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 6 October 1841.

94. *Calcutta Christian Advocate*, 9 October 1841.

95. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 6 October 1841.

96. Member of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge. According to the *British Indian Advocate*, 1 January 1842, pp. 181-82, however, the author of the address was Kashi Prasad Ghose, the well-known poet and journalist.

political liberty is the cause of our misery and degradation. The loss of happiness follows the loss of liberty, as shadow does the substance. This is a principle which has been received as an axiom of political science.⁹⁷ The author cited the examples of England and ancient Rome to prove that the political greatness of a country depended upon the possession of political rights by its people. He did not expect that 'our present rulers will ever enable us to rise in the scale of political greatness'.⁹⁸ With the help of a quotation from the *Pleasures of Hope*, he tried to establish that they 'pay a superstitious adoration to mammon and scruple not to adopt any means by which they can enrich themselves, and reduce us to squalid poverty'.⁹⁹ As an instance of their 'grinding oppression exercised upon us',¹⁰⁰ he referred to the resumption of rent-free lands. Then, with apt quotations from *Paradise Lost*, *Childe Harold* and Thompson's *Seasons*, and with allusions to Greck history, Hampden and the American War of Independence, he tried to impress upon his audience the need for union and patriotism. He advised them to co-operate with the British India Society which had for its objects 'the improvement of their degraded condition' and the removal of their grievances.¹⁰¹ He strongly urged the editors of the Indian papers to afford 'their aid in the glorious cause': 'They are to write continually on political subjects, pointing to the evils of the Government, together with the means by which those evils can be remedied, in the same manner as the gentlemen of the British India Society are doing at present... as our misery has proceeded from the oppression of the Government, so, in order to remove grievances, a stop should be put to that oppression....¹⁰² He also advised his countrymen to represent their grievances to 'that august assembly', the British Parliament.¹⁰³ 'You do not,' he argued, 'like the brave and noble-minded American, aspire as high as to free yourselves from the yoke of British sway; to take in your hands the reins of Government; and to display in the world striking

97. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 6 October 1841.

98. *Ibid.*

99. *Ibid.*

100. *Ibid.*

101. *Ibid.*

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Ibid.*

instances of your courage exercised in the cause of your independence. No. Your aspiration is by far much humbler; you only desire to be freed from the tyranny and oppression of the local Government of this country....¹⁰⁴ And this he believed could be achieved by an urgent petition to Parliament. He attributed the mitigation of the severity of the resumption laws to the interference of 'the British nation'.¹⁰⁵

The Deshahitaishini Sabha shared the sad fate of the Patriotic or United India Association, but the feelings and opinions of which they were both the outcome remained and grew. The personality and perorations of George Thompson imparted a fresh impulse to them and they flowered into the Bengal British India Society of 1843. The object of this Society was declared to be 'the collection and dissemination of information, relating to the actual condition of the people of British India, and the laws, institutions and resources of the country; and to employ such other means of a peaceable and lawful character, as may appear calculated to secure the welfare, extend the just rights, and advance the interests of all classes of our fellow subjects'.¹⁰⁶ The Society was to 'adopt and recommend such measures only, as are consistent with pure loyalty to the person and government of the reigning Sovereign of the British dominions, and the due observance of the laws and regulations of the country'.¹⁰⁷ Membership of the Society was open to 'all persons of adult age, and not at the time receiving instruction in any public seminary, contributing to the funds of the Society' and 'anxious to promote the good of India, and the improvement, efficiency, and stability of the British Government, without respect of caste, creed, place of birth, or rank in society'.¹⁰⁸

Until he left India in December 1843, George Thompson remained the president of the Bengal British India Society. His place was filled in January 1844 by William Theobald, a Calcutta barrister who was also one of the secretaries of the Landholders'

104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*

106. George Thompson, *Addresses Delivered at Meetings of the Native Community of Calcutta and Other Occasions*, p. 138.

107. *Ibid.*

108. *Ibid.*, pp. 137, 140.

Society.¹⁰⁹ When Theobald resigned in November 1845¹¹⁰—apparently due to some serious difference of opinion—Ramgopal Ghose¹¹¹ was elected president of the Society. Piarichandra Mitra¹¹² acted as secretary of the Society as long as it lasted. Other prominent members of the Society were: Tarachandra Chakravarty,¹¹³ Chandrasekhar Deb¹¹⁴, K.M. Banerji¹¹⁵, Dakshinaranjan Mukerjee¹¹⁶, Harimohan Sen¹¹⁷, Kishorichandra Mitra¹¹⁸, Ramchandra Mitra¹¹⁹, Ramtanu Lahiri¹²⁰, Govindachandra Basak¹²¹, Radhanath Sikdar¹²², M. Crow¹²³, Samuel Smith¹²⁴, Alexander Duff¹²⁵, J. J. Fleury¹²⁶, G. F. Renry¹²⁷ and G. F. T. Speede.¹²⁸

The Bengal British India Society was, like the Landholders' Society, a joint Indo-British venture. The overwhelming majority of its members were, however, Indians.¹²⁹ These latter represented the younger generation of English-educated and public-spirited men from Calcutta and the mofussil. Though some of them were also zamindars and members of the Landholders' Society, the Bengal

109. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 9 January 1844.

110. *Ibid.*, 7 November 1845.

111. B. 1815; merchant, orator and reformer; member of Bengal legislative council 1862 b. 4; d. 1868.

112. B. 1814; merchant, author and reformer; member of Bengal legislative council 1868; d. 1883.

113. President of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge; Young Bengal nicknamed 'Chuckerbutty faction' after him; b. 1806; began career as teacher but later employed in the *sadar diwani adalat*; d. 1857.

114. Associate of Rammohan Roy; appointed deputy magistrate in 1844.

115. B. 1813; teacher and missionary; d. 1885.

116. B. 1814; landlord; later secretary of the Oudh British Indian Association; d. 1878.

117. Son of Ramkamal Sen; *diwan* of the Bank of Bengal.

118. B. 1822; writer and social reformer; deputy magistrate 1846-58; d. 1873.

119. Teacher in the Hindu College.

120. B. 1813; teacher and social reformer; d. 1898.

121. Deputy collector of Midnapur.

122. Writer in the Surveyor General's office; later superintendent of the Alipur observatory; b. 1813; d. 1870.

123. Deputy collector of Calcutta; earlier editor of *Reformer*; d. 1847.

124. Proprietor of the *Bengal Hurkaru*.

125. B. 1806; Scottish missionary and teacher; d. 1878.

126. Assistant and adjuster of weights in the Company's mint.

127. Indigo planter; master of the Calcutta Trade Association.

128. Teacher in the Hindu College; author.

129. Of the sixty odd members of the Society whose names are available, about 20 were British.

British India Society was in its composition and outlook essentially bourgeois¹³⁰.

The Bengal British India Society was more of a study circle than an association of agitators. At its very foundation, George Thompson had pointed out that the operations of the Society were to be 'of a necessarily limited character'.¹³¹ 'For the work of agitation and petitioning, as carried on in England,' he had told the budding patriots of Calcutta, 'you are not yet prepared. You have no representative body, no *public*, in the English sense of the word. Beyond your own immediate neighbourhood, all is tame acquiescence, or sullen discontent, or interested connivance, or profound ignorance, or perfect helplessness.'¹³² Yet, notwithstanding these handicaps, the members of the Society could, he said, perform a useful function by way of collecting information, valuable to the public at large, to the government and to their friends in England. They should quietly and inoffensively prosecute inquiries into questions of general interest, bring their contributions together, prepare their statements and represent their grievances and then make an appeal in quarters where there were both the disposition and the ability to aid them. 'Sit down', said Thompson, 'and draw out a statement of those evils. Let them be intelligibly exhibited, and convincingly illustrated; and let the plain and practicable remedy be set forth. We then, who have access to the people and Parliament of England, thus assisted by you, will be able in your own language to make known your wishes and your wants.'¹³³

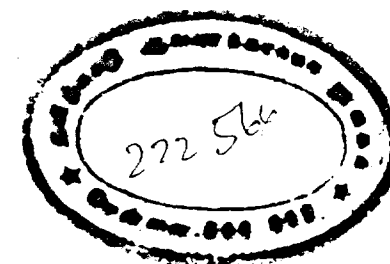
Though the promised help from England was not forthcoming, the members of the Bengal British India Society faithfully followed the lines laid down by Thompson in 1843. They organized no monster meetings and delivered no oration. Quietly and unobtrusively, they met—almost regularly—once a month at Faujdari Balakhana Hall, for over three years, to deliberate on questions of

130. In 1870 Kishorichandra Mitra recalled that the Society 'was composed of the upper middle-class men, sympathizing strongly with the conditions of the ryots'. See *Indian Daily News*, 9 April 1870. Another contemporary, Bholanath Chandra, wrote in 1893 that while the Landholders' Society represented 'the aristocracy of wealth', the Bengal British India Society represented 'the aristocracy of intelligence'. See his *Raja Digambar Mitra, C.S.I.: His Life and Career* (Calcutta, 1893), p. 36.

131. George Thompson, *Addresses Delivered at Meetings of the Native Community of Calcutta and on Other Occasions*, p. 127.

132. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-28.

133. *Ibid.*



public interest.¹³⁴ Individual members and sub-committees laboured in between the monthly meetings to prosecute their inquiries and write their papers and reports on questions entrusted to their care by the Society. The Society carefully examined the legislation proposed to be introduced by the government and submitted its views and suggestions for improvement to the latter. It also occasionally petitioned the authorities in India and England on important public questions such as the maintenance of direct communication by steam between Calcutta and Suez, the establishment of a small cause court and the increase of drunkenness in Calcutta. It showed great interest in the administration of justice, police and municipal affairs. It compiled and published in the form of a pamphlet the evidences of prominent Britons regarding the efficiency of Indian agency in the administration of the country, with a prefatory notice of the offices held by the Hindus under Moselm rule and of those to which they were admitted under British rule, in support of the petition sent to England by the inhabitants of Calcutta in April 1843 for the full implementation of section 87 of the Charter Act of 1833.¹³⁵ How far this movement influenced the resolution of the Government of India in October 1844 to give preference to educated Indians in civil employment it is hard to say.

The Society did not, however, confine its attention entirely to administrative and political issues. It conducted an open and detailed inquiry into the condition of the ryots in lower Bengal. A printed questionnaire was sent to responsible persons in the mofussil and the information furnished by the latter, along with the remedial measures suggested, was examined and analysed by a sub-committee of the Society before being made public. The plight of teachers in government schools in Bengal and of the ticca bearers in Calcutta attracted the attention of the Society. It advocated the cause of mass, technical and female education. It raised its voice against the prevalence of Kulin polygamy and perpetual widowhood

134. For the proceedings of the Bengal British India Society, see *Bengal Harkaru*, 24 April, 6 May, 10, 21 June, 1843; 9 January, 3 February, 13 March, 15 April, 6 May, 29 June, 11 September, 12 October, 12 November, 9 December 1844; 16 January, 6 February, 3, 21 March, 16 April, 12 May, 11 December 1845; 31 January, 14 February, 11 July 1846.

135. *Evidences Relative to the Efficiency of Native Agency in the Administration of This Country* (Calcutta, 1844).

amongst the Hindus. Some members of the Society even favoured legislative action to put down the former evil.

A selection of the Anglo-Indian press never took kindly to the Bengal British India Society. It dubbed its members as 'the Chuckerbutty faction' and accused them of talking sedition.¹³⁶ The Government weaned some of the prominent members away from the Society by appointing them deputy magistrates.¹³⁷ The older and more conservative leaders of the Indian community in Calcutta kept aloof from the Society. The inquiry conducted by the Society into the condition of the ryots in lower Bengal could not have made it popular with the zamindars. Moreover, the advanced views of the members of the Society as regards the education of girls, the remarriage of widows and the abolition of polygamy must have given offence to the orthodox Hindus. In May 1845 William Theobald warned the members of the Society not to make themselves 'too prominent, either by the nature or number of the subjects undertaken' and advised them to wait for improvement in Hindu Society, instead of urging legislative interference with its customs.¹³⁸

The precise reasons which prompted Theobald to resign the presidency of the Society in November 1845 were never made public, though the *Bengal Hurkaru* reported that there was 'a very general feeling among the members' of the Society 'that they should have a native gentleman of rank and consideration for their president, which it is hoped will have the effect of giving a more national character to the Society as an institution emanating from, and supported by, the great body of the native community.'¹³⁹ Ramgopal Ghose accepted the office of president of the Society in December 1845 'with some reluctance and great diffidence, as the nature of his pursuits would not permit him to devote sufficient attention to his duties.'¹⁴⁰ At a meeting of the Society held on 27 January 1846, Ram-

136. See for example, *Friend of India*, 21 September 1843; 13 February 1845; *Englishman*, 14 July 1843; and *Calcutta Christian Advocate*, 29 September 1845.

