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Land Market in Eastern India, 1793-1940 - Part I : The Movement of Land Prices*

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The emergence of a market in land in eastern India during British rule as a result of distress sales of zamindari estates is by now a well-known story. But it has so far been studied mainly from the point of view of its immediate effects on the old landed community, and the main point of emphasis is the gradual extinction of a sizable section of this community. This paper is concerned with two other aspects of the land market which seem to have been inadequately examined: first, the movement of land prices over the years and, second, the changes in the composition of the landed society. A study of the land prices is particularly worthwhile in view of the more or less general impression that the 'creation' by the British of private property in land had immediately made landed estates immensely attractive, and that a considerable amount of the fortunes made through non-agrarian pursuits was consequently diverted to the purchase of landed property. Again, once as a result of the distress sales of estates, the old landed community had ceased to be a closed group, it is also meaningful to ask who replaced the old zamindars. We have examined the validity of some prevailing notions about the composition of the new zamindars. (The related question of the extent to which the coming of the new people affected the old style of estate management has not been investigated here.)

I. ORIGINS OF THE LAND MARKET

The process of the formation of the land market lies outside the scope of this paper. However, some remarks on its origins would be in order, particularly because of their bearing upon the question of the complex circumstances in which moneyed persons chose to purchase land. The formation of a land market resulted from three sets of circumstances: the insistence on the part of the government on sales of defaulting zamindars' estates as a device towards

*This paper is concerned only with the market in zamindari estates. 'Eastern India' in this study denotes Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa.

ensuring the security of its revenue; the inability of very many zamindars under the circumstances to cope with the increased revenue burden, particularly during the first few years after the introduction of the new fiscal administration, when in fact the largest number of the sales occurred; and the willingness because of various reasons on the part of moneyed persons to transfer part of their fortunes to the purchase of estates.

Till 1793 the primary means of the government for the realization of arrears of revenue were the old coercive measures of the Mughal state, such as imprisonment of the defaulters. The Government of Hastings disapproved of sales of estates primarily on two grounds. In view of the low market value of the zamindari estates at the time, a point about which more is said later, their sales were scarcely an effective device for the realization of arrears. The government also refrained from such sales, partly out of political considerations, since indiscriminate sales of estates of zamindars, in disregard of their antiquity and their place in the rural society; were 'always attended with some degree of odium', particularly where Brahmin families were involved. When in 1793 the land revenue demand was fixed for ever the government was understandably concerned that the stability of its income was not endangered in any way and sales of the defaulters' estates were judged to be the most effective means towards ensuring this. Since landed property was now 'put upon a more desirable and more permanent footing' the government had also no doubt about a considerable increase in its market value.

Very many zamindars failed to cope with the task that the government demanded of them. This can only partly be blamed on the proverbial incompetence of the zamindars in managing their estates. Numerous other circumstances had a role in their predicament. The high pitch of the revenue demand was one. Between 1765 and 1793 the amount of the revenue nearly doubled itself. A further increase was imposed in 1793 on the ground that the state had entirely forgone its share in the probable increase in future in agricultural resources. In Orissa the net collections of revenue in 1802-3 had increased by about 12 per cent compared to the last 12 years of Maratha rule (1791-1802). A further increase of 25 per cent occurred between 1804-5 and 1818-19. Neither in Bengal nor in Orissa did the state of the agricultural resources justify such an increase. The income of the Bengal zamindars had considerably declined during the past two decades. The famine of 1769-70, by killing off about one-third of the population and forcing many others to emigrate, resulted in reducing the cultivation by about one-third. The recovery from this catastrophe, by itself a long process, was retarded because of the unimaginative revenue policy of the government. While the economy was thus languishing the government relentlessly collected as much as possible of the large increase in the revenue imposed between 1772 and 1777.

The government was evidently aware of the acute financial difficulties of

the zamindars. Philip Francis, a member of the Governor General in Council, and one of the staunchest supporters of a 'permanent settlement' with the old zamindars, had no illusions about their low economic position: 'by this time [1776] the greatest part of them are beggars and in debt'. The situation in Bihar was even worse. John Shore, a leading expert in the Company's Government on agrarian questions, particularly noted 'the very degraded state of the proprietors of the soil in Bihar, compared with those in Bengal.' The Collector of Saran in Bihar, while opposing a 'settlement' with the local zamindars, wrote of the 'difficulty of ascertaining the actual proprietors', because of the widespread practice on their part of mortgaging their estates.

Despite their financial problems, the zamindars hesitated to spurn the offer of a 'permanent settlement', however harsh the terms, primarily out of a fear of the ignominy of losing their patrimony to aliens. Such terms were difficult for the zamindars to fulfil even in normal circumstances. The long spell of low agricultural prices, soon after the new system began to operate (1794-97), inevitably aggravated immensely such difficulties, and it was during this period that the largest number of land sales occurred.

In Orissa, a region far inferior to Bengal in point of agricultural resources, the zamindars' difficulties were all the greater.¹ The desolate state of the economy at the time the British had taken over was described in numerous contemporary reports. The largest proportion of the land produced only an annual crop of rice. Some lands did produce a second crop 'of the commonest pulse and oilseeds'. However, valuable cash crops, such as tobacco, sugar, cotton, and mulberry, were 'comparatively little cultivated or wholly unknown'. Inundations endangering settled agriculture occurred nearly every year and, unlike during Maratha rule, remissions of revenue on this account were only rarely made. Under the circumstances the only development that could mitigate the pressure of an abruptly increased revenue was an increase in the cultivation, but there was hardly any increase in the first ten or 15 years. The depreciation in the value of *cowries* (conchshells), which up to, and indeed long after, the introduction of the copper coinage in Orissa about 1811, was the main medium of exchange there, a development resulting in a substantial increase in the pressure of revenue on the zamindars, hastened the ruin of very many of them. The revenue demand of the previous governments, Mughal and Maratha, was calculated and chiefly collected in cowries. Zamindars collected their rent in this currency and handed them over to the merchants and money-changers of Cuttack and Balasore, the two important trade centres, for conversion into silver, and the amount of remuneration to the money-changers on this account was eventually deducted from the zamindars' dues. The British, keen on a change over to silver as soon as possible,

¹ Bengal Territorial Revenue Deptt. Progs, 17 July 1818, No. 16; Ewer's Report of 13 May 1818.

formally disapproved of the payment of revenue in cowries after 1808, and the rate of exchange was fixed at four *kahans* and two *pans* of cowries per silver rupee. (A *kahan* is equal to 16 *pans* or 1280 cowries.) The cowries consequently tended to depreciate, and in 1811-12 the rate was six *kahans* and eight *pans* for a rupee. Within a period of five years, the cowries thus depreciated by about 36 per cent. The depreciation in the value of cowries was also due to a rise in the value of silver, resulting from its scarcity. This was partly due to a development connected with British rule. 'A considerable proportion of what the district could ill-afford to spare, its silver currency, began to be annually sent out of it'. During Maratha rule the remittance of surplus revenue from Orissa to the treasury at Nagpur seldom exceeded four lakhs of sicca rupees, and this sum was almost invariably remitted by bills of exchange. Between 1804 and 1818 the average annual remittance to Calcutta amounted to more than 7.5 lakhs. The fall in the exports from Orissa resulted in further reducing the supply of silver. Her trade with the territories controlled by the Government of Madras, which a contemporary called a 'grand channel through which specie formerly flowed into Cuttack', gradually declined. Whatever grain continued to be exported to such regions was paid for chiefly by bills on Bengal, which were exchanged for specie or goods in Calcutta, and from there brought into Orissa. The trade in rice with Bengal slightly improved, but it scarcely made up for the loss of the old market. The disappearance of the once prosperous trade in salt, the largest part of it with the Raja of Berar's dominions, mainly because of the salt monopoly of the British had the same result. In certain regions of Orissa the rise in the value of silver was due to an attempt on the part of the zamindars to collect their dues from the peasants also in silver. However, the success of the attempt was largely confined to 'the vicinity of a good market, where there is no deficiency of silver currency, and the ryot could dispose of the whole of his produces for rupees'.

The depreciation of cowries necessarily adversely affected most of the zamindars. Since 1807-8 the payment of revenue inevitably cost them much more than before. For instance, a zamindar previously paying Rs 39,724 at four *kahans* of cowries to the rupee incurred a loss of Rs 19,862 when the bazar rate fell to six *kahans* to the rupee.

The difficulties which such developments in the peasant economy had caused the zamindars were all the more keenly felt in the relatively large estates, such as Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Nadia, and Burdwan, where the government had imposed the heaviest increase in the revenue. The collection of rent in such estates was even normally a complicated process, and any failure on the part of any one of the numerous agencies connected with collection from the widely scattered villages, would inevitably tell on the ability of the zamindars to pay, particularly as long as the government rigidly insisted on the collection of a monthly instalment at the end of the month, penalizing

the defaulter by selling part of his estates. (The system of monthly sales was discontinued in 1799.) Zamindars fared worse where the benefits from increased agricultural resources were intercepted by firmly entrenched intermediary groups standing between the peasant producers and the zamindars. (The difficulties of the zamindars resulting from the agricultural depression between 1794 and 1797 greatly increased because of the bad faith of such intermediate groups. Regulation 7 of 1799, which was specifically designed to help the 'rent difficulties' of the zamindars towards a solution, undoubtedly strengthened them in relation to such group.)²

II. SIZE OF THE LAND MARKET

With the available statistical data, it is difficult to measure the size of the 'land market' that had thus emerged and also the changes in it from time to time. The data relate mostly to the auction sales, and only rarely to the private sales of estates, the number of which was far from negligible. Even the data relating to auction sales are largely imperfect. One of their main limitations is the absence of any information about the size of the estates that such sales affected in any particular year; we can only know of the size of the revenue demand on such estates. In view of the admittedly notoriously uneven distribution of the land revenue demand the data about the size of the revenue demand on the particular estates sold reveal only a part of the story. It is however possible to infer some broad features of the land market.

In both Orissa and Bengal the largest number of sales seem to have occurred during a period of about two decades after the enforcement of the sale laws. The number sharply declined thereafter.

In Orissa out of about 3,000 'proprietors' of the first settlement of 1804 only 1,449 survived till 1818. 51.6 per cent of the original zamindars were thus wiped out within a period of 15 years. Estates which remained unaffected by auction sales of the period paid only 21.5 per cent of the revenue demand fixed in 1804-5.³ Such sales considerably diminished later. While between 1805-6 and 1818-19 the revenue of the affected estates amounted to Rs 9.5 lakhs, the amount during the 55-year period, 1845-99, was only Rs 1.5 lakhs. It was the private sales that continued to decimate the old landed gentry. In the Balasore district, for instance, where the relevant statistics are nearly complete between 1836 and 1896, 30 per cent of the total number of estates were privately sold, whereas auction sales affected only 5 per cent

² Binay Bhushan Chaudhuri, *Agrarian Relations in Bengal after the Permanent Settlement, 1793-1818* (unpublished Calcutta D. Phil. dissertation, 1958), Ch. IV, Background of the 7th Regulation, 1799. Also see Section IV of this paper.

³ Bengal Territorial Revenue Deptt. Progs, 17 July 1818, No. 16; Ewer's Report of 13 May 1818, para 76.

of the estates.⁴

In Bengal and Bihar, most sales occurred between 1793-94 and 1806-7.

TABLE I
STATISTICS OF AUCTION SALES IN BENGAL AND BIHAR
DURING THE PERIOD

Year	Revenue of the estates (in lakhs of rupees)	Percentage of the revenue of the affected estates of the province (about 268 lakhs)
1793-94	8.0	2.9
1794-95	7.6	2.8
1796-97	14.1	5.2
1797-98	22.7	8.2
1798-99	38.6	14.2
1799-1800	7.7	2.8
1803-04	5.5	2.05
1804-05	3.3	1.2
1805-06	1.3	.48
1806-07	3.2	1.1

SOURCE: The Revenue Letters from Bengal to the Court of Directors during these years.

NOTE: Data for 1795-96 are incomplete. For the years between 1800-1 to 1802-3 no data are available.

Auction sales sharply diminished thereafter, and only marginally affected the agrarian society, except during some short periods of crises in the economy: for instance, 1830-34 (when the fall of the Agency Houses one after another caused a widespread commercial crisis), 1848-52 (when the fall of the Union Bank caused a comparable crisis of confidence in the credit market), and nearly the whole of the 1930s because of the pervasive economic depression. Between 1807-8 and 1834-35, it was only in 1831-32 that the revenue demand on the estates sold exceeded Rs 2 lakhs. The crash of the Union Bank caused more extensive sales, and the annual average between 1848-49 and 1852-53 amounted to about Rs 2.77 lakhs. Between 1853-54 and 1878-79 the amount was generally even less than 1 lakh, and during the rest of the century did not exceed 2 lakhs. The 1930s were extremely hard times for the zamindars, and the intensity of the hardship can be inferred from an abrupt increase in the sales—from the annual average of Rs 84,000 between 1923-24 and 1927-28 to that of Rs 2,72,727 between 1933-34 and 1937-38.

Contemporaries related the rarity of the auction sales to the increased value of landed property, resulting largely from the increased rental assets while the revenue demand was fixed. 'It hardly ever occurs', observed the Presidency Commissioner in 1871, 'that even the most needy and improvident of landholders cannot command sufficient credit in the market to pay off his quarterly

⁴Final Report of the Survey and Settlement in Orissa, 1892-1896, Vol. 2, Balasore Final Report, para 72.

instalment'. An apprehension in the 1870s that the road cess and public works cess would depreciate the market value of landed property by destroying the people's 'confidence in the stability and permanence of Government demand' quickly died away. The Bengal Board of Revenue concluded in 1878 thus: 'Land is still the most coveted investment in the country, and capitalists are willing to take less than half the interest they would demand for loans on good security, as a return for investment in land'.⁵

Why some sales still occurred despite this was investigated by the government from time to time, and the findings reveal interesting features of the land market of the time. It was striking that the largest number of the sales occurred in Chittagong. This partly resulted from the complexity of the land system in the district, characterized by innumerable petty estates and a complicated tenure system which led the owners to sell off the inconveniently located estates and to purchase some others which were easier to manage. Sales were numerous here also because Chittagong was perhaps the only district where the level of revenue demand pressed hard on a number of proprietors, since the permanent settlement in the district was confined to the area surveyed in 1765 and the new cultivation since then was periodically reassessed. The reasons for the sales in other districts were mostly unconnected with the level of revenue demand. To zamindars, involved in financial distress or in debt, auction sales of their estates were usually preferable to private sales as a means for realizing the market value of their estates. This also applied to the estates with a defective title. Sales in faction-ridden joint-estates, of which there were very many, resulted mostly from the intrigues of the most powerful shareholder, who deliberately defaulted in order to force an auction and sought to grab the best parts of the estates when the sale occurred. In some eastern Bengal districts, such as Bakarganj, where estates were often ridden with an amazing number of complicated tenures above the level of the peasant producers, auction sales were designed as a means of making an estate 'free of encumbrances' and the old proprietor, where successful in purchasing the estate, could thus get not only its full market value, but also 'appropriate a second time the value of the tenures and encumbrances, which he and his predecessors have voluntarily created, and often in consideration of a large payment of a bonus.' Thus in all such cases the background of the sales was mostly the high market value of landed property.