137. Between 1843 and 1846 at least three members of the Society—Chandra-shekar Deb, Shivachandra Deb and Kishorichandra Mitra—were appointed deputy magistrates. On 13 February 1845 the *Friend of India* noted that the 'exaggerated statements and inflammatory addresses' of Young Bengal had 'died into an echo' and remarked that 'a few Deputy Magistracies, judiciously bestowed, will doubtless prevent their revival'.

138. *Bengal Harkaru*, 12 May 1845.

139. *Ibid.*, 7 November 1845.

140. *Ibid.*, 31 January 1846.

gopal Ghose expressed his regret 'that an unfavourable impression had gone abroad against the Society', though he declined 'to discuss whether this was due to any unjudicious proceedings on the part of the members or to other causes'.¹⁴¹ He also referred to 'an impression in the public mind that this Society was entirely of a political character'.¹⁴² He emphatically repudiated it as 'a great misapprehension' and remarked: 'The Society has not, as a matter of fact, exclusively, or even principally, devoted itself to the consideration of political questions; while it had aimed to assist the Government in effecting such reforms as appeared feasible and necessary, . . . it had laboured also in endeavouring to promote the social and moral condition of the country.'¹⁴³

From 1845 on the Hindu community in Calcutta became increasingly alarmed and excited over the attempt of the government to alter the traditional Hindu law of inheritance so as to enable apostates from Hinduism to have a share in the ancestral property and over the renewed offensive of the missionaries to convert school-going Hindu children to Christianity. This development could have hardly been conducive to the smooth functioning of a mixed body like the British Bengal India Society. In August 1846 the Society suffered an irreparable loss in the death of its patron, Dwarkanath Tagore, and it was probably not long afterwards that it had itself ceased to exist.

The demise of the Bengal British India Society in 1846 virtually marks the end of that era of close co-operation in public life between educated Indians and non-official Britons which had been initiated in Calcutta by men like Rammohan Roy¹⁴⁴ and Dwarkanath Tagore about a quarter of a century ago. Henceforward the leaders of the two communities in Calcutta, who had often in the past stood side by side, were to be found standing face to face over an increasing number of public issues. It is significant that the British Indian Association, organized in 1851 by some of those Indians who had once been active in the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society, contained not a single British member.

141. *Ibid.*

142. *Ibid.*

143. *Ibid.*

144. Author, journalist and social reformer; b. 1772; in the East India Company's service 1803-14; sailed for England in November 1830; d. at Bristol 1833.

Islamic Law and Ismaili Communities

(Khojas and Bohras)

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The Isma'ili heresy within Islam is a most astounding phenomenon. It arose out of all the elements hostile to the ruling dynasty of Abbasides, and attempted at different corners of the empire to enlist supporters to a both political and religious cause and succeeded temporarily in Yemen and Bahrain and more permanently in Ifriqiya and Egypt to establish their rule. Before the establishment of their position in North Africa, the Isma'ilis adopted the religion and the practices of the place they resided in. They had tried till then to conciliate by devious methods, every religious denomination. Even the first two Caliphs of Islam—on whom the wrath of the Shiites was by no means niggardly or irrelevant for their being the root cause to them for the exclusion of Ali and his progeny from the Caliphate,—were provided in the Isma'ili hierarchy a pride of place as Hujja of the Prophet to propitiate the Sunni Islam. But with their ascendance to power in North Africa, the position had veritably changed. The Abbasids were coming under the patronage of the Shiite Buwaihids, the Shi'i Hamdanids were coming up in the Syrian region and the Idrisids in Morocco, if not thorough Shiites, had at least Shiite tones and trends. The orthodox Sunni Islam was already on the defensive and was preparing to close itself within the ready at-hand citadel of religious dogmas and legal prescriptions. The Isma'ilis then came out dogmatically as Shi'as with a living ruling Imam, a position at least tactically better than that of the 'twelver' Shi'as whose twelfth Imam Mahdi had been hidden from sight for more than fifty years and was only expected to appear in future to usher in a millenium. However, efforts were not lacking in putting up 'Abdullah al-Mahdi the first Fatimid Caliph both as the expected Mahdi of the Sunnis and of the Shi'as.

Prior to the Fatimid stabilization in North Africa, the Isma'ili

law as such was non-existent and the Isma'ilis followed the law of the land of their settlement. Abu Hatim ar-Razi an Isma'ili Da'i living in Iraq gives Hanafi points of view whenever he has to quote a legal ruling in his *Kal Zina*, a book written about the time of the inception of the Fatimid rule in North Africa. These were not officially acceptable to the early Fatimids, who were in a different environment.

For the first few years, the Fatimid rulers tried to put into practice their theory of the absolute Imama by openly expressing their views both on the dogma and the law. But the conditions within their kingdom were different from what prevailed outside. The majority of the population was Maliki by persuasion. They had a well-worked out legal system which they were not going to give up for any innovation introduced by the new conquerors. The rulers realized this and soon reached a compromise. The Maliki law was readily accepted except in places where their political stand could be exposed to danger. The law of inheritance and succession was adopted from the twelver Shi'as mainly to demonstrate the right of the Prophet's daughter Fatima and her progeny to his inheritance. In most of the important prescriptions like Muta-marriage, Ummu' l-Walad etc. which had distinguished twelver Shi'as from the Sunni Schools, the Isma'ilis accepted the Maliki attitudes. Even the report that Imam Malik had sat at the feet of Imam Ja'far a's-Sadiq was given much currency and their official legal spokesman and chief Qadi Nu'man went to the extent of saying that Imam Malik took his Fiqh from Imam Ja'far and wherever Imam Malik relates in his *Muwatta'* from a 'Thiqah', i.e. a trustworthy person, he relates from Ja'far-a's-Sadiq. In his last, officially promulgated legal compendium, *Da'a'imu'l-Islam* he attributes three fourth of his narratives to Ja'far-a's-Sadiq and does not even once quote from any Isma'ili or twelver Shi'i Imams after him.

In theory, the Imam was an absolute authority, both in mundane as well as religious matters. However, this absolute authority was circumscribed by the pressures of prevailing conditions and circumstances. The theory of law as propounded by Nu'man did away with Qiyas, Ijtihad or any other human predilection and put in its place the Imam's authority which was to remain next to the Qur'an and Sunna as a source of law. However, during

later periods, it was approved for the appropriate authorities appointed by the Imam and his deputies, the Da'is, to deduce laws for newly arising situations and problems by a method called *at-Tariqu'l-Kulli*, i.e. the universal method. In effect it was no different from Qiyas, Nazar or Istidlal of yore except in nomenclature.

The Khojas

With the close of the Fatimid rule in Egypt in the sixth century of Hijri and the split amongst the Isma'ilis, (1094) the law of the two factions underwent changes. The Nizari branch of the Isma'ilis settled in the Caspian Sea region and enjoyed power till they were overwhelmed by the Moguls in the thirteenth century (654/1256). There were already pockets of Isma'ilis in the Persian and Indus region during the Fatimid rule in Egypt. The Fatimid Caliph in Egypt had tried along with his Abbasid counterpart to woo Mahmud of Ghazna. However, Mahmud of Ghazna preferred to owe allegiance to the Abbasids, amongst other reasons, for securing his eastern frontier; and Mahmud before riding down deep into the Indian territory put an end to the two petty independent Isma'ili kingdoms of Multan and Mansura. The Isma'ilis were plentiful in the Ghorid kingdom and a large number of them is said to have been put to the sword by Saifuddin Muhammad b. 'Ala'u'ddin in 544 A.H. and Muhammad Ghori is reported to have been killed by an Isma'ili at Lahore in 602/1205. The last of the attempts to regain their power in the north was made in Delhi on Friday, 6th Rajab 634 A.H./March 1237 under the leadership of Nur-Turk.¹ The Nizari branch of the Isma'ilis, when parting company with the Musta'lian branch had no need of the law which was applied in the Fatimid kingdom, for they were already following other systems which they had perforce to accept in their regions. Besides, the law amongst the religious sciences of the Isma'ilis had a very subordinate place. Ta'wil in effect was a subtle method of indoctrination through unrestrained and at times bizarre interpretations of the dogmas in support of their politico-religious philosophy.

The Nizari Imam, Hasan Il'ala dhikrishis'-Salam, soon after their consolidation at Alamut, took a curious step of declaring the arrival of the day of resurrection; he himself being the Qaimu'l-Qiyama, the Lord of the day of resurrection. This meant the

1. *Zubdatu't Tawarikh*, quoted by Elliot p. 66-67.

abrogation of the Prophet's Shari'a²; the new dispensation mainly consisting in an unconditional and absolute belief in and surrender to the Imam. The people, he claimed, were now freed from the trammels of the law and even 'Ibadat, the Islamic ritual prayers, were no longer necessary. This created an unprecedented uproar in the non-Isma'ili Muslim population and compromise was reached by the recantation of his successor from Hasan's position and acceptance, at least publicly, of the Sunni Islam for him and his followers.

The rise of the Safawids and the Shi'a Supremacy in Persia suited the Isma'ilis; and within that region some communal Isma'ili pockets established themselves with large sprinklings of Sufi and Shi'i tenets and practices. In 1813 Macdonnel Kinneir, notes that near Alamut there were quite a few Isma'ilis who were called Husainis.³ However, the Persian headquarters of the Nizari Isma'ilis kept in continuous touch with the Isma'ilis of Central Asia, Syria, Afghanistan, Sind, Punjab and Gujarat. The relationship between the Imam and the sectarians was parallel to that of a Murshid or a Pir and a Murid; and the sectarians sent an yearly contribution to their Imam as an evidence of their acceptance of his headship. The affairs were largely left to the communities themselves and each one adopted the laws or customs that were best suited to it. The eastern Isma'ilis had neither bothered about any of the official legal compendia of the Fatimids, nor was there any use for them.

According to one of the Khoja accounts Nuru'ddin or as they call him Nur-Satgur was sent from Dailam by Hasan II to Patan in Gujarat under Bhim Solanki II (1179-1242). He is said to have been killed by one of his disciples while in a Samadhi at Navsari.⁴ However, it appears that after the Isma'ili discomfiture in the North, a large number of them entered Gujarat, Sind, Baluchistan and Kashmir.

In the new environment and under new political conditions they adopted many of the Hindu customs and manners. Parallels

2. Mirkhwand relates that over the library of Alamut, Hasan II had the following couplets engraved:

(*Bardasht tauk' tabarraḥ ba'taid ezdi Makhdoom rozgar ali zikra'ul'salam*)
See *Bombay Gazetteer* Vol. IX Pt II, 37.

3. Dumasia N. M., *Brief History of Aga Khan*, 1939 p. 69.

4. According to Satpanthi text—*Pirana Satpanthi Pol*, he is reported to have come to Gujarat on April 1, 826. In *Nuru' l-Mubin* he is said to have been sent by Mustansir bi'llah, The Fatimid Caliph in 1069.

were created between the personalities of the two faiths. Adam was introduced as Vishnu and the Prophet of Islam as Mahesh. Islam Shah, the ruling Imam of the day (fifteenth century) was presented as the incarnation of 'Ali and Nur-Satgur as that of the Prophet, and Pir Sadru'ddin, the missionary of the age, as that of Brahma. The five Pandavas were equated with the first five Imams. The coming of the Mahdi was explained as the coming of Nilkaki or the stainless Avatar whose appearance was awaited by the Shaktipanthis⁵ as the millenium. These Pirs with or without sanctions from the headquarters went on with their missionary activities succeeding at times to get a number of adherents who formed themselves into distinct communities, with a common belief in an Imam who was living in Persia. The Pirs adopted various methods to attract adherents and even took for themselves Hindu names. Pir Sadru'ddin is said to have called himself Sahdeva and Harichand. Pir Sadru'ddin's grandson Imamu'ddin (856/1452-919/1513) well known as Imam Shah and founder of a new sect called Imam Shahis is said to have composed a hymn in which he describes his journey to heaven through the power of the Imam and meeting with Prahlada, Harishchandra, Yudhishtira, Sadru'ddin and others. Many of the ritualistic beliefs of the Shaktipanthis were incorporated within the new faith. The most revered book of the Khojas, Dasavatar, deals with the Avatars. The first nine chapters deal with the nine incarnations of Vishnu and the tenth one treats of the tenth incarnation of Vishnu in the form of 'Ali.

These communities had no Islamic sectarian leaning in the early stages and Imam Shah's son is said to have married a daughter of Sultan Mahmud Begarha of Gujarat.⁷ But with the hardening of beliefs all around coupled with political and social pressures both amongst the Khojas and Imam Shahis, an inner conflict started as to the group of the Islamic sects to which they belonged? Imami Shah Pirs within two centuries claimed to have Chishti relationship and continued to show Sunni as well as Shi'i leanings. Pir Masha'ikh II, one of the Imam Shahi Pirs in the 17th century,

5. The new dispensation was called Satpanthi, *Bombay Gazetteer*, VOL. IX-Pt. II, p. 40.

6. B. G. Vol. IX, Pt. II, p. 48.

7. Pirzada Syed Sadru'd-Din, *Tawarikh-i-Pir*, Muslim Gujarat Press Navsar' 1935, p. 126-31.

is credited with having composed treatises both in praise of the four pious Caliphs⁸ as well as the twelve Imams of the Shi'as; whereas⁹ the community's chief tenet remained belief in Pirs whose spiritual authority went back to the Isma'ili Imams. Pir Masha'ikha II had also reproduced the Hanafi law of marriage and divorce in one of his works ('Ibadat). In the later centuries Shi'i bias predominated amongst them; although a section of them persisted in calling themselves Sunnis.