III. MOVEMENT OF THE LAND PRICES, 1793-1805, AND THE MAIN FACTORS IN THE LOW PRICES OF THE PERIOD

The available statistics relating to the movement of land prices are as imperfect as those relating to the extent of land sales. For instance, we have no

⁵ Report on the Land Revenue Administration of the Lower Provinces of Bengal, 1877-78, para 123. (Hereafter called Beng. L.R. Adm. Report.)

information about the changes over the years in the prices that particular estates fetched at the public auction. The usual measure of land values in the available statistics was the comparison of the prices at which estates sold at the public auction with the amount of the land revenue demand on those estates. In view of the fact that the existing resources of particular estates were not necessarily the main determinants of the land revenue demand on them such a comparison could be misleading at times. However, in the absence of better statistics, we use the available ones as one of the indications of the movement of land prices.

Impressionistic judgments about this movement often assume a high level of land prices, even at the early phase of the growth of the land market. The assumption is unfounded.

Before the enforcement of the sale laws, land sales were rare, and the prices at such sales cannot properly be compared with the later prices. However, one finds that the prices offered for estates were then even smaller than the amount of the land revenue on them. In Bengal, for instance, prices at the sales of even the entire estates seldom exceeded 50 per cent of the land revenue demand on them, and prices were far lower where the estates lay far away from the metropolis. Some of those estates were in fact unsalable. This was one of the considerations influencing the decision of the Government of Warren Hastings against depending on sales of estates for the realization of arrears of revenue. In Orissa A. Stirling, Collector of Cuttack, after 'a careful examination' of a 'vast number of bills of sale of old dates' 'confidently affirmed' that 'from one-fourth to one-half of the jumma was the ordinary selling price of the zamindaree or talookdaree of any village or a number of villages'.⁶

In Orissa land prices during early British rule were higher, but still 'estates were sold for a mere fraction of their real value'. The prices offered by Bengalis and other foreigners (who included a number of moneyed men interested in investment in real property) for the estates sold between December 1806 and January 1807 may be taken as an example: 350 estates with an assessment of Rs 4,72,344 were sold for a sum of only Rs 6,07,063—at only 1.28 times the assessment. In fact even this was unusually high, because of the predominance there of 'Bengali capitalists' as purchasers. The usual prices were much lower, and between 1806 and 1808 estates were sold at less than 50 per cent of the land revenue assessment.⁷ The position slightly improved later. The prices of the estates sold between 1809 and 1812 exceeded the assessment only by 25 per cent. Further improvement occurred between 1813 and 1816, when the excess was about 40 per cent. About 1821 Stirling found

⁶ Sterling's Minute of 10 October 1821, para 84. The minute is printed as an appendix in his monograph *An Account of Orissa Proper or Cuttack*, Calcutta, 1904.

⁷ Ewer's Report of 13 May 1818, para 80.

the 'average selling price' varying from 50 to 100 per cent on the assessment. He found among the purchasers a new confidence in their investment:

The very highest value is at present attached to it [zamindari and talukdari] by the natives. Everybody is now anxious to become a zamindar or landed proprietor; the purchase of land is the only mode of providing security for a family and of employing capital with any chance of a secure and adequate return, more especially in a district which has neither commerce nor manufactures. The respectability and consequence attaching to the situation renders it an object of ambition to all classes to obtain a zamindaree.⁸

The land prices in Bengal and Bihar were also initially similarly low, and it was from the end of the 1810s that they tended to increase. The purchase money as the multiple of the land revenue demand of the estates sold was 1.57 in 1795-96; 1.25 in 1796-97, and .97 in 1797-98. The situation slightly improved for some years but again in 1803-4, the multiple decreased to .96.⁹

Statistics of such sales in some particular districts are also revealing. In the case of seven important estates in the district of Rajshahi in 1799 the multiple was .80.¹⁰ The Settlement Officer of Pabna and Bogura (which at the time of the Permanent Settlement formed parts of Rajshahi) expressed surprise that the paragana of Yusufshahi, which at the time (1920-29) he was surveying the district was 'one of the richest areas', found no bidder at a sale in 1796. Split up into four portions in 1808 'it was eventually disposed, but the purchasers found they had made a bad bargain', and the estate 'changed hand several times' afterwards. The general feeling of the district officers in 1801 was that lands did not sell well at public auctions. At the sales in 1801 in Midnapur the price was barely 1.00 times the land revenue demand on the estates sold,¹¹ in Burdwan .38 times, in Jessore .90 times.¹² The report by the Collector of Midnapur shows that things were worse before. Analyzing the statistics of sale from the time of the Permanent Settlement the Collector found that in the case of the largest zamindaris (such as Kasijora and Shahpur) 'the average price of lands appears to have been little more than half of the jumma'. In the case of the smaller estates, known as talukdaris, the situation was slightly better, the average being .96.¹³ In some districts of Bihar the prices were favourable, mainly where rent-free

⁸ Sterling's Minute of 10 October 1821, para 84.

⁹ Calculated from the statistical data contained in the revenue letters from Bengal to the Court of Directors during these years.

¹⁰ *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement, Bogra and Pabna, 1920-29*, para 138.

¹¹ *Parl. Papers, 1811-12*, Vol. IX, p. 341; Answer by the Collector of Midnapur, 24 February 1802.

¹² *Ibid.*, Burdwan, 319; Jessore, pp. 336-37.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

lands were sold at private sales. Things did not much improve even by the time Buchanan visited the districts. He thus commented in 1812 on the value of landed property in the district of Patna-Gaya:

The assessed land has not yet become a very salable property. Within these five years, the collector of Bihar has put up to public auction 77 lots, paying an annual revenue of Rs. 33,777, and the whole price has been 53,152 [the latter being only 1.57 times the former], and for no less than 10 of the lots no bidder appeared, and the lands fell into the Company's hands. This shows that the Settlement made by Cornwallis is not a security for even the revenue which is made perpetual.¹⁴

Prices were slightly better where the estates could attract the 'capitalists', i.e. persons who made fortunes through non-agricultural pursuits. In Midnapur, for instance, at some sales occurring towards the end of 1801 the price was about .99 times the amount of the land revenue demand, while in the case of the largest zamindari, as noted earlier, this was little more than .50 the revenue demand. This was how the Collector of the district explained it:

The high price . . . must be owing to the unusual crowd of people, who came to Midnapur to purchase land, and who are said to have been chiefly contraband traders in salt. These persons, ambitious of becoming talookdars, without any knowledge or experience in the management of lands, and careless about money which they had amassed rapidly and with very little trouble, seem to have determined to make purchases at any price; and the sale of more than 9-10ths of the lots which had been advertised for to be sold, having been put a stop to by the recovery of the arrears due from the proprietors, the competition for those that remained, may account for their having sold for much more than their value . . . The late sales cannot be referred to as a criterion of the value and assessment of the lands in this district.¹⁵

Similar things happened in 1805 at some sales in the district of Dinajpur where the purchasers were mainly 'Calcutta merchant speculators'. The sale price was 2.09 times the revenue of the estates that were sold.¹⁶

Such low prices resulted from various circumstances. Impressionistic judgments assuming a high level of land prices, even in the years immediately following the Permanent Settlement, usually infer from an assumption that the 'creation' of a private property in the land and the permanent fixation of the land revenue demand automatically attracted to the purchase of

¹⁴ Patna-Gaya Report, M. Martin Edn, Vol. 1, p. 317.