However, within the general Khoja community of Gujarat, Kutch and Sind, the conflict did not come to the fore, before the coming of the Aga Khan I or Aga Husain Shah to India. The father and the grand-father of Aga Khan I, Shah Khalilu'llah and Abu'l-Hasan Shah had both enjoyed governorship of the province of Kirman and had pleasant relationship with Fatih 'Ali, the Shah of Persia. When Khalilullah was murdered by a Mulla, Fateh 'Ali Shah appointed young Aga Husain Shah son of Khalilullah, the Governor of the entire district of Qum and Muballati. The Shah also gave him his daughter in marriage and conferred on him the title of Aga Khan. After Fateh 'Ali's death, there developed some rift between him and the Prime Minister Mirza Aghasi and he revolted and was imprisoned. However, he managed to flee to Sind, where he was received with great welcome by his followers amongst whom were many Amirs of Sind including the Mir of Talpore. Since the Imam or Pir was for the first time amongst his followers, there were great rejoicings and show of loyalty. About his influence on his followers Sir Charles Napier says in his letter to his brother, "The old Persian Prince is my great crony here, living under my care but paid by me £2,000 a year. He is a God, his income is immense... I speak truly when saying that his followers do not and dare not refuse him any favour he asks... he could kill me if he pleased, he has only to say the word and one of his people can do the job in a twinkling and go straight to heaven."¹⁰

The Persian headquarter, before being shifted to India, had tried to tighten its grips on the Indian followers. The local Khojas were appointed as vakils, who collected the contributions for the

8. Pir Muhammad Ibrahim, *Khulafa' I-Rashidin, -Masha'ikhi Chistitini Jiwan Charitra*, Bombay, 1935. p. 11-16.

9. *Maqtulnama*, see *Masha'ikh Chistitini Jiwan Charita*, op. cit. p. 11-16.

10. *Brief History of Aga Khan*, N. M. Dumasia, Bombay, 1939, p. 80.

Imam or Murshid and sent them over. But then the Imam's special deputies started coming over to collect contributions. With the arrival of the Aga Khan in India, a new variety of compulsory contributions was introduced. Although, Khwajah Vrantant mentions only sixteen dues, they were said to be many more.¹¹ Besides these Dassondh or the tithe was also made compulsory on all incomes and it took the place of Zakat. The percentage was increased from time to time. There were also voluntary contributions which were believed to give high merits; the highest merit going to those called Sarbandias, who turned themselves with their families out of their houses, with only clothes on their backs, leaving all their possessions to the Aga Khan. As regards the clothes they were wearing, these were valued and an equivalent amount was debited to the account of the Sarbandias to be paid at the earliest opportunity when they could do it.¹²

In 1851 in the Great Khoja case¹³ Sir Erskine Perry had held that Aga Khan had failed to establish any right of ownership in the property of the caste or jama'at. To remedy this situation, Aga Khan had all the communal and other properties transferred in his own name and in 1866, legally, Sir Joseph Arnold¹⁴ accepted the absolute control of the Aga Khan over the communal property, contributions and offerings. The result of all this was that a community with a variety of beliefs produced by the local pressures on its widely scattered sections, could not hold together with only the acceptance of the Aga Khan as an Imam; and soon there were claims that Khojas were Sunnis or Shi'as. In what is known as the Aga Khan case (1866),¹⁴ it was claimed that Pir Sadruddin was a Sunni, and the Khojas were a Sunni Community and that their marriage and burial ceremonies were closer to the Sunni's than to those of the Shi'as. It was however held by Sir Joseph Arnold that the Khojas were Shi'as, and later in an Aga Khan family case, Haji Bibi vs. Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah¹⁵ (1908) that Khojas

11. *Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol. IX. Pt. II, p. 48.

12. *His Highness Aga Khan*, Harry J. Greenwell, 1952 London p. 76. Also see Memorial to His Excellency Lord Northcote Governor and President in Council Bombay; Bombay, March 1901, p. 75.

13. *A voice from India*, London 1864, p. 27.

14. Advocate General vs Muhammad Husen Huseni (1866), 12 Bom. H.C.R. 323.

15. (1908) 11. Bom. L.R., 409. Also see Greenwell op. cit. 79.

were not Ithna 'Ashari Shi'as. However, Khojas divided themselves into three groups. A small group merged into the Sunni community accepting the Hanafi school. A large portion accepted Ithna 'Ashari persuasion. This was made possible also because there was within the entourage of the Aga Khan himself a good number of Twelver Shi'as. The dominant group however remained with the Aga Khan and came to be known as the Aga Khani or the Isma'ili Khojas.

The Aga Khani community was scattered in Sind, Kutch Kathiawar, and Gujarat down to Bombay in the south. They were mainly governed by the customs and conventions taken principally from the communities they had been converted from or those that came in contact with them.

The religion however centred around the belief in the Aga Khan whom his followers worshipped. In one of his articles written in 1923 in *John Bull*, entitled "I belong to no country"; the late Aga Khan said "I am a direct descendant of the Prophet and a large number of Muhammadans numbering about 20 millions acknowledge me as their head. They pay me tribute and worship me, who have the blood of their Prophet in my vein."¹⁶ Some of the early opposition to the Aga Khan was also for these extraordinary claims. Karim Goolamai, Secretary, Khoja Reformers' Society (1927) in an open letter addressed to His Highness the Aga Khan, writes, "your Highness is the Almighty God and divine worship is to be paid to you alone and no one else. And as a matter of fact that is what your preachers preach, your followers practise and all prayers are addressed personally to your Highness as the Supreme Deity."¹⁷ However, this stage was not difficult to reach in view of the Isma'ili and even Shi'i concept of Imams, and the state of the converts. Karim Goolamali goes on, "As regards the Holy Koran your Highness cannot deny that in Haji Bibi case, witnesses produced on behalf of your Highness from amongst your followers abjured the holy Quran and deposed that they had nothing to do with it. Besides, your Highness has yourself enjoined on your followers to devoutly follow Pir Sadruddin's Ginans which clearly

16. Message by Aga Khan, a collection of Articles p. 12. Also see Greenwell *op. cit.*, page 14, where Aga Khan has reported to have said "I am so holy that when I drink wine, it turns to water."

17. An open letter to His Highness Aga Khan, published by Karim Goolamali, Secretary, the Khoja Reformers' Society; Karachi 1st Aug. 1927, p. 4.

point out to your followers that the Koran is meant for them. There is also the Firman by your Highness to your followers some years ago to the effect that the present Koran is not genuine and that if your Highness were to compose one it would take you six years to do so ... As for Haj and fasts, it is well-known that Aga Khani Khojas do not follow either of these Islamic requirements."¹⁸ There are no mosques amongst the Khojas and their Jama'at Khapas or the communal houses serve the purpose of mosques. Some of the modern Jama'at Khanas are erected structurally like mosques. As for the ritual prayers, the Aga Khani Khojas have three; morning prayer, Suboji Namaz, evening prayer 'Maggrib or Somanji Namaz and night prayer Isaji Namaz. However, the prayers have little in common with the Islamic prayers.

The Khojas specially in Kutch and Kathiawar and parts of Gujarat had many Hindu customs and conventions. About seventy five years ago Ahmedabadi Momnas would keep a Hindu top knot and would go through two marriage ceremonies; the first one a Muslim one, performed by a Syed and the second a Hindu one, performed by a Brahmin. Also in Kutch the Khojas used to resort to two marriage ceremonies. In Kutch, services of Saraswat Brahmins were asked for, for naming a child and for several other ceremonial purposes. Janmashtami, Diwali and even Ekadashi were observed till very recently. Some of the Kutch Khojas did not eat flesh and even the practice of circumcision was not known to them. In the afore-mentioned Haji Bibi case (1908), the judge recalled the evidence of three witnesses who belonged to what are known as Gupti Khojas and remarked, "They are unquestionably Shi'a Imami Ismailis but they certainly adhere to some of the Hindu practices, for instance they burn their dead."¹⁹ Child marriage, as with the other Indian communities, was common and re-marriage of a widow was not much approved of, and in some areas a widow could not re-marry without a permission from the Mukhi (the local Chief) and if she did, she was to be excommunicated. Excommunication was resorted to also in cases of adultery or murder. The chhatti, or the sixth day ceremony of naming the child, is still largely prevalent and the child's father's sister has the right to name the child. Even

18. *Ibid.* pp. 5 and 6.5 B.G. Vol. IX. Pt. II 76 ff. B.G. Vol. V, pp. 90-9.

19. Greenwell, *op. cit.*, p. 84. Also see 1908. 11, Bom. L.R., 409.

more than in post-natal rituals, in marriage a blend of Hindu and Muslim customs could be discerned. The use of turmeric, coconut and rice in different marriage ceremonies is very common, and during happy occasions, like marriage, only the *suhagans*, the women whose husbands were still alive, could play the prime role. The expectant mothers are expected to guard themselves, like the other Indian communities, against evil influences during eclipse. The Samarchanta or the holy-drop given to the dying Khoja in the form of pieces of cakes of Kerbala clay diluted in water is similar to the giving of Ganga Jal.²⁰

Although, in matters of marriage and other social affairs, the Khojas had evolved an amalgam of Hindu and Muslim customs, in intestate succession, the Khojas followed the Hindu law as an established custom. The traditional organization of a Khoja family was based on a patrilocal and patrilineal pattern similar to that of the other neighbouring Hindu communities. Existing within an overwhelmingly Hindu environment with only a veneer of a different but an insignificant religious dogma, as far as the social affairs or structural organization of the family was concerned, the Khojas remained within the cultural and ideational framework of the larger community. It was in Sarjan Mir 'Ali's case²¹ (1846) that the Hindu Law of Inheritance was judicially applied to a Khoja on the strength of a widely adopted custom in the community, the effect of which was to exclude females from any right to succession. The exclusion of females from inheritance was a widely accepted practice in different Muslim communities of Gujarat and is still not abjured. With the slow spread of Wahhabism in Gujarat and general tendencies towards Islamization in the wake of the Khilafat movement, Muslim communities in Gujarat began to accept a gradual change. As a consequence of it came the Shariat Act of 1937 which laid down that in matters of intestate succession and special property of females, the Muslim Personal Law was to be applied to all Muslims. However, as to testamentary succession, and in matters of agricultural lands, they are still governed by the Hindu Law. But if a Khoja makes a declaration as required under

20. B. G. IX. Pt. II. 46.

21. Northcote Memorial *op. cit.*, p. 57-59. Also see *Hirbae vs Sonbae* (1847) Perry's Or. Cas. 110, Morley; *Digest*, II. 431.

section 3(1) of the said Shariat Act, he as well as his descendants will be governed by Muslim Personal Law even in matters of adoption, wills and legacies. Customary Law of the Khojas has not yet been completely superseded in practice and the right of the females to succession in the villages in Kathiawar and Gujarat is still considered dubious.

Outside Gujarat and Kathiawar, the Khojas, as we have said before, had adopted the law of the people they were living with. In a recent Pakistani case, *Nur 'Ali vs. Mulka Sultana*²², it was held that the followers of the Aga Khan in the Punjab and North West Frontier were not necessarily governed by the Shi'i law of succession. But since the community generally followed and practised Hanafi Law in other matters, in matters of succession also it was presumed to be governed by Hanafi Law. During the hearing of the case, some of the rules of the internal management of the community called *Dasturu l-Amal* were quoted, one of which laid down that the marriage and burial ceremonies of the Khojas will be solemnized by Maulavis belonging to 'Ehl-i-Sunnat Jamat'; and that any person acting contrary to this shall be punished by the Council. Another directive lays down that the *Kalma, La ilaha illa'll-ah Muhammadun Rasulul-lah* will be recited publicly among Isma'ili jamats throughout the Punjab.²³ The late Aga Khan, in the face of growing opposition to his absolute headship of the community in the twenties had relented and allowed the local communities to establish councils of their own to run their affairs, with explicit directions regarding his own share of riches accruing through tithes, other dues and contributions. The Punjab council seems to be a similar council, but its *Dasturu l-Amal* or the code of behaviour, must have been a recent one. It will be worthwhile to know when it was issued. In any case, from the two articles quoted, it would appear to have been issued after the establishment of Pakistan with a view to initiate good relations with the large Muslim community, specially when the late Aga Khan was taking interest in the new State.

The Government of Pakistan Ordinance No. VIII of 1961 has given effect to some of the recommendations of the Commission on Marriage and Family laws. The law extends to the whole of

22. PLD, 1964. (W. P.) Lahore, 431.

23. A. A. A. Fyzee, *Outlines of Muhammadan Law*: Third edition, 1964, 69.

Pakistan and applies to all Muslim Pakistani citizens. The changes in law would hardly affect the fabric of the Khoja society. The law raises the marriageable age from fourteen to sixteen for girls and eighteen to twenty-one for boys. Polygamy is only permitted if allowed by the chairman of the Arbitration council, the permission to be given if the taking of a second wife is just and necessary. The provisions for Talaq are brought closer to the Talaq's-Sunna. The person who pronounces the Talaq has to notify the chairman in writing of his having pronounced the Talaq and supply a copy thereof to the wife. The chairman within a month has to try to bring about a reconciliation between the parties through an arbitration council and if the reconciliation effort fails, the Talaq becomes effective on the expiry of ninety days. In intestate succession, the ordinance remedies the situation where Islamic Law did not provide anything for the children of a person who dies in the lifetime of his or her father and the father at his death is survived by other sons or daughters. The ordinance provides the children with the share of their deceased father or mother, as the case may be. All these provisions are as much applicable to the Khoja community, as others, but these would not affect much the structure of the community since polygamy was not quite in vogue amongst them and divorces were not approved.

The Aga Khani Isma'ilis in East Africa are a numerous and a well-knit community. The law applicable to them is the Sharia Law as amended by custom. In Syria the Isma'ili community is not allowed by the Syrian Personal Law of 1953 to practice polygamy. This was done at their own request. In other matters, they are as much governed by the Syrian Personal Law as other communities.

The Bohras

Soon after the establishment of the Fatimids in North Africa, attempts were made to establish a pro-Fatimid regime in several parts of the Abbasid kingdom. In Yemen the Isma'ili endeavours succeeded in bringing to power the Sulaihids for 70 years (428-497 A. H.). During this period a close collaboration existed between the Isma'ili head-quarters in Cairo and the local rulers in Yemen and after the Nizari Musta'lian split and the loss of power in

Yemen, they came even much closer. Most of the Isma'ili works were brought over the Yemen from Cairo and a few more were added to them by the Yemeni adherents of the mission (Da'wa). The Cairo traditions of the Isma'ilis found a firm foothold in Yemen and continued without any interruption, whereas the Nizaris and other Isma'ili sections in Syria and Lebanon lost all contacts with the early Isma'ili literature, due to the breach and open hostility with the ruling Fatimids of Egypt. The Bohra Isma'ili traditions of India is an extension of the Yemeni Da'wa in an Indian locale.

According to the Bohras, the first of their missionaries to arrive in India was Mawla'i Nuruddin whose activities were mainly confined to Deccan. He died at Aurangabad after a long life in 1167 A. D. The missionary activities in Gujarat are attributed to Mawla'i 'Abdullah d. 1168 and Mawla'i Ahmad d. 1665 whose shrines in Patan are still much venerated. The Bohra Isma'ili tradition has it that the early missionary activities were successful in converting Siddharaj Jaisingh, the Solanki king of Gujarat (1104-1133), his minister Bharmal and Hemacharya, the Jain teacher of Kumarpal (1143-1174).²⁴ However the Jain supremacy in Gujarat and its hostility towards Hinduism during the last years of Siddharaj Jaysingh and the reign of Kumarpal, helped the missionaries both to win over the converts from orthodox Hinduism as well as find favours with the rulers. There is a mention in *Kumarpal Charitra* about plenty of Bohras being found in Anhilvad and Birgong (Viramgam).²⁵

Amongst the Bohras also, the first open schism between the Sunni and Shi'a groups came about the end of the fifteenth century when, according to the Bohra sources, one Isma'ili Bohra by the name of Ja'far, seceded to Sunnism, taking with him a very large group of Bohras in Patan and other Gujarat towns. They are known as Pattani or Ja'fari Bohras.²⁶ Even after the schism, the social relations continued between the two groups for years until 1538, when Syed Ahmad Ja'far Shirazi persuaded Sunni

24. For the early History of Bohras, as narrated by them, see *Mawsam-e-Bahar* (three vols.) by Ibn Jiwanji; *Akhbaru' d-Du'ati' l-Akramin* by Isma'ilji Hasan 'ali and *Gulzar-e-Da'udi* by 'Abdu'l-Husain. The first is written in Arabicized Gujarati in Arabic character, the second in Gujarati and Urdu and the third in English.

25. B. G. IX, Pt. II, p. 24.

26. *Mawsam-e-Bahar* III, 117-27, *Du'ati' l-Akramin*, 61-66.

Bohras to cease all marital and social relations with their Shi'a counterparts.²⁷ This led to the eventual ill will and hostility towards Shi'a sections, both politically and socially, leading to gradual deviations from the Shi'a Bohras to the Sunni group. The cumulative result of these pressures was a great reduction in the number of the Isma'ili group; nearly a million according to Bohra reports abandoning the Isma'ili faith.

A major internal split amongst the Bohras occurred in 1588, when the headship of the community became a matter for dispute between Sheikh Sulaiman b. Hasan and Da'ud b. Qutubshah. Many issues were taken up and fought out in the Royal courts during the time of Akbar and Jehangir which again brought the community in the limelight resulting in the persecutions during the time of Aurangzeb.

With the death of 'Amir bi Amri'l-lah, the seventh Fatimid Caliph of Egypt, in 524/1130, the religious headquarters of the Musta'lian branch of the Isma'ilis came to be organized in Yemen. Since the 21st Imam, the infant son of 'Amir bi Amri'l-lah was 'mastur', hidden from sight, the rank of the headship of the community was settled after some hesitations at ad-Da'i' l-Mutlaq, a lesser rank in the Isma'ili hierarchy. For nearly 450 years, Yemen remained the religious and spiritual centre for the Bohras of India. The higher religious instructions were given in Yemen, although gradually most of the Isma'ili literature reached India. The Yemeni connections kept alive amongst the Bohras a zeal for learning Arabic in which almost all their religious compilations were written.

During the Fatimid rule and Yemeni days, the Isma'ilis had adopted certain distinctive features, especially in religious observances and rituals. Around the middle of the fourth century Hijra, when the Greek sciences had already found firm footing amongst the Isma'ilis, a decision seems to have been taken to employ the Greek astronomical calculations for reckoning of the lunar calendar. It was first employed in Egypt and enforced during the Fatimid rule. It meant that the calendar for the Isma'ilis was fixed and definite with six months of thirty days and six months of twenty nine days alternating one with the other. Every third year there were to be

27. *Mir'at-e-Ahmadi*, Khatimah (Baroda Oriental Institute) 1930, 130-131.

seven months of thirty days, one extra day to be added to Dhu'l-Hijja, the last calendar month, which otherwise would be of 29 days. Although in N. Africa and Egypt, it did not make much difference, with the possibility of the moon being sighted on the same day it was calculated to appear, it did in India, where the Bohra dates would be a day or two ahead of the general Muslim calendar. The fact that they were the only people amongst the Muslims who would celebrate the Muslim festival a day or two ahead of the others had roused much animosity. Moreover, their dates coincide with the Hindu calendar. This adds to ill-will for it makes it seem that the Bohras have adopted the Hindu calendar. During the days of the Gujarat Sultanate and the Mughal rule, the Bohras had to be careful about celebrating their festivals and it was done as secretly as possible and the children were taught not to tell any one. Under 'taqiya', they would publicly celebrate the general festival. Now-a-days, however, 'taqiya' has very little use and Bohras celebrate both festivals, their own and the general one. The religious ceremony is performed on their own day, and a general celebration held on the following day.

Another distinctive feature which the Yemeni Isma'ilis and so also their adherents in India had adopted was dropping the Khutba at the Friday and the festival prayers. After the disappearance of the 21st Imam, Tayyib, the infant son of the Fatimid Caliph, 'Amir bi Amri'llah 524/1130 a convention was evolved in Yemen, of not saying the Khutba mostly as a sentimental gesture that since Khutba was a special function of the Imam, no one else could undertake it in his absence. There must have also been some expectation that the party of the infant Imam would be politically restored in Egypt and the conditions would return to normal; but the political affairs of Egypt took a different turn and the Ayyubids ousted the warring Fatimids within a short time and the new convention became binding although no legal works of the Fatimid period or even those compiled later gives such a sanction. In Muslim Law, the Khutba of the Friday mid-day prayer reduces the usual four rak'as into two. It is compulsory for a Muslim to offer the usual four rak'as of the mid-day prayer, if he misses the Friday Khutba and the congregational prayer. The Bohras perform the ordinary mid-day prayer, without the Khutba on Fridays. On 'Id days, they perform two additional rak'as which are called 'iwadu'

l-Khutba, the equivalent of Khutba. At the end of the additional prayer, the person who leads the congregation stands up, facing the Quibla and not the congregation as he would otherwise do when delivering the Khutba, recites a prayer and asks God to make manifest the Imam. The mosques of the Bohras have usually, therefore, no minar and if they are found in some places, this is done under the burden of Taqiya. The practice of letting the hands down when performing the ritual prayers and of wiping over, instead of washing the feet in the ritual ablutions are some of the other points which are not exclusively distinctive of the Bohras.

The 18th of the month of Dhu'l-Hijja, is an important day for the Bohras, for not only it represents the general Shiite festival commemorating the day, when according to them 'Ali was appointed by the Prophet as his successor, but it is also the day, on which the compulsory covenant to the Imams and the Da'is is renewed. The Mithaq or the covenant is an old Isma'ili feature by which the neophytes vowed allegiance to the Imam or the Da'i of the time and surrendered his life, soul and property to the service of the Imam. It is also an oath of secrecy which had both political significance when Isma'ilis were trying to find their political power and social significance when they suffered religious persecution in Yemen and India. The vows include amongst other things, a conditional divorce which would legally operate, if disobedience to the Da'i or Imam would occur. The Mithaq to-day serves only to preserve a feeling of identity and as a stringent control of the head or the Da'i over the sectarians.

The Indian Bohra community had from early times adopted these distinctive features. For legal matters, however, Da'imu'l-Islam of Qadi an Nu'man enjoyed unrivalled authority. The law as propounded by Nu'man had legal sanction during the Fatimid rule, but in Yemen and India, it had, excepting in a very limited field, no relevance. The Hanafi or Zaidi law was enforced on them in Yemen in all matters except those which the community could do without attracting external attention. The Isma'ili community in Yemen had, moreover, a greater cohesion, both inherited from the Sulaihid rule and inspired by the hostile environment. Socially, they were part of the larger society one result of which was that since in legal matters their needs were no more or less than those of the other groups, there were no new compilations on law.

In India, however, the new converts were a community quite different socially from the Yemeni Isma'ilis. The two had nothing in common with the exception of certain religious beliefs and dogmas. The Indian community moreover had grown more numerous and rich than the Yemenis and the Yemeni headquarters for centuries was supported by contributions from India. The Yemeni hegemony was going to end when the possibility existed in the fact that the Da'iship was not required to be hereditary. Several Indian savants had occupied high ranks in the Yemeni Da'wa and Yusuf Najmuddin b. Sulaimanji (1539-1567) was the first Indian to become a Da'i in Yemen. The Turkish persecution was the immediate cause for the transfer of the seat of Da'wa to Ahmedabad a few months later. However, the split was inevitable and it came in 1588 at the death of the first Indian Da'i at Ahmedabad. The Yemenis opted out for Sulaiman and Indians for Da'ud b. Qutub Shah although an insignificant number of Isma'ilis both in Yemen and India adhered to the opposite party.

The Sulaimani Indian community since then came to be managed by a deputy appointed from Yemen. In Yemen, the Sulaimani Da'wa since then has produced some remarkable works on many fields of Isma'ili literature except law where its need was the least. The Indian Sulaimani community was very small and dispersed. There was an open hostility with the larger groups of the Da'udis and hence they had to cultivate good relations with other Muslim groups and eventually in dress, language and behaviour they were nearer to the other Muslims than to the Da'udis. Their wide dispersal necessitated relaxation of control and even in matters of marriage and divorce, they readily resorted to Qadi courts.

The Da'udis in India could not remain as united as Sulaimanis in Yemen and there have been several petty divisions; 'Alias, Negoshias,²⁸ Hiptias,²⁹ Mahdibagwallas and so on; the large majority of the Bohras however remain Da'udis. Even in the present century their domestic feuds have continued.