¹⁵ *Parl. Papers, 1811-12*, Vol. IX, p. 344.

¹⁶ *Survey and Settlement Report, Bogra and Pabna, 1920-29*, para 154.

landed property the accumulated capital in the country, particularly in view of the very limited existence of 'other objects of speculation or investment' and also in view of land possessing 'the quality of immovability'—'a very desirable quality when the system of police was defective, and the possession of valuable moveables was sure to tempt the cupidity of the numerous gangs of dacoits, which infested the country'.¹⁷

Such an assumption is only partially valid. The Permanent Settlement did cause a diversion of part of the mercantile or urban capital to purchase of land, but it is doubtful whether this was a big part. As we shall see later, the land market was scarcely dominated by the so-called 'Calcutta banians', as was once believed. It is true that the scope for participation in trade on the part of indigenous merchants and traders tended to be restricted, but it scarcely disappeared. Their role as independent traders became sharply limited, but trading in various forms as junior partners to the Europeans was still highly profitable, particularly because of the expansion of both internal and external trade. The historian of the Bhagyakul family of east Bengal (which transferred a considerable part of the fortunes made by trade, particularly salt trade, to the purchase of land) explains the reluctance on the part of the family at the beginning of the nineteenth century to go in for much purchase of land in terms of the profitability of trade.¹⁸ The aversion to trade did increase later, mostly as a result of an increasing distrust of the British style of business, the first real crisis of confidence having occurred at the time of the fall of the Agency Houses in 1830-34.

Apart from trade there were other opportunities for the investment of indigenous capital, of which a very important one was the numerous loans that the government floated from time to time, primarily as a means of financing war operations. One can take, for instance, the loan operations during the administration of Wellesley. The financial difficulty of the Company had reached a critical phase by the time he arrived in India (April 1798). This necessitated a considerable cut in the size of purchases of commodities from Bengal (for export to Europe), and the certainty of a war with Tipu Sultan of Mysore greatly aggravated the crisis, forcing the government to float loans. The amount of such loans between 1798 and 1803 has been estimated at over six million of sterling.¹⁹

In fact the Government of Bengal itself attributed the low land prices of the period partly to such loans bearing very high rates of interest (the first decennial loan in 1798 was, for instance, at 10 per cent; another loan floated in 1799 at 8 per cent, and a series of optional loans floated from 1800 on at 8 per cent). Already in August 1797 the Government wrote to the Court

¹⁷ C.D. Field, *Introduction to the Regulations of the Bengal Code*, Calcutta, 1884, pp. 106-7.

¹⁸ Debendra Nath De, *Bhagyakul Ray Paribar* (in Bengali), Pt. 1, Dacca, 1949, p. 28.

¹⁹ A. Tripathi, *Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency, 1793-1833*, Calcutta, 1956, p. 92.

of Directors of the implications for the land market of the prevailing rate of interest, which was as high as 12 per cent.²⁰ The fall in the land prices at the sales of 1796-97 was mainly attributed to this: 'The late public loans as well as the exigencies of individuals having raised the rate of interest throughout the country and the consequent advantage with which capitals could be employed has necessarily occasioned a proportionate reduction in the price of the landed property'.²¹ The same point was repeated next year: 'The interest of money being very high . . . less inducement existed for individuals to invest their money in landed property, and in proportion as the competition was limited the value of landed property would necessarily be diminished.'²² This happened again in 1803-4.²³

This diversion of capital to the numerous public loans did undoubtedly depress the land prices, particularly where the local zamindars could not bid at the public auction because of their poverty. In fact in very many places the capital needed for the purchases of land came from outside. What the Collector of Dacca wrote of the zamindars of Dacca and Bakarganj in 1788 applies also to a number of other cases: During his stay there for about 15 years he 'never heard of a zamindar or any other renter having credit with the merchants in the city except on mortgaging their lands', and the 'common mode of raising money was by mortgaging their estates to the *shroffs* for double or treble the amount borrowed'.²⁴

The role of this diversion of capital in the depression of land prices should not, however, be over-emphasized. Part of the indigenous capital was of course invested in the public loans. However, 'by 1801 the greater part of the public loans, contracted since 1798 for the prosecution of the war, had been transferred to European hands. This was possible not merely because the loans were floated at a very high rate of interest, but because they possessed certain other alluring conditions which attracted the Europeans more than the opulent natives'.²⁵ Such conditions related to the remittance of their money home with much greater ease than before.²⁶

²⁰ Revenue letter from Bengal, 31 August 1797, para 42.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 23 September 1798, para 43.

²² *Ibid.*, 31 October 1799, para 89.

²³ *Ibid.*, 21 March 1806, para 29.

²⁴ The letter quoted in J. Taylor, *A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca*, Calcutta, 1840, pp. 157-58.

²⁵ Tripathi, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 'Before 1798 the transfer of the principal of the India debt through bills was restricted by the Charter Act to £ 500,000 per year at 1s. 11d Wellesley found himself compelled to make further concessions to the European capitalists Decennial loans were floated in 1798 and 1799 which provided for the transfer of the principal by bills at 15 months date at 2s. 6d the sicca rupee. The first 8% loan floated in 1799 promised to pay interest in bills [but the principal in India], while the second 8% of 1800 promised 'both principal and interest in bills'. Such opportunities were even greater later.

The lowness of the land prices was also due to many other circumstances. In the case of Orissa the most obvious reason was that the land revenue demand was not fixed. The government once promised a 'permanent settlement' of the Bengal type, but the promise was not kept. In fact till 1821 the land revenue demand was revised at short intervals which seldom exceeded two or three years. If we add to this the heaviness of the assessment on the zamindars' estates it becomes understandable why purchase of land at the public auction did not much attract the 'capitalists'.

In Bengal and Bihar the revenue demand was fixed for ever, but various circumstances, apart from the heaviness of the assessment, greatly reduced the attraction for investment in land purchases.

The notorious heaviness of the land revenue demand and the circumstances which prevented the resources of zamindars from increasing, at least at the rate the government had expected, have been mentioned before. The smallness of the zamindars' income from their estates was often noted in the letters from the district officers, and this was emphasized also in the answers to the queries of Wellesley (to which we have referred). The case of Midnapur may be taken as an illustration.²⁷

By the time the Collector was writing (1802) most of the big estates had already been broken by land sales. We therefore refer to what he said about the smaller proprietors, known as talukdars. Their profit seldom exceeded more than 10 to 16 per cent of the gross collections (such 'profits' were defined by the Collector as 'the amount that was left, by the terms of the settlement, to provide for the maintenance and domestic expenses of the talukdars'). Provision was made for the charges of the general management of the estates. Those who lived in their estates and managed them could probably save part of it. But 'two-thirds, and even a greater proportion of the purchasers have no idea of living upon their lands or of taking the management of them into their own hands', and were thus forced to pay more than what was allowed for on this score.

The Collector's investigations showed how such a level of profit was utterly inadequate to enable the proprietors to live in a manner suitable to their condition and habits . . . the most fortunate and provident *talookdars* cannot, in common years, derive from their estates more than a mere subsistence for themselves and their families; and that whenever there is a failure of crops they must encroach upon the public revenue Dearly as they pay for falling in arrear, they find it costs them less than borrowing money, and sometimes they cannot borrow on any terms Very few *talookdars* are engaged in trade, which may afford a temptation to them to misappropriate their collections; and, except in *mahals* notoriously over-

²⁷ *Parl. Papers, 1811-12*, Vol. IX, pp. 342-44.

assessed, which have been purchased at public sales for less than half, and sometimes for less than half, and sometimes for less than one-fifth or one-sixth of their jumma, for the express purpose of defrauding the public revenue, they are immediately expended in some way or other, and hardly ever hoarded.

Things were not dissimilar in Dinajpur. Even by 1809-10, when Buchanan visited the district 'no zamindar cleared less than 10 per cent and none of the larger zamindar more than 25 per cent of the gross rental'. This Buchanan came to know from the collectorate itself. From his estate which was then 'in its fallen condition' the Raja of Dinajpur cleared only 15.5 per cent. The estate of a famous merchant Odwait Chaudhuri yielded only 18 per cent.²⁸ Needless to say even this small profit was liable to be reduced by crop failures or other hazards. This heaviness of the land revenue demand partly accounted for the phenomenon called 'trading in land' by contemporaries. Purchasers in such cases were not keen on keeping in possession their new estates, but merely looked for opportunities for selling them off as soon as possible with a big margin of profit, or 'for defrauding the public revenue', as the collector of Midnapur put it, i.e., to collect as much as possible from peasants and then to wilfully default.

Where the high level of the revenue demand did not deter prospective purchasers the rigorous sale laws did. In fact with liberal sale laws the high revenue demand would not have pressed so hard on the zamindars. The sale laws were particularly rigorous till 1798, and even later pressed hard on those who depended mainly on their rental income for the punctual payment of revenue.

The sale law of 1793 combined physical coercion with economic coercion. Revenue had then to be paid monthly, and where zamindars failed to pay one-third of a monthly instalment by the 15th of the following month they were imprisoned and their estates were attached by the government. Rents were collected by the government as long as the arrears remained unpaid, and monthly sales were insisted upon. The system of imprisonment was abolished in 1794, except where the sale of estates was not enough for the realization of arrears. At the same time a new penalty was imposed—interest at 12 per cent charged on the arrears. Regulation VII of 1799 did away with imprisonment altogether but the utmost punctuality was insisted upon in the payment of revenue. Where a zamindar failed to pay the due monthly instalment his estates were attached. However, such estates were now sold at the end of the year, not monthly as before.

The Collector of Murshidabad characterized such measures as 'probably the strongest engines of terror and compulsion which could be devised'.²⁹

²⁸ *Dinajpur Report*, 1951 Census Edn, Calcutta, pp. 247-49.

²⁹ *Parl. Papers, 1811-12*, Vol. IX, letter dated 11 February 1802.

These ensured the collection of revenues, but sometimes not without much damage to the resources of the estates, which eventually disappointed their purchasers. This happened particularly where the proprietors of the attached estates judged it impossible to prevent their eventual sale. Means were not wanting for such proprietors for the misappropriation of the collected rent, often in collusion with the deputies of the government, or by the adoption of such means as these deputies, ignorant of the matters relating to rent collections, failed to detect. Sometimes a damage of a permanent kind resulted, where the proprietor secretly sold off portions of his estate. When after the public sale of the whole estate the purchaser

proceeds to take possession, he finds himself involved in disputes with the person holding the taluks [the portions privately sold before], disputes which seldom terminate but in the institution of an expensive law-suit by one party or the other. The frequent recurrence of cases of this nature must necessarily tend to depreciate the value of landed property, in the estimation of both private and public purchasers.³⁰

Purchasers had also other difficulties to face, and estates naturally depreciated in value in such cases. Sometimes competition at the auction was stifled because of the opposition by the old proprietors. The awareness on the part of prospective purchasers that mere purchase of an estate might not necessarily ensure its eventual possession often discouraged them from competing at the auction. Sometimes this happened without the old proprietors making any organized opposition, particularly where they were known to be powerful. The Government of Bengal explained the very low prices at the early sales, particularly those between 1793-94 and 1795-96, partly by the widespread system of fictitious purchases by the proprietors themselves of portions of their own estates, since 'the inutility of entering into competition with proprietors, who were determined to buy in their own lands at any price . . . discouraged many bidders from bidding for landed property exposed to public sale'.³¹ In 1794-95 estates with a jumma of Rs 6,44,325 were sold in the district of Burdwan. Of these estates with a jumma of Rs 6,14,410 (about 95 per cent) were bought in by the zamindar of Burdwan himself.³² This happened nearly everywhere. In Tippera and Noakhali, because of the opposition from the old proprietors, 'at first it frequently happened that there were no bidders when an estate was put up to sale', and it was described as 'the most remarkable feature of the fiscal history of Tippera since the Permanent Settlement' that, as a result, the government had to buy in quite a large number of such estates, which accounted for more than 25 per cent of

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Collector of Jessore, 31 December 1801.

³¹ Revenue letter from Bengal, 23 September 1798, para 44.

³² *Ibid.*, para 38.

the whole permanently settled revenue of the district.³³ In Bhagalpur, as the Collector found in 1801, 'purchasers are deterred from bidding if they observe a superior of any description to be their opponent'.³⁴ Such practices did not disappear altogether even much later. For instance, as late as 1887 the Collector of Sahabad found that 'as a rule, at present one local magnate bids and competition is stifled'³⁵ and he went to the extent of suggesting that the government 'ought to bid at such sales', so that 'defaulters would get a better price'.

The opposition by the old proprietors only stiffened after the sale of their estates. What the two Greek purchasers of about a third of the pargana of Chandradwip (the largest estate in the district of Bakarganj sold in 1799) said in a petition (1799) to the government was more or less typical: 'what we intended as a purchase of lands has only been the purchase of disputes' in the criminal and civil courts.³⁶

The old proprietors at first sought to baffle the purchasers by simply withholding the papers relating to their estates. Where this was not effective enough, they tried to incite the local people against the purchasers. In Mymensingh 'it very frequently happens that the original proprietors, by tampering with the renters throw every obstacle they possibly can'.³⁷ It sometimes served the interests of the peasants and holders of different kinds of tenures to help such intrigues, since the new owners were usually more energetic in regard to increase of rent. It was the rent-free holders that gained most by opposing the newcomers, since initially at least the purchasers depended more on resumption of rent-free tenures than on increasing the peasants' rent-rates for increasing their income from the new possessions. While in Dinajpur Buchanan heard 'violent complaints from the possessors of free estates against the new landholders for encroachments on their estates'.³⁸

This was in fact natural in view of the larger number of such tenures throughout Bengal. In Dinajpur, according to Buchanan's estimate, of the lands 'now occupied exclusive of houses and gardens', 16.68 per cent were rent-free,³⁹ in Patna-Gaya 27.36 per cent, and in the Bihar portion of the Purnea district 25 per cent.⁴⁰ In 1802 the Collector of Midnapur estimated the size of the cultivated rent-free land at 'about one-fourth' of the total assessed cultivation.

The coming of new men frightened the rent-free holders, particularly be-

³³ *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement in Tippera, 1915-1919*, paras 117 and 123.

³⁴ *Parl. Papers, 1811-12*, Vol. IX, p. 304.

³⁵ *Beng. L.R. Adm. Report, 1886-87*, para 154.

³⁶ Quoted in H. Beveridge, *The District of Bakarganj*, London, 1876, pp. 87-88.

³⁷ *Parl. Papers, 1811-12*, Vol. IX.

³⁸ *Dinajpore Report, op. cit.*, p. 244.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 238, 244.