The Bohras in general were converts from Hinduism like the Khojas and other Gujarati Muslims. Being largely traders, they

28. B. G. IX, Pt. II, p. 25. Also see Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. VII, 68.

29. *Mawsam-e-Bahar* III, 447 ff.

were in matters of property and commercial transactions more wedded to the local trade customs and usages than to Islamic Law. Bohras and generally all Muslim trading communities accepted and gave interest as a matter of fact, even though the more pious among them have refrained from doing so. Till very recently the new account books were opened for the fiscal year only after proper worship of Lakshmi was carried out through their agents. Several innocuous marriage customs of the Hindus, which have no relevance to the legality of marriage were always and are still to a large extent observed as necessary to the completion of marriage. Attempts are also made at times to explain them in terms of Ta'wil or Isma'ili esoteric interpretations. Child marriages were quite common. Polygamy was and is rarely practiced, and is more frequent in the priestly circles. Divorces were rare and widow re-marriage till very recently was largely avoided. The widow, especially during the period of 'idda, dresses like a Jain Sadhwi, in white and is kept in seclusion. Only her nearest relations and women are allowed near her. The Nagoshia schism came in 1789 for several reasons, the most prominent amongst which was that the schismatics believed that to eat meat was sin.³⁰ The right of females to succession was and is still not wholly recognized, although for avoiding an unpleasant court proceeding, arrangements are usually arrived at by which the females get certain shares, which are not always equivalent to what they would be entitled to under Islamic Law. Since Bohras had centuries old closely integrated communal organization headed by a Da'i, their customary practices rarely became a matter of dispute before the courts. Besides, unlike the Khojas, they had an awareness that their law was collected mainly in Da'a'imu'l-Islam and the main recourse for knowing the religious or legal position on any conflict or question was the Da'i or his agent. However, Da'is preserved their absolute control over the community and in all disputes among themselves, both civil and religious, his decision was final. Any recourse to the Law courts or officers of Government in matters of internal disputes was rigidly prohibited and penalty incurred by the refractory was quite heavy. He was sent to Coventry. Only about a century and a half ago, fines and floggings were imposed and ex-communication proved a

30. B. G. IX. Pt. II, p. 34.

very potent weapon in the hands of the Da'i, to secure unhesitating obedience.³¹

The Bohras evolved in any given period a working compromise between the law that had been given to them by religion and customs they inherited. The conflicts, if any, were settled with the least disturbance to the working of the communal mechanism. Since there already was a religious tradition, several legal works were compiled during the period of the Indian Da'wa of which *Masa'il* of Aminji bin Jalal, *Masa'il* of bin 'Abdir-Rasul, *Masa'il* Zainiya of Tayyib Zainuddin are quite useful. These works are in the nature of Fatawa or decisions given by the Da'is. The latest of these are *Masa'il Zainiya* composed about early nineteenth century. It contains decisions given by the 43rd Da'i Sayyidna 'Abdu'l-Ali Sayfuddin (d. 1817) to Sayyidna Tayyib Zainu'ddin the 45th Da'i (d. 1837). The book requires a detailed study. The questions mainly relate to marriage, divorce and ritual prayers, for it was largely in these matters that the control of the head of the community was more real and easily discernible. However, in matters of marriage there seems to be a more rigid and uncompromising attitude than in divorce. A marriage ceremony performed by a non-Bohra Qadi is even termed *Ghair Shar'i*, i.e., not according to Shari'a³² even though it had all the ingredients of a valid marriage. However, a divorce obtained in a Qadi court in accordance with Isma'ili law which does not give validity to *Talaqu l-bid'a* or the triple divorce in one sitting, is considered to operate legally. This attitude is understandable, for the divorces were very rare and a stray divorce obtained outside the community under pressing circumstances did not much disturb or intrude on the powers of the head of the community or its organisation, whereas a marriage ceremony performed by an outsider, if granted validity, struck at the roots of the Da'i's authority and communal solidarity. If such a marriage was entered into, either by an error or under some emergency, it is recommended that the marriage ceremony has to be

31. For the recent history of Da'udis, two cases, Advocate General of Bombay v. Yusufali, (1921) 24 Bom. L. R. 1060, popularly known as Chandabhoy Gulla case, Seth Tayabali vs. Mulla Abdul-Husain suit No. 25 of 1925 in Burhanpur and appeal No. 52 of 1931, Central Provinces, popularly known as Burhanpur Durgah case, can be consulted.

32. *Masa'il-Zainiya* fol. 11(b), 44(b). The Ms. in my possession seems to have been written about the later half of the nineteenth century).

again performed by the Da'i or his agent. However, the consequences ensuing from a Ghair Shar'i marriage performed by a non-Bohra Qadi are silently passed over. It is presumed that when the Da'i or his agent had performed the ceremony again it was supposed to have a retrospective effect.

However, this absolute control of the head over the community assumed an extortionate and oppressive form in reality during the last fifty years. The permission of the Da'i or his duly appointed deputy, became necessary for starting any social activity or performance of any religious or other ceremony. For every permission there is a fee charged, large part of which goes to the Da'i's treasury. This along with certain other causes led to open flouting of the Da'i's authority and matters went to courts several times. The most interesting case was that of Fatima Abd-e-Ali vs. Mullaji Sahib. The party, because of the refusal of the Da'i's deputy to perform the marriage on the grounds of non-payment of certain sums demanded, got themselves married before a Qadi. Therefore, the 'Amil or the deputy wrote to the parties, intimating that they were not properly married and the children of the union would be illegitimate. A libel case was instituted in the Bombay High Court, wherein it was claimed by the Da'i's agent that marriage among Bohras could only be valid if they were performed by the Da'i or his authorised agents. However, this claim was withdrawn later, mainly for the fear of creating animosity between other Muslims and the Bohras. The Mullaji paid some agreed sum as damages. This case has been taken as a precedent in some Bohra circles and since then several Bohra marriages have been performed before a Qadi whenever the priestly class tried to be unjustly harsh. The legality of such marriages has not been openly disputed now, although a tension always exists between those who have flouted the priestly authority and the priestly class.

The Bohras, today, in spite of their religious legal traditions, are partly governed by the Islamic Law as applied in India (i.e. Isma'ili Law as enunciated in Da'a'imu'l-Islam) and the customs. The Shariat Act of 1937, has done away with customs as far as Law courts are concerned but the internal arrangements outside the courts are still governed by customs. The dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act 1939 alters the Isma'ili law to a small extent but in matters of divorce and marriage it is the communal traditions

which govern the Bohras. A similar condition obtains in Pakistan, where the Pak ordinance of 1961 is only an additional change in the prevailing legal position of India.

It may appear a little curious that Isma'ilis who had so boldly intruded into the sacred precincts of religious beliefs and dogmas, toying with them at times, and even transforming them to suit their own ends, did not interfere with legal matters, once they had been formulated in Da'a'imu'l-Islam. Mu'izz, the first Fatimid Caliph of Egypt is reported by the historians to have recommended monogamy; but this recommendation never found a place in the law books. The Imams and the Da'is have made extraordinary claims for themselves, which may amount to pure and simple heresy and even apostacy in the eyes of the general Muslims, but when they came to propound legal matters, they kept themselves scrupulously within the limits laid down earlier. Even though Isma'ilis took interest and it was within the knowledge of their priests that, as a trading community, they had to take and were taking interest, their legal compendiums went on prohibiting it. And even in the aforementioned *al-Masa'ilu'z-Zainiya*, the Da'i refuses to recognize India, as Daru'l-Harb and permit the taking of interest.³³ The taking of photographs among Bohras was forbidden not long ago. Now the priestly class vies amongst themselves to be photographed and the Da'is' portraits adorn many a Bohra household. The veil was a must before, now the priestly class has abjured it. But the legality of these is owned neither by any official decree nor any change is allowed in the law books. The position that obtains amongst the Bohras runs very much parallel to the other Muslim communities and this in spite of the liberties they take in matters of beliefs and dogmas. The main reason for this lies in the fact that Isma'ilism grew up as a political-cum-religious doctrine, in direct opposition to the orthodox Sunni Islam. Isma'ilism was much concerned to establish the political and religious headship of the Imams and for this it employed traditional as well as non-traditional methods. The traditional methods gave rise to the traditions from the Prophet legalizing their claims and were meant for the guidance of the general Muslim community, the non-traditional in the form of purposeful interpretations, came very early to

33. *Masa'il-Zainiya*, fol. 20(a).

be restricted to their own group of sectarians. If their influence had been over the masses during the Fatimid rule in Egypt and North Africa, the history of Islam would have taken a different turn. A small elite composed of sectarians from the Sanhaja Berbers of North Africa, the migrants from Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and Khurasan and a small band of neo-converts from Egypt, ruled for a little more than a century and a half with the help of a military machine. Before the official Isma'ili propaganda could take roots, or any mass base was formed, Isma'ilism was ousted from Egypt. The absence of a mass base compelled the Isma'ilis to subscribe at least publicly to all the Islamic norms. A feeling of belonging to the Islamic community was built up and what was abhorrent in the eyes of the larger group also became abhorrent for the smaller. So also the law, which became immutable for the general Muslims became also immutable for them. The belief was a matter of internal sectarian affair, a kind of Batin which could be made sport of for some definite ends; but not so with the law which was Zahir. For any tampering with the Zahir would inevitably lead to, as it did in the case of Hasan II's, disowning of the sect by the larger group. The discretion and cautiousness of the cast prevents the priests to this day from bringing about any changes in the religious legal system.

Cyclical Trends in Indian Agriculture 1861-1913

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Most available data on prices and output in Indian agriculture dating back to a century or so suffer from a number of limitations. There is, apart from the problem of "coverage" of the data (or of the area covered), the difficulty of "serial correlation", and of the accuracy of the quoted observations, all agricultural production data being based until recently on what is known as the method of "eye estimation".¹ The most reliable data for a period going as far back as the 1860s, relevant for a study of agricultural trends, pertain to foreign trade (agricultural products being important items of export), and export and import prices. Even in this connection, there are several breaks in available series on agricultural prices, and considerable care is required to convert all available statistical series relating to the past century to a comparable basis.

In the study of the behaviour of economic time series from which this summary is drawn,² an attempt was made to see whether there are any clearly discernible trends in the available price series, and whether any general pattern of behaviour emerged from these series. Various statistical tests were also applied to the movement of the individual series to see, first, whether there was any underlying cyclical trend in the available series or whether the movements were "random"; secondly, whether and to what extent they were serially correlated; and finally, whether price movements in India were related in any manner to movements of similar prices abroad.

The price series used for this analysis covered 35 items or commodities, relating not only to agricultural products but also to

1. This is, of course, true even now of all but the major cereals.

2. Arun Kumar Ghosh, *An Analysis of the Indian price structure from 1861*, Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1949.

manufactured items, over the period 1861 to 1913. Of the 35 price series analysed, two (in respect of Bricks and Coconut oil) showed "random" rather than cyclical variations. The remaining 33 price series showed a generally "oscillatory" character,¹ although one or two other price series also were not conclusively "autoregressive".

The price series examined (other than the two mentioned above) covered *foodgrains* (rice; wheat; jowar; bajra; gram; barley and ragi); *other agricultural products* (potatoes; linseed; mustard seed; sesamum seed; poppy seed; raw cotton and raw jute); *other raw materials* (raw silk; raw wool; raw hides; dressed skins; shellac; saltpetre; indigo; limestone and bamboos); *miscellaneous consumer goods* (mustard oil; tea; ghee; firewood; jaggery); and *manufactured items* (cotton yarn; cotton cloth; jute bags; sugar and castor oil).

Although prices of 33 of the 35 items examined showed a generally cyclical behaviour, it must be stressed at the outset that not all of them moved together, although by and large they followed a similar pattern—at any rate, among certain groups of products with similar dependence on weather, rainfall, and the like.

Before giving any of the findings of the investigations conducted in this connection, it may be useful to indicate the behaviour of wholesale prices in general, from 1861 until the beginning of the second World War. Graph 1, which sets out the two series, of the wholesale price index and of money supply, speaks volumes and needs little comment.

It is not possible in the present context to elaborate on the behaviour of all individual price series, and the natural 'groups' into which they could be classified on the basis of their behaviour. Suffice it to mention here that the study indicated a fairly regular pattern of fluctuations, generally around a rising secular trend, best described as an exponential function. (Some items did not evince a rising trend, prices showing either a declining trend or best described as a parabolic function).

Without going into too many details and a mass of statistics,

1. This was confirmed by an analysis of the correlograms of the auto-correlation function of all individual price series. Most price series were observed to be typically "auto-regressive". This particular study is of interest in itself, but is not of direct relevance in the present context except as to its conclusions, and hence, is not elaborated here.

perhaps it can be stated here that, by and large, there was surprisingly large correspondence in the behaviour of the various time series, and the following broad peaks and troughs in all prices were observed (though not all prices participated in all the cyclical points indicated here):

TABLE I

<i>Trough</i>	<i>Peak</i>	<i>Trough</i>	<i>Peak</i>
1861-62	1866	1882-83	1884
1867-68	1869-70	1885-86	1888-89
1871	1873-74	1891	1892-93
1875-76	1878-79	1894-95	1896-97
		1898-99	1900-01
		1904-05	1906-07
		1910-11	

It must be reiterated that not all price series participated in all the cyclical variations. Even so, there was reasonably close correspondence in the variations of different price series. The degree of correspondence observed among agricultural prices (especially of grain prices) was remarkably high. The general "leadership" of agricultural prices, and among these of foodgrains prices, in making for cyclical up swings and down swings, is unmistakable. It will be seen from the 'timing' of the cyclical turning points of different price groups (indicated below) that with one or two exceptions, most prices followed the behaviour of agricultural prices.

The periodicity of the cycle, in respect of different prices was briefly as follows:

TABLE III

	Mean Cyclical Length	Median Length	Modal Length
All 33 prices	5.9 years	5.0 years	4.0 years
Grain prices	6.6 "	5.0 "	4.0 "
All agricultural products	6.1 "	5.0 "	4.0 "
Other raw materials	5.0 "	5.0 "	4.0 "
Misc. consumer goods	5.1 "	4.0 "	4.0 "
Manufacturers	5.0 "	5.0 "	5.0 "

The significant difference between the modal length of the cycle and the mean length of the cycle indicates the possibility of minor cyclical movements being "damped", and perhaps a four to five yearly cycle could be assumed to indicate the general pattern of movements.

The average amplitude of fluctuations varied from as much as 49 per cent (!) for Ragi and 40 per cent for Gram to as low as 6.5 per cent for cotton cloth. The amplitude of as many as 23 price series ranged between 15 and 30 per cent, most agricultural products having a range of fluctuation of 20 to 30 per cent around the 'trend'. (The amplitude of fluctuations of the series analysed is given in Annex. I). The association of price fluctuations between thirteen major agricultural products is given in Annex. II at the end. The pairs of items with a regression coefficient higher than (+) .5 are indicated below (with the standard error of the estimates given within brackets).

TABLE IV

(i) Gram and Barley	+ .9232	(.0203)
(ii) Jowar and Bajra	+ .9004	(.0260)
(iii) Jowar and Gram	+ .8709	(.0332)
(iv) Jowar and Barley	+ .8342	(.0418)
(v) Bajra and Gram	+ .8141	(.0463)
(vi) Bajra and Barley	+ .7931	(.0510)
(vii) Wheat and Barley	+ .6863	(.0727)
(viii) Wheat and Gram	+ .6796	(.0739)
(ix) Wheat and Jowar	+ .6626	(.0770)

TABLE II
Reference dates of cyclical turning points for different commodity groups in India

All Prices Trough	All Prices Peak	"Grain" Prices Trough	"Grain" Prices Peak	Agri. Prices Trough	Agri. Prices Peak	Manufacturers Trough	Manufacturers Peak	Other Raw Food Trough	Other Raw Food Peak	Misc. Consumer Goods Trough	Misc. Consumer Goods Peak
1861-62	1866	1862	1866	1862	1866-67	1867-68		1867-68	1870	1871-72	1873
1867-68	1869-70	1868	1869	1868	1869-70			1871	1872	1875	1877-78
1871	1873-74	1871	1874	1871	1873-74	1872-73		1874	1876-77	1878-79	1879-80
1875-76		1875-76		1875-76		1877		1877-78	1880	Vague	1882
	1878-79		1878		1878-79	1881-82		1881	1882-84	1886	1887
1882-83	1884			1882-83	1884			1885	1887-89	1889	1893
1885-86	1888-89	1885	1888	1885-86	1888-89	1889-90		1891-92	1893	1894-95	1895-96
1891	1892-93	1890	1892	1890-91	1892-93	1894-95		1894-95	1895-96	1898	1900-01-02
1894-95	1896-97	1894	1897	1894-95	1896-97			1899	1900	1903-06	1907-08
1898-99	1900-01	1898	1900	1898-99	1900-01	1898-99		1902-04	1907	1909	
1904-05	1906-07	1904	1908	1904-05	1908	1903		1908			
1910-11		1911		1910-11		1909-10		1908			

(Table IV Cont.)

(x) Linseed and Poppyseed	+ .6598	(.0776)
(xi) Rice and Wheat	+ .6093	(.0864)
(xii) Rapseed and Poppyseed	+ .6018	(.0876)
(xiii) Sesamum and Poppyseed	+ .5927	(.0891)
(xiv) Wheat and Bajra	+ .5810	(.0910)
(xv) Rice and Ragi	+ .5792	(.0913)
(xvi) Rapseed and Sesamum	+ .5661	(.0933)
(xvii) Jowar and Ragi	+ .5512	(.0956)
(xviii) Jowar and Rice	+ .5147	(.1010)

Among non-food items

- (a) Raw cotton and cotton cloth + .7762 (.0546)
 (b) Raw jute and jute bags + .6293 (.0830)

It needs to be emphasised here that this order of correlation in the percentage variation of different price series must be regarded as acceptable evidence of the close conjointness of the fluctuations of different agricultural prices, which lends support to the thesis of the general pervasiveness of the cyclical swings in agriculture as a whole.

The "leads" and "lags" among all these prices is a somewhat long story, and has been omitted here as not being germane to the main issue under study.

The "generality" of these cyclical variations throughout the country was sought to be further checked by taking wholesale wheat prices at two fairly distant places, Delhi and Khandwa (for which comparable data were available only from 1871), and retail prices of wheat in 17 centres all over the country; and similarly, the wholesale price of rice in Calcutta and retail prices of rice in 16 centres all over the country. With a few local variations, "conjointness" of fluctuations was observed for most series.¹

An attempt was also made to analyse the movement of agricultural prices with the trend of "rainfall" in the country. It must be noted in this connection that the data used were crude figures of

¹This does not mean that there was no divergence between inter-regional prices, or that all prices moved together, but rather that the "fluctuations" around the trend evinced a generally similar pattern. The study of inter-regional variations in prices, in different time periods, will be taken up in a subsequent article.

total rainfall without reference to the "distribution" of rainfall either over the year or in terms of the share of the different regions. As will be seen from Graph 2, although years of very poor monsoon were followed by scarcity and famine, generally with a one year lag, not all "low points" in total rainfall have led to over-all famine conditions, and indeed, there are one or two years when good over-all rainfall has yet synchronised with famine conditions. As S. R. Sen has suggested¹ a lot more work is necessary, with reference to rainfall in particular areas, and its distribution over the year, before any conclusive statement can be made as to the cyclical periodicity of agricultural output following a regular cycle in the matter of total rainfall. (The cyclical period in the matter of rainfall appears to be somewhat shorter than the cyclical periodicity of fluctuations of agricultural prices, as seen earlier).

Despite the limitations of "averages" in this connection, the following summary indication of the movement of agricultural prices with cyclical variations in rainfall may be of interest. Table V shows that although not all 'low' points in rainfall have led to low agricultural output (as deduced from high agricultural prices) the latter generally do follow periods of low total rainfall.

As may be expected, with a few exceptions the 'reference years' (of peaks and troughs) for foodgrains prices generally follow the behaviour of rainfall. One conclusion that may reasonably be drawn from these data is that in the absence of comparable series on agricultural output, the available series for agricultural prices could be taken to represent fairly well, in an inverse order, data on agricultural production—at least in respect of cyclical variations.

Price series being perhaps among the more reliable of the data available for this period, the behaviour of prices may help us in an understanding of the trends in the Indian economy over the past century. An attempt was therefore made to examine whether there was any cyclical pattern in over-all 'income' and economic and business activity in India over this period. The "indicators" used for this purpose were: actual land revenue collections (which

¹Growth and instability in Indian Agriculture, Technical Address delivered at the inaugural meeting of the Conference of Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics, Waltair, 10-12 January, 1967.

TABLE V

Famine Years	Cyclical Phases in Rainfall		Cyclical Phases in Foodgrains Prices	
	High	Low	High	Low
1861	1861-62	1864		1862
	(1865)	1866	1866	
1866	1867	1868	1869	1868
1869	1870	(1871)		1871
	1872	1873	1874	
1874	1875	1876		1876
			1878	
1877-78	1878	1880		
	(1882)	(1883)	1885	
1884-85	1886	(1888)	1888	
1889	1889	1891	1892	
1891-92	1893	1896	1897	1894
1896-97	(1898)	1899	1900	1898
1899	(1900)	1902		
	1903	1905		1904
1905-06	(1906)	1907	1908	
1908	(1909)	1912		
1912				

would allow for remissions of land revenue in distress areas); quantities of salt consumed (which, surprisingly, revealed a cyclical pattern of great significance in this context); imports of cotton textiles (by quantity); the total value of private merchandise imports; the tonnage of goods carried by the Railways; the stamp revenue on internal Bills of Exchange or Hundis; the total amount of currency in circulation; the value of private deposits in the Bank of Bengal; the rate of interest charged by the three Presidency Banks of Bengal, Bombay and Madras; and finally, an index of equity prices in India (constructed by the writer, from weekly quotations of equity prices, compiled from a journal called *Allen's Indian Mail*, available in the Newspaper Section of the British Museum).

It would appear from all available "indicators" of income and economic activity that the "low" points of activity coincided with both the peaks and troughs in the price series (please see Annex. III) indicating the possibility that not only were income and activity reduced in times of low production but that the years of bumper agricultural production, which were evidently followed by a sharp drop in the prices of agricultural commodities, presaged an equally difficult period for the agrarian economy. This hypothesis is supported by the significantly higher amplitude of fluctuations of agricultural prices to which reference has been made earlier, and which will be seen clearly from Graph No. 3.

In short, with an elasticity of prices of agricultural products (in respect of increases in output) probably greater than unity, years of really good agricultural production were, from the point of view of cash earnings of the agricultural sector, as bad as years of scarcity, when the low volume of production left little marketable surplus.

To return to the relationship between agricultural output and economic activity, the "low points" in the various indicators of income and business activity over 1861-1913 have been set out in Annex. III, and compared to the peaks and troughs in prices over this period. The matching of the 'low' points of indicators like salt consumption, imports of textiles, and stamp revenue, as also of some of the other indices, with both the peaks and troughs of the cyclical phases of prices, lends support to the hypothesis made above regarding the relationship between agricultural production and agricultural incomes. It would appear from this cursory study that the famous concept of a so-called "backward sloping" supply curve for agriculture (in less developed countries) is not proved, and that the failure of agricultural production to show any faster trend of growth in the past probably stemmed from a price elasticity of demand for increases in output of agricultural products greater than unity. While this is not conclusively proved from the above study, there is strong ground for this hypothesis, especially because all "indicators" of income point to a lower cash income in years of very good agricultural production, which may be expected to have acted as a strong disincentive to sustained improvement in production. The need for a positive price policy for agriculture, as indicated by these data, is generally accepted today as a broad

premise ; it would appear that there is strong statistical evidence in favour of such a policy.

Finally, the question arises as to whether there has been any close relation between cyclical behaviour in business activity in India and abroad, over the period under review. Here again, the focal point of the study was the turning points in cyclical swings of prices, though it has to be borne in mind that a "peak" in prices—reflecting a boom—in industrial countries, would be something materially different from a peak level of prices reflecting a failure of crops in India.

Comparing the cyclical behaviour of Indian prices generally with the behaviour of prices in other countries of the world, one finds an apparent similitude between the peaks and troughs in prices the world over. However, on closer examination, the close correspondence in the cyclical turns in prices in India and in other countries turns out to be "spurious", and a comparison of prices of individual items in England and in India indicates that their movements were not necessarily correlated. There are, of course, common cyclical periods. For many of the items considered here, Indian prices may also be expected, at least in the nineteenth century, to act as a "leader" in world price movements, e.g. in respect of tea, jute, castor oil, indigo, silk, and to some extent (in the nineteenth century) even for items like oilseeds, hides and skins, and raw cotton, and one may, to that extent, expect international prices to move in sympathy with Indian prices. (One interesting result, emerging from Annex. V, is that in respect of tea, prices in England have been consistently in the 'lead' in the matter of fluctuations, indicating that the main impact on prices of tea came from the demand side and not from the supply side).

Before concluding, perhaps two additional statistical tables may be introduced here, not because they have any direct relevance to the argument at this stage, but because they were compiled with considerable effort, and may perhaps be found useful to future research workers related in fields. Annex. IV gives an index of agricultural prices from 1861 to 1913 constructed by the writer. Considerations of space rule out a detailed discussion here of the methodology and the statistical sources used. Annex. V gives, among other things, an index of equity prices in India between 1861 and 1890, compiled by the writer from actual weekly quotations of

equity prices for all British industrial firms operating in India. For obvious reasons, a "chain index" had to be constructed for this series, because of missing quotations in respect of individual series, from time to time. Annex. V also gives the index numbers of some of the "indicators" of income and of business activity (referred to earlier) between 1861 and 1913. Annex. VI gives estimates of monetary circulation in India from 1860-61 to 1938-39.

Conclusions

Considerably more work is necessary with regional price, production and meteorological data. Such work can also be done fruitfully only for more limited areas, possibly, on a district-wise basis, as else there would arise problems of comparability of production data. The wealth of material contained in various District Gazetteers could be fruitfully used. The results of the study—which was undertaken primarily as an enquiry into the application of alternative statistical techniques for time series analysis—from which certain inferences have been drawn here, can, therefore, at best indicate some pointers in regard to future research work on this fascinating problem.