⁴⁰ *Patna-Gaya Report, Bihar Orissa Research Society Edn.*, pp. 560-61.

cause of the weakness of their titles in very many cases. Buchanan suspected that quite a number of the grants of rent-free lands were 'procured by forgery or other fraud, during the confusion which prevailed on the first occupancy of power by the Company's servants'. The old proprietors had also an interest in inciting the rent-free holders against new-comers. Buchanan found that in Dinajpur 'many of the families entitled to these estates have become extinct, and that the landholders have seized on these, and retain them under fictitious names'. This happened also in Purnea: 'in fact much free land now belongs to the zamindars, who are of course taking every means at the expense of their assessed estate to increase its value'. The new purchasers were keen on resuming as many of such tenures as possible, not only because of their number, but also because of the alienation in this way of the best lands, at least in Purnea, Sahabad, and some other districts. In Purnea 'many owners of small free estates have found means to procure an exchange for the lands originally granted; and have in their stead procured land of the best quality'. Zamindars did the same thing where they had come to possess them. Buchanan was 'told that some estates are now so much impoverished by this means and by the lands let at a low rent to the high castes, as scarcely any longer to be worth the holding'.

In the district of Bengal proper the conflict of the new purchasers with the rent-free holders was particularly acute in the big estates held by Hindu zamindars who made many of these grants—such as Bishnupur, Nadia, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, and Midnapur. In Bishnupur purchasers 'found it impossible to secure full possession of the purchased mahals... their purchase money with interest was returned to them'. Even the zamindar of Burdwan 'into whose hands the bulk of the zamindari fell found it difficult to secure possession'. His suggestion to the government to cancel the sales and give him back the purchase money was not accepted, and 'it is probably only because he was himself a wealthy and powerful nobleman that he was eventually able to secure peaceful possession of the property'.⁴¹ The Nadia zamindar Krishna-chandra Ray made about 80,000 grants of rent-free land, which probably was the reason of a saying in the district that 'any Brahmin whose house is not on rent-free land granted by Krishna Chandra is no true Brahmin at all', and, according to an official report, the 'multiplicity' of such tenures 'has been a source of constant irritation to auction-purchasers'.⁴²

There were yet other sources of conflict between the auction-purchaser and the old proprietors. One of the most important was the ill-defined boundaries of different estates. In fact, the land sales themselves contributed to this, since the old big estates disintegrated into small pieces, and the decision of the government at a certain time to sell off only as much of the

⁴¹ *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement, Bankura, 1917-24*, pp. 35-36.

⁴² *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement, Nadia*, pp. 22-23.

lands of a particular estate as sufficed for the realization of the arrears of revenue due from it only worsened matters. In fact, the situation scarcely improved till the beginning of the revenue surveys in the 1840s. The difficulties faced by the famous Tagore family of Calcutta in getting possession of Dihi Sahazadpur (in the district of Pabna) which it purchased in 1836 could be taken as an illustration. Baffled in getting the possession the Tagores applied to the government for deputing a special officer to help them in this. The report of George Yule, who was thus sent, vividly describes the scene :

There are many instances of villages in which possession was not obtained by the original purchaser, or of which he was at some time forcibly dispossessed The consequence was that the estates were mixed up with one another . . . no boundaries of any kind were fixed, and the purchasers being wealthy men, and at a great distance from any station seemingly agreed among themselves to dispense with the Magistrate altogether and to settle their disputes by Club Law. Even the Civil court was seldom resorted to, the person who was dispossessed of any lands soon making amends by seizing some of his opponents.⁴³

If powerful zamindars like the Tagores (who paid at the time about Rs 5 lakhs as land revenue to the government) had such a predicament to face before getting possession of their purchased estates, the plight of the lesser people is not hard to imagine. The judicial records of the period amply testify to this.

IV. MOVEMENT OF THE LAND PRICES, 1806-1830; A PERIOD OF SLOW RECOVERY AND ITS BACKGROUND

Land prices, however, gradually rose, and the upward trend was particularly noticeable from 1806-7 on. Before that year the purchase money of the estates sold seldom exceeded the amount of the land revenue due from them. The prices fell to the lowest point in 1798-99, when the purchase money was only .62 times the revenue demand. Table 2 shows the rising land values. High prices were particularly noticeable during the long period, 1811-12 to 1823-24. Then followed roughly a decade of relatively low prices.

The improvement in the land prices resulted from a number of circumstances. Local reports occasionally related it to a gradual increase in the cultivation. Such an increase did take place, though with the available statistical materials it is difficult accurately to measure it. One of the queries that the local officers answered in 1802 related to the extent of this increase since 1790, and the answers provide some information on the point. (Only a small

⁴³ *Survey and Settlement Report, Bogra and Pabna, 1920-29*, para 139.

TABLE 2
SALE PRICE AS THE MULTIPLE OF THE JUMMA

Year	Sale price	Year	Sale price
1793-94	N.A.	1814-15	5.67
1794-95	N.A.	1815-16	3.85
1795-96	1.57	1816-17	6.85
1796-97	1.26	1817-18	4.22
1797-98	.94	1818-19	2.98
1798-99	.62	1819-20	4.88
1799-1800	.84	1820-21	4.41
1800-1801 to 1802-3	N.A.	1821-22	7.05
1803-4	.96	1822-23	4.49
1804-5	N.A.	1823-24	5.13
1805-6	.95	1824-25	1.55
1806-7	1.34	1825-26	3.16
1807-8	1.44	1826-27	2.91
1808-9	2.46	1827-28	N.A.
1809-10	2.78	1828-29	N.A.
1810-11	4.38	1829-30	3.23
1811-12	5.14	1830-31	4.28
1812-13	4.49	1831-32	3.23
1813-14	7.08	1832-33	4.31

SOURCE: Based on the data contained the Revenue Letters from Bengal to the Court of Directors, during these years.

minority of the officers answered this specific question.) It is notable that the increase was appreciable even in the districts where the general conditions of agriculture were not conducive to its growth or which were afflicted with severe calamities shortly before and after the Permanent Settlement. In Nadia, for instance, where 'the soil being remarkably light, the land is only capable of cultivation three successive years, after which it must lie fallow for an equal period' the cultivation had increased by 12.5 per cent. Just two years before the beginning of the Decennial Settlement the dreadful inundation of 1788 caused Dacca and some other neighbouring regions immense losses. Yet in 1802 the Collector wrote of an increase in the cultivation by about 12.5 per cent, which was mainly confined to the 'southern parts'. Midnapur had suffered from a series of calamities even after the one in 1769-70—for instance, the famine of 1772 and the more widespread famine of 1792. In 1802 the Collector was told by 'the most intelligent of the natives whom I have consulted on the subject' that 'near three-fourths of the lands' which became waste because of the famine of 1792 had been reclaimed. 'All the land that has been newly brought into cultivation' during the 1790s was in fact that which went out of cultivation because of these calamities. The Collector, however, did not 'discover any considerable improvement'. The growth of cultivation seems to have been faster in the districts of eastern Bengal,

largely because of the fact that such regions were only marginally affected by the famine of 1769-70. However, one suspects that the Collector of Chittagong exaggerated the extent of real growth in the district. The statistics he provided show that the new cultivation (known as *Noabad mahal*) since 1790 had increased by 96.27 per cent. This is unlikely, and it seems a considerable part of the existing cultivation had escaped the survey at about the time of the Permanent Settlement. Of the Bihar districts, it is only in regard to Saran that some information is available. The Collector estimated the increase at 20 per cent.⁴⁴

The gradual, though slow, rise in the prices of agricultural commodities had perhaps a role to play in the increase of cultivation. Prices widely fluctuated even later, but the phenomenon of the long spell of low prices that prevailed between 1794 and 1797 seldom repeated itself later. 'Scarcity of specie and the consequent deflationary tendency were a check to production up to 1798. But the years between 1798 and 1822 experienced inflation caused by foreign demand, wars and war-time speculation'.⁴⁵

There were other factors which, at least initially, seemed to have been more important than the growth of cultivation and the rise in prices—mainly institutional changes designed for the security of land revenue and as well for a greater stability of landed property. One was the abolition in 1799 of the old Mughal practice of imprisoning zamindars for failure to pay land revenue. The practice, as Wellesley argued, 'degraded' the zamindars and its continuance 'must necessarily depreciate the value of landed property by annexing to the tenure [zamindari] conditions attended with personal disgrace; by depriving the zamindars of all the influence derived from personal character by subjecting their persons to restraint, at the moment when the state of affairs rendered their utmost exertions necessary'.⁴⁶

Two other changes effected by Regulation VII of 1799 had also a role in the rising value of landed property. Firstly, the substitution of year-end sales for monthly ones greatly reduced the strain on the zamindars' resources. Secondly, the Regulation strengthened the hands of zamindars against various groups from which they collected rents. This very many zamindars badly needed, since their difficulties in paying revenue were partly due to the bad faith on the part of such groups, particularly the numerous intermediaries who collected rent from the cultivators. The new law provided for the quicker collection of arrears of rent mainly through the coercive process of distraint of defaulters' properties including crops. The process did exist before but the means of enforcing it were now simplified, mainly by doing away with the tardy civil court methods. The defaulters not having paid on demand the

⁴⁴ For the answers see *Parl. Papers, 1811-12*, Vol. IX.

⁴⁵ Tripathi, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

⁴⁶ Revenue letter from Bengal, 31 October 1799, para 79.

arrears of rent as soon as these arose, their properties became liable to 'attachment', and to eventual sale within six days after the attachment, where zamindars could not be assured of the payment in the meantime. The distrainers who could, according to the law, be recruited even from the low-paid members of the zamindari bureaucracy, were assured of all possible help from the state machinery. The local police was authorized to help them in order 'to prevent resistance or other breaches of peace'.

The effectiveness of the law in reducing the arrears of revenue is evident from the following table.⁴⁷

TABLE 3
THE AMOUNT OF THE ARREARS OF REVENUE BETWEEN 1798-99 AND 1804-5

Year	Outstanding arrears (Rs)	Year	Outstanding arrears (Rs)
1798-99	41,766,94	1802-3	23,128,44
1799-1800	32,555,96	1803-4	21,843,25
1800-1801	29,719,00	1804-5	22,068,74
1801-2	31,297,07		

Compared with 1798-99, the year in which the law came into force, the outstanding arrears by 1804-5 thus decreased by 47.16 per cent, and in terms of the revenue of the estates sold sales decreased by 91.45 per cent.

The improving state of rent collections understandably reassured the auction-purchasers. The sharp fall in the number of auction sales also contributed to the rising land values. Contemporaries trying to relate the low land prices of the earlier period partly to the phenomenon of a 'glut' in the market probably meant that the capital available for transfer to the purchase of land was not large enough.

There were other contributory changes in the law: measures towards preventing excessive fragmentation of estates and towards removing some constraints on zamindars in regard to the management of their estates. When the sale laws first came into force, a whole estate was usually sold whatever the amount of arrears. Judging the measure to be a hardship for the proprietors the government decided to sell only such portions as sufficed, under the circumstances, for the realization of the arrears. This solution was not without its shortcomings, since in view of the rigid enforcement of sale laws, even small arrears were realized by sales of estates, so that the number of small estates rapidly increased. Finding that the development tended 'to prevent a competition for their purchase' the government decided in 1801 to sell a whole estate where the annual land revenue was less than Rs 500. The change in the law that occurred in 1812 was far more important. Till then zamindars could not grant leases of portions of their estates for a period

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 17 October 1805.

of more than ten years. As contemporary reports pointed out, this prohibition by reducing the mortgageable value of their estates eventually affected their market value. The law of 1812 by removing such constraints thus resulted in increasing this value.

V. DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING THE LAND MARKET BETWEEN 1830 AND 1848

A temporary setback occurred in the early 1830s. Peculiarly enough, though the official reports of the time wrote of a 'severe depreciation' of landed property and the consequent concern of the government led them to institute in 1833 an enquiry into its causes⁴⁸ the available statistics show that though in terms of the amount of land revenue demand on the estates sold the volume of sales suddenly increased⁴⁹ the aggregate sale prices did not much decline. The purchase money as the multiple of the jumma of the estates sold in the years 1830-31, 1831-32, and 1832-33 was as follows: 4.28, 3.23, and 4.31 respectively. The official reports show that there were still a number of regions where the land values did not fall, and that the aggregate sale prices concealed the fact of a considerable fall in very many other regions, particularly in the eastern and northern Bengal districts. The circumstances described in detail in the reports from these and also other districts leave no room for doubt about a considerable depreciation of landed property during the period.

This resulted from the combination of some economic events and some institutional changes of the time, changes in the sphere of land revenue administration.

The most important of the economic events was the series of commercial failures of the time—the fall of all the important Agency Houses which controlled not only the trade of Bengal, but also the institutions of credit, since such Houses combined trade and banking. The first major crash occurred in 1826 when the famous House of Messrs Mercer & Co. failed. The ruin of other Houses, which started in 1830, was complete by 1834.

A detailed study of the causes of such failures is out of place here.⁵⁰ Only some of the major causes are briefly indicated here. The structure of the Houses' capital, mostly formed out of the deposits of the Company's servants (who had long been excluded from lawful private trade) and of those of the wealthy natives, had always been weak. Such capital, which had already

⁴⁸ The reports from the district officers, mostly written in 1834, were recorded in the Board of Revenue Progs, 19 September 1834.

⁴⁹ The number of sales in 1832-33 was nearly double the average of that in the years between 1819-20 and 1821-22. Revenue letter from Bengal, 27 February 1836, para 2.

⁵⁰ For this see the author's *Growth of Commercial Agriculture in Bengal, 1757-1900*, Vol. 1, Calcutta, 1964, pp. 82-108. Also see Tripathi, *op. cit.*, Ch. V.

been considerably depleted as a result of the influx of speculators after the opening of the India trade in 1813-14 (since such speculators also partly depended on the locally available capital), further diminished as a result of numerous government loans attracting much of the local capital and also numerous withdrawals of capital by the European partners. The trade depression in England, which started in 1825-26 and continued for several years, was a far greater blow, because the trade with England formed the largest part of the Houses' total trade. What really started the process which eventually ruined the Houses was the crisis of confidence among the Houses' creditors, in which some dubious practices of the Houses had a great role to play.⁵¹ In fact, this crisis became increasingly pervasive and paved the way for the ruin of all the Houses one after another. The crisis was aggravated by the general stagnation in trade and commerce at the time. The ruin would probably have been averted, at least for some time, with the continuation of the old government policy of extending liberal loans to the Agency Houses in distress. The change in such a policy removed all chances of a survival.