ANNEX. I

AMPLITUDE OF PRICE FLUCTUATIONS AROUND TREND 1861-1913

Rank	Item	Period covered	No. of Phases	Mean p.c. amplitude
1.	Ragi	1861-1913	14	49.0
2.	Gram	"	15	40.2
3.	Potato	1871-1913	17	30.8
4.	Barley	1861-1913	17	30.6
5.	Raw wool	1870-1913	10	27.9
6.	Wheat	1861-1913	17	26.9
7.	Bajra	1861-1913	18	25.1
8.	Rice	"	21	25.0
9.	Jowar	"	15	24.7
10.	Raw cotton	"	20	24.4
11.	Shellac	"	10	22.9
12.	Raw jute	"	16	21.9
13.	Jaggery	1867-1913	14	21.3
14.	Firewood	1871-1913	13	19.9
15.	Linseed	1861-1913	12	19.8
16.	Bamboo	1871-1913	13	19.5
17.	Sesamum	1861-1913	17	19.3
18.	Indigo	1861-1913	12	19.0
19.	Poppyseed	"	13	18.0
20.	Saltpetre	"	12	17.3
21.	Rapeseed	"	18	16.8
22.	Tea	1871-1913	17	16.5
23.	Raw silk	1861-1913	19	16.3
24.	Ghee	1871-1913	9	14.8
25.	Jute bags	1861-1913	19	14.6
26.	Sugar	"	17	14.0
27.	Castor oil	"	13	13.7
28.	Mustard oil	1871-1913	16	13.2
29.	Dressed skins	1867-1913	13	12.4
30.	Raw hides	"	9	10.7
31.	Cotton yarn	1874-1913	13	10.5
32.	Limestone	1871-1913	15	10.0
33.	Cotton cloth	1874-1913	17	6.5

ANNEX. II

ASSOCIATION OF PRICE FLUCTUATIONS 1861-1913*

	Wheat	Jowar	Bajra	Gram	Barley	Ragi	Linseed	Rapeseed	Sesamum seed	Poppy seed	Raw cotton	Raw jute
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Rice	+ .6093 (.0864)	+ .5147 (.1010)	+ .4226 (.1128)	+ .4497 (.1096)	+ .4002 (.1154)	+ .5792 (.0913)	+ .0668 (.1368)	+ .3067 (.1244)	+ .3169 (.1236)	+ .3236 (.1230)	+ .1278 (.1351)	+ .3391 (.1216)
Wheat		+ .6628 (.0770)	+ .5810 (.0910)	+ .6796 (.0739)	+ .6863 (.0727)	+ .4556 (.1089)	+ .0660 (.1368)	+ .4184 (.1133)	+ .3568 (.1199)	+ .3697 (.1186)	+ .2068 (.1315)	+ .0670 (.1367)
Jowar			+ .9004 (.0260)	+ .8709 (.0332)	+ .8342 (.0418)	+ .5512 (.0956)	+ .1792 (.1330)	+ .4946 (.1038)	+ .5121 (.1013)	+ .3330 (.1221)	+ .0723 (.1366)	+ .2067 (.1315)
Bajra				+ .8141 (.0463)	+ .7931 (.0510)	+ .4119 (.1141)	+ .1874 (.1325)	+ .4343 (.1114)	+ .4570 (.1087)	+ .2578 (.1282)	+ .1870 (.1326)	+ .2061 (.1315)
Gram					+ .9232 (.0203)	+ .2676 (.1275)	+ .1355 (.1348)	+ .4898 (.1044)	+ .4558 (.1088)	+ .3336 (.1221)	+ .0514 (.1370)	+ .1589 (.1339)
Barley						+ .2234 (.1305)	+ .1431 (.1345)	+ .4897 (.1044)	+ .4103 (.1142)	+ .3771 (.1178)	(-).0412 (.1371)	+ .1382 (.1347)
Ragi							+ .1545 (.1341)	+ .0978 (.1360)	+ .3665 (.1189)	+ .1652 (.1336)	+ .0551 (.1369)	+ .1066 (.1358)
Linseed								+ .2924 (.1256)	+ .4593 (.1084)	+ .6598 (.0776)	+ .2085 (.1314)	+ .3093 (.1242)
Rapeseed									+ .5661 (.0933)	+ .6018 (.0876)	(-).0339 (.1372)	+ .3761 (.1179)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Sesamum seed											+5927 (.0891)	+1730 (.1333)	+2968 (.1253)
Poppyseed												+0663 (.1368)	+3746 (.1181)
Raw cotton												Cotton Cloth +7762 (.0546)	+3412 (.1214)
Raw jute												Jute bags +6293 (.0830)	

*Correlation coefficients for cyclical variation (The Standard Error of the Regression coefficients is given in brackets)

ANNEX. III

"DATING" OF LOW POINTS IN INDICATORS OF INCOME AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY WITH REFERENCE TO CYCLICAL PHASES OF PRICES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Cyclical Phases of Prices	Land Revenue collection	Salt Consump- tion	Imports of Cotton Textiles (Quantities)	Private Merchan- dise imports (value)	Total Private Merchan- dise imports (value)	Value of Postal Money Orders Issued	Tonnage of Goods carried by Rlys.	Private deposits in Bank of Bengal	Value of Internal Bills discounted	Stamp Revenue Receipts	Equity Prices Index	Cyclical Phases in Business as per Thorp's ANNALS
1861-62 LOW	1862	1861-62	1862	1862	1862						1862	
	1864	1863-64	1864								1866	
1865-66 HIGH	1866	1865-66			1866			1866	1866	1866-67	1867	
1867-68 LOW	1868	1867-68					1868			1867-68		
1869-70 HIGH				1869	1870			1869				
1871 LOW	1871	1871-72	1872	1872	1872	1872	1871	1871	1871-72	1871-72	1871	
1873-74 HIGH	1873	1873-74							1874	1872-73		
1875-76 LOW	1876-77	1875-76	1875	1877	1877	1876	1875	1877	1876	1875-76	1875-76	
1878-79 HIGH	1880	1878-79 1880-81	1878				1878		1880	1878-79		

(Annex. III contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1882-83 LOW			1882	1882					1881-82		
1884 HIGH	1884		1884			1884	1884	1884	1884-85		
1885-86 LOW		1885-86		1886				1886	1885-86	1885	
1888-89 HIGH	1888	1887-88 1889-90	1887			1889	1889				
1891 LOW	1891		1891					1890-91	1890-91	1891	
1892-93 HIGH		1893-94		1893				1892	1892-93		
1894-95 LOW	1894	1895-96	1895				1895	1894	1894-95		
1896-97 HIGH	1896			1895		1897		1897-98		1897	
1898-99 LOW	1899	1899-00	1898	1899			1898	1899			
1900-01 HIGH		1901-02	1901	1902				1902		1901	
1904-05 LOW	1904	1905-06	1904								
1906-07 HIGH	1906		1907					1906			1908
1910-11 LOW	1910	1910-11	1909	1910			1911				

ANNEX. IV INDEX OF AGRICULTURAL PRICES

Date	Food Grains	Commercial Crops	Ag. Prices
1	2	3	4
1861	85 79 73 100 119 160 119 99 121 109	71 82 119 160 112 130 103 86 100 116	80 80 89 121 116 149 113 95 114 111
1871	92 92 100 131 120 102 140 163 168 126	101 110 100 101 89 92 106 107 108 120	95 98 100 120 109 99 128 143 147 124
1881	94 94 105 122 122 116 105 110 132 134	111 98 88 102 94 96 99 109 129 121	100 95 99 115 113 109 103 109 131 129
1891	131 151 156 150 130	104 122 126 132 116	121 141 145 144 119

1	2	3	4
1901	147	121	138
	208	116	176
	159	99	138
	126	100	117
	149	131	143
	156	127	146
	160	124	147
	137	121	132
	137	120	131
	138	132	136
1911	189	174	184
	229	182	211
	244	157	215
	223	132	191
	150	147	148
	161	188	170
	176	181	177
	199	208	202
	210	218	213
	235	148	204
1921	236	170	213
	203	200	202
	204	225	211
	314	330	320
	331	292	318
	319	245	293
	299	278	291
	233	267	245
	238	259	245
	289	277	285
1931	286	291	238
	281	216	265
	287	240	270
	267	222	251
	232	180	214
	162	103	141
	137	115	129
	133	112	126
	141	108	130
	147	140	144
	161	137	153
	155	139	150
	154	121	143
	162	133	152

ANNEX. V

Year	Land Revenue collections (Excl. Irrigation tax) (in Rs. crores)	Index of salt consumption in British India (excl. Burma) (1872-73=100)	Index of the value of Private Merchandise Imports (1872-73=100)	Imports of Cotton Piece good chain (Index 1872-73=100)	Tonnage of goods carried by Railways (Index 1873=100)	Private Bank of Bengal (Chain Index) (1861=100)	Stamp Revenue Index (1873=100)	Index of Equity Prices (Chain Index) (1861=100)	Index of average rate of interest charged by three Presidency Banks of Bengal, Bombay and Madras (1873=100)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1860-61	19.5 (1861)	96.4	73.9	100 (1861)		100	212	100	106.1
	19.4	81.1	70.1	63		105	237	100	130.8
	19.9	89.8	71.1	69		125	206	108	140.2
	19.7	88.8	85.2	59		150	140	110	220.1
	20.2	94.4	88.7	68	53.9	213	137	101	176.6
	18.7	89.9	93.1	73	69.3	200	159	100	232.6
	19.9	100.3	99.4	87	72.6	308	166	100	128.5
	19.8	95.2	112.3	113	69.8	388	140	102	148.3
	21.0	97.3	113.2	84	82.8	264	106	101	152.7
	20.6	98.4	103.4	105	84.1	259	100	99	103.9
1870-71	20.5	97.7	105.0	123	82.2	210	107	98	100.8
	21.3	96.1	97.8	116	83.4	246	104	102	109.4
	21.0	100.0	100.0	133	100.0	231	98	104	100.0
	21.2	99.9	103.6	150	115.0	215	99	105	138.1
	21.5	102.1	113.4	149	107.4	211	104	100	135.9
	19.8	101.7	121.6	156	158.6	179	96	100	137.3
	19.7	102.7	116.1	175	223.6	168	107	101	154.5
	22.2	104.4	128.9	159	200.1	227	110	101	125.4
	21.2	103.4	120.0	161	216.1	216	109	103	136.7
	20.4	111.1	130.2	222	225.9	255	111	106	102.7

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1880-81	21.5	21.4	109.1	164.9	218	323.4	255	110	112	111.1
	21.4	21.8	114.2	154.1	203	363.1	219	100	116	129.1
	21.8	21.4	120.6	163.9	221	418.4	206	99	119	139.5
	21.4	21.6	121.6	172.8	219	407.9	198	106	111	131.5
	22.0	22.0	129.3	174.1	221	463.3	255	111	101	101.0
	22.5	22.5	125.7	169.8	281	479.3	253	117	103	123.2
	22.5	22.5	132.8	192.4	242	494.4	279	119	103	118.2
	22.4	22.4	128.8	204.6	271	548.2	303	100	107	114.5
	23.3	23.3	128.6	218.4	266	544.7	258	101	106	140.8
	23.3	23.3	128.8	218.4	269	553.6	415	99	101	121.3
1890-91	23.3	23.3	131.7	226.2	245	636.4	531	103		61.7
	24.2	24.2	137.0	218.4	247	641.7	427	96		71.7
	24.8	24.8	139.1	205.2	252	703.3	397	112		102.9
	24.7	24.7	133.5	242.6	305	796.4	390			108.0
	25.4	25.4	138.0	230.2	229	820.1	481			85.9
	23.1	23.1	138.0	227.2	273	791.2	475			114.7
	24.7	24.7	143.2	235.7	235	644.6	406			162.3
	26.4	26.4	145.1	227.2	219	872.6	387			165.0
	24.8	24.8	147.8	224.3	243	973.1	413			121.9
	25.1	25.1	147.3	231.8	258	1050.1	475			113.1
1900-01	26.2	26.2	150.4	250.2	235	1062.3	548			114.5
	27.6	27.6	149.4	267.2	256	1114.8	632			103.9
	27.0	27.0	154.0	258.4	246	1167.4	635			107.0
	26.9	26.9	157.8	278.0	236	1274.3	755			99.6
	28.2	28.2	164.2	317.0	267	1344.9	861			104.5
	26.5	26.5	162.0	338.0	288	1436.8	1051			128.1
	27.9	27.9	169.9	355.1	271	1520.3	1141			126.0
	30.3	30.3	176.6	425.9	295	1527.6	1217			124.0
	29.5	29.5	180.2	397.7	233	1491.0	1313			111.7
	29.0	29.0	181.1	383.9	256	1606.0	1254			105.1
1910-11	29.7	29.7	170.1	424.3	269	1744.7	1209			112.7
	29.6	29.6	200.2		285	1921.2	1285			112.9
	29.4 (1913)		201.1		348	2021.9	1327			126.4

ANNEX. VI

MONETARY CIRCULATION IN INDIA

(In crores of Rupees)