The failure of the Agency Houses alone was enough to paralyze all trade and also the institutions of credit. But, as the Commissioner of Patna pointed out, 'the Calcutta failures have each occasioned a concomitant want of confidence, abated means and incapacity on the part of the native bankers to carry on their moffusil business where ready cash is the great medium'. For instance, the two famous indigenous Houses in Patna, Bijnauth Sahoo and Mathura Dass and Bulram Das, failed soon after.⁵² The effects of the shake-up in the credit market were aggravated by the scarcity of silver and the considerable reduction in the volume of money in circulation, which, in the words of the Collector of Rajshahi, had 'cramped all transactions'. The Collector was 'credibly informed' that 'the diminished expenditure on both silk and indigo' had resulted, 'within a few years', in withdrawing out of circulation about Rs 10 lakhs 'which has thrown the land from a more to a less productive sort of cultivation'.⁵³ In the districts of the division of Dacca the near extinction of the 'former flourishing manufactures' contributed to the constantly increasing scarcity of silver. The inflow of silver into the region which, according to the Custom House returns, had 'gradually been on the decline' since 1828-29 was by 1834 'nearly at a standstill'.⁵⁴

This phenomenon, whose main features have been thus described by a member of the Bengal Board of Revenue—the want of capital, the loss of credit, the destruction of trade, the contraction of currency, wherein along

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

⁵² Board of Rev. Progs, 19 September 1834; letter from Patna Commissioner, 11 June 1834; Prog. No. 71 A.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Prog. No. 74 C.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Prog. No. 76; Commissioner of Dacca, 26 March 1834.

the revenue is paid'⁵⁵—inevitably reduced the market value of estates. With trade sharply reduced the market value of agricultural commodities suddenly fell, to which the acute scarcity of silver contributed not a little, a natural result of which was falling land values. The uncertainty in the credit market, coupled with the scarcity of silver, produced other effects which led to the same thing. Rates of interest suddenly went up. In fact, 'a universal present distrust', as the Collector of Dacca observed, 'renders the borrowing of money at any rate often impossible'. Where the capital transferred to the purchase of land was a borrowed one, as a large part of it actually was,⁵⁶ the high rates of interest naturally reduced the effective demand for land. The same circumstance forced the zamindars to sell more of their estates. The Patna Commissioner found that 'most' of them 'have an accredited mahajan or banker at the sudder station, who engages to make good the revenue and by such an arrangement save the zamindars from many contingent expenses Of late money having become scarce, the bankers have been unable to make cash payments to the same extent as formerly or have been tardy in paying the revenue on the part of their constituents'. In very many parts of Bengal, successive bad harvests for three seasons greatly added to zamindars' difficulties. Arrears of revenue payment consequently increased. As compared to 1828-29 the balances outstanding at the end of the financial year 1832-33 increased by 78.39 per cent.⁵⁷ Hence more sales. This in the context of the reduced effective demand for land of course resulted in the depreciation of landed property.

The commercial failures led to the depreciation of not only land but also of 'every other description of real property', such as indigo factories and urban houses.⁵⁸ In addition, landed estates were affected by the introduction of a greater rigour in the sale laws and the fresh drive for the resumption of rent-free tenures.

The symptoms of the economic depression and its probable effects on the security of land revenue worried the government, and they hastened to take steps towards preventing this eventuality. A law of 1830 (Regulation VII) provided for advertisement for sale of the defaulters' estates soon after a month had passed after the usual date of revenue payment, and for their eventual sale within a month after the advertisement. In the mean time a 'consolidated penalty and interest' at the rate of 25 per cent per annum on the arrears of

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Prog. No. 57; Minute of W.W. Bird, 15 July 1834, para 4.

⁵⁶ The Collector of Tirhut thus wrote in 1839: 'Auction-purchasers save and except those who ordinarily bid at sales, seldom have ready money at command, and are constrained to apply to mahajans on the spur of the moment for any extra-ordinary unbursement'. *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement, Muzaffarpur*, para 310.

⁵⁷ Board of Rev. Progs, 19 September 1834; Board of Revenue to the Government of Bengal, 19 September 1834.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Bird's Minute of 15 July 1834, para 7.

revenue was imposed on the defaulters. However, it lay with the Commissioners to confirm or annul the sales.

The local officers and also the prominent zamindars whom the government consulted during this enquiry nearly universally agreed that the new sale law adversely affected landed property. The penalty and interest at 25 per cent constituted a severe strain on the zamindars' resources, particularly when such resources had appreciably declined as a consequence of the commercial failures and the bad harvests for three years. In their answers the zamindars particularly stressed the role of the greater frequency of sales, almost monthly sales in some cases, and also the new elements of uncertainty in regard to confirmation of sales by the Commissioners.

Because of this frequency, as Maharaja Kalikrishna of Shovabazar said, 'the influence of a zamindar over tenants is done away with', since they 'cause tenants to have less confidence in zamindars, or rather they create confusion in expectation of new landlords'.⁵⁹ Another zamindar Radhakanta Dev argued alike: 'The ryots from a doubt as to the stability of the zamindar's estates have no regard for him and try every evasion to pay the rents'.⁶⁰ This development undoubtedly reduced the mortgageable value of landed estates. A zamindar found it difficult to borrow money 'on the mortgage of his property, as the capitalists withhold to make him advances for fear of the mortgaged property being sold for arrears of the next *kist* [instalment] before the expiration of the term of the payment of their loan'. In fact 'capitalists knowing of the uncertainty of the land tenure have ceased to lend money'.⁶¹

Uncertainty about the finality of sales also deterred the otherwise willing purchasers. Not that non-confirmation of sales was an entirely new thing, but the number of such cases became far larger now than before. A member of the Board of Revenue estimated while before 1830 the ratio of the number of sales confirmed to those annulled was 5:1, in 1834 it was 7:6.⁶² The cancellation of sales naturally irked the purchasers because of 'the loss and vexation they are subjected to by the constant reversal of sales'. Such loss occurred because they had to make a compulsory deposit before the actual sales. They were now unwilling to 'place it [the amount of deposit] in the Collector's treasury, bearing 4 per cent at the utmost, with a prospect of having it returned upon their hands' when the sales had been cancelled. The member of the Board thus concluded: 'At least fewer will do so, and those few less keenly, and hence depreciation of price [of landed property]'. An influential vernacular paper, *Samachar Darpan*, analyzed the implications thus: 'This renders every purchase a matter of doubt and uncertainty. The natives feel that in a sale of land nothing is certain, and they will not therefore risk their money'.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Prog. No. 56, answer dated 15 May 1834.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, answers not dated.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, Bird's Minute of 15 July 1834, para 7.

Things came to such a pass that in Patna, as the Commissioner wrote, he was 'unable for days together to sell a single estate', and even when some sales did occur, the price that was obtained 'is utterly inadequate to the real value of the property disposed of'. The Commissioner of Bauleah also had a similar experience: 'The immediate consequence would be that all estates knocked down at public sales would be sold at a price below their natural value'.

The new drive, since 1828, for the resumption of rent-free tenures, also contributed to the depreciation of landed property. Such resumptions were far from a new thing. What was new was the introduction of a more or less summary process in this regard, which superseded the procedure of an ordinary civil court, and the vast increase in the number of such resumptions resulting from an over zealous enforcement of the summary process.

Such resumptions adversely affected the value of landed property mainly by reducing the mortgageable value of zamindars' estates. The Commissioner of Bhagalpur thus explained it:

The supposed insecurity in which all land is now placed by the disquieting operations of the resumption regulations prevents the landholders from raising money by mortgage or conditional sale; few transfers now take place indeed, it is out of the power of the owners to alienate their tenures, few estates not being in the predicament of being given in security. No one feels willing or secure in advancing money on a tenure which is good to-day and judged invalid the next, at the mere expression