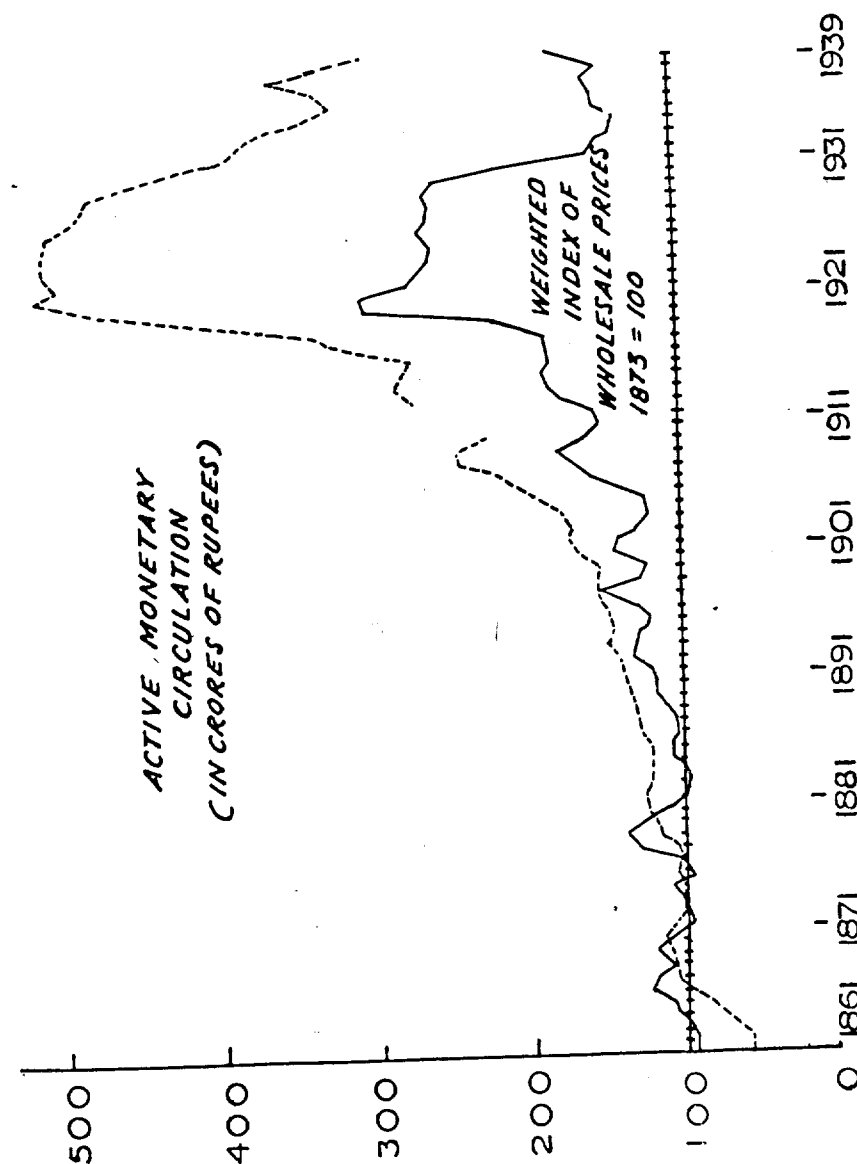
Year	Active Monetary ¹ Circulation	Average Active ² Note Circulation	Estimate of ³ the Rupee Circulation	Total Monetary Circulation
1	2	3	4	5
1860-61	56			
	56			
	63	1911-12	42	272
	73		45	283
	86		47	278
	99		45	271
	105		48	315
	106		59	336
	109		72	410
	113		114	476
1870-71	107		151	515
	101		139	499
	101	1921-22	152	508
	101		153	509
	105		157	507
	101		161	506
	104		163	492
	114		156	483
	118		164	480
	123		172	454
1880-81	124		163	423
	120		151	392
	119	1931-32	153	379
	119		152	365
	120		157	337
	126		162	320
	128		164	330
	131		176	359
	133		186	327
	135	1938-39	182	317

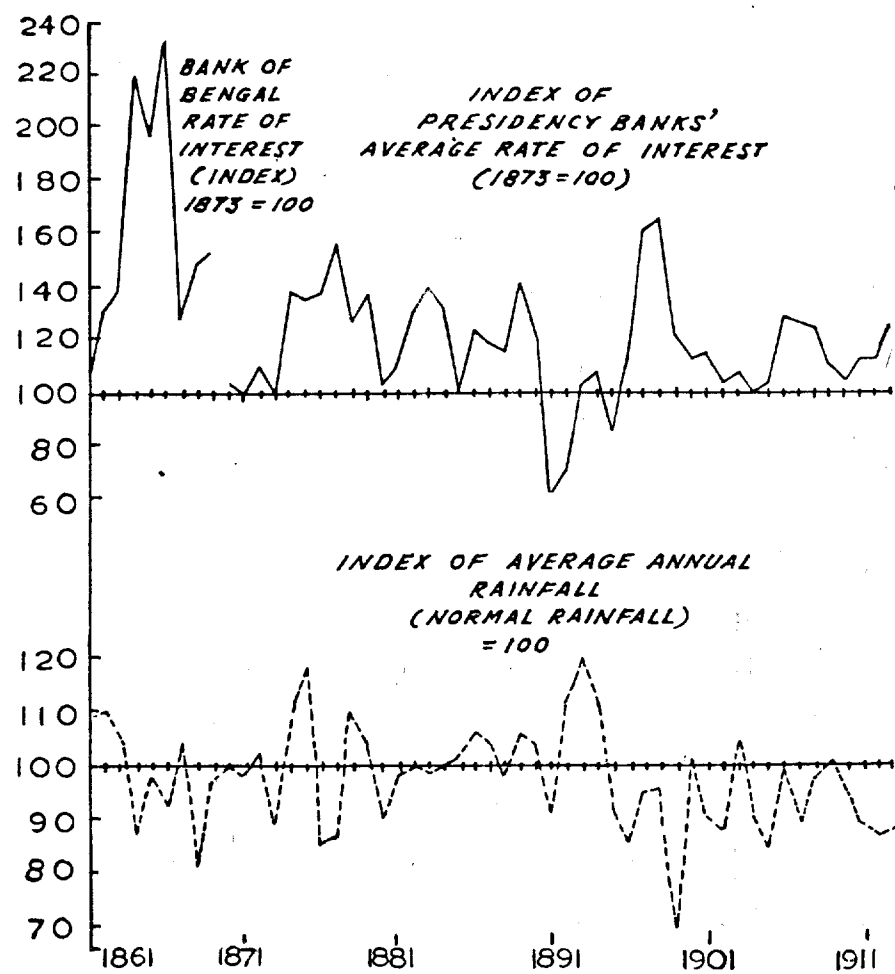
1	2	3	4	5
1890-91	139			
	141			
	149			
	143			
	145			
	150			
	153			
	152			
	150			
	166			
1900-01	171			
	170			
	175			
	188			
	200			
	215			
	241			
	242			
1908-09	223			

1. F.J. Atkinson "Rupee Price in India", *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 1909, (Vol. 72, Pt III), pp. 68-69.

2. For 1909-10 to 1920-21, estimates of note circulation are from the *Report of the Controller of Currency*, 1921, p. 40. For 1921-22 to 1932-33, from *Ibid*; 1933 p. 96. For 1933-34 to 1938-39, from the *Report of the Reserve Bank of India*, 1939, p. 64.

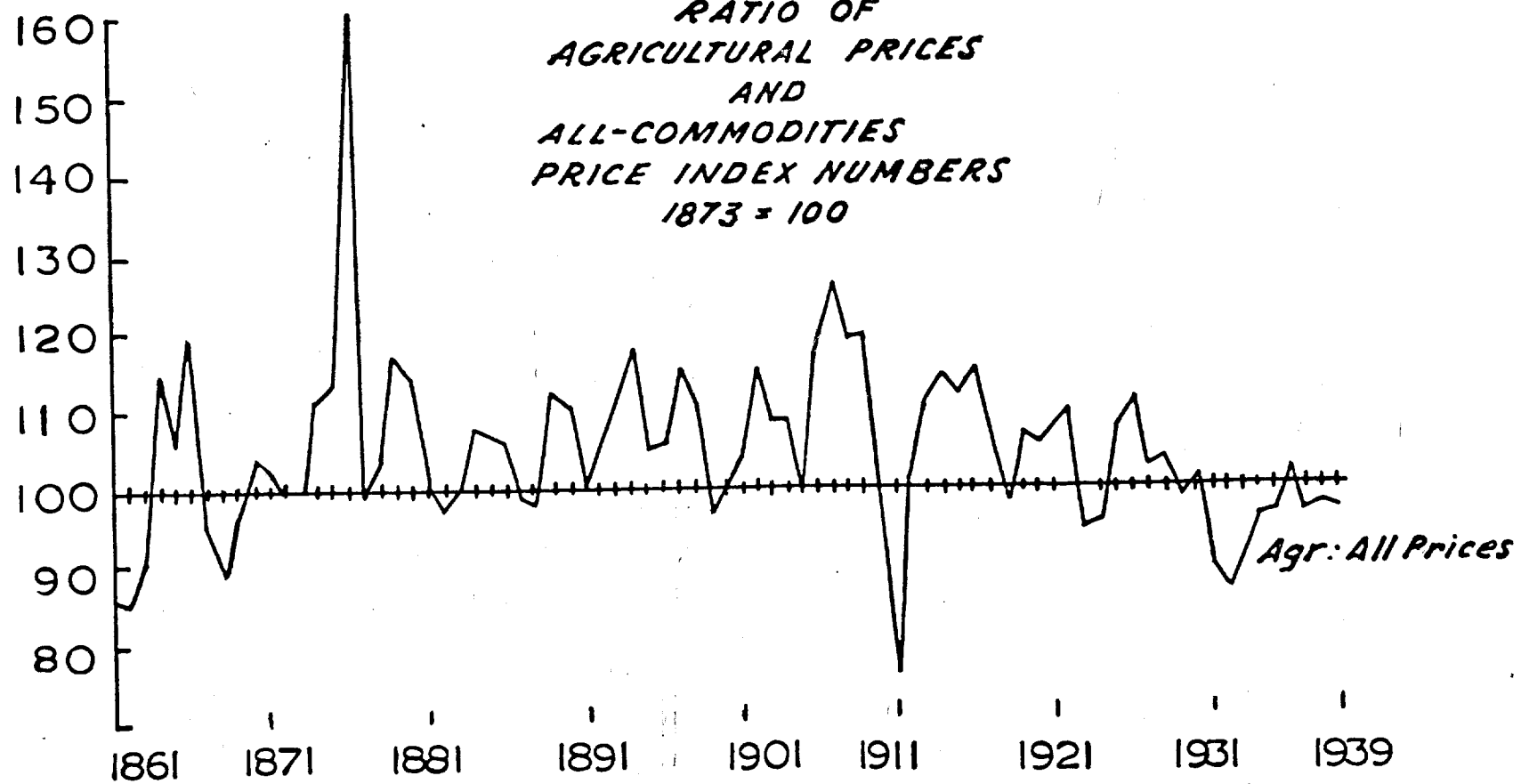
3. Estimates made by P.C. Mahalanobis (See, *Report on Currency and Finance*, 1940-41, p. 52).





X.2 m 1167
1167.42

*RATIO OF
AGRICULTURAL PRICES
AND
ALL-COMMODITIES
PRICE INDEX NUMBERS
1873 = 100*



BOOK REVIEWS

India : Instalment Credit, Extent, Stability, Growth. By Kesri D. Doodha. (Bombay : University of Bombay, 1965), pp. xx+304.

The book under review represents an attempt to estimate the volume of instalment credit in India and to analyse its impact on economic stability and growth.

The author estimates the volume of such credit outstanding at Rs. 174.01 crores as of March 1965. This estimate, worked out to a second decimal place, gives the appearance of great accuracy. In actual fact, it is an extremely crude estimate and the method of estimation is unnecessarily clumsy. Dr. Doodha first derives an estimate of instalment loans by finance companies on the basis of RBI's survey of 113 financial and instalment companies. According to him, only 10 of the companies covered by the RBI's survey were instalment lending agencies. If that was the case estimate should have been derived directly from the balance sheets of the ten companies instead of indirectly as he has done, by making very questionable assumptions.

The most stimulating part of the book is Chapter 2 in which the author analysed the impact of instalment credit on stability and growth. His main theme is that instalment credit is positively correlated to employment, output and income and has a favourable socio-economic impact. This is so, Dr. Doodha seems to imply, irrespective of the type of commodity financed by means of instalment credit. From this he concludes that "democratic planning needs not a curb on marginal propensity to consume with rising levels of income, but its canalisation into the least disruptive channels" (p. 71).

Dr. Doodha's argument would hold true, and his vigorous plea for promotion of instalment credit would be wholly acceptable in the Indian situation, if the factor restraining growth was demand. Until very recently in India, the factor restraining growth in the case of most durable goods was on the supply side. Many of these things were in short supply, with long queues of buyers. In such situation, there was hardly any inducement to manufacturers to pro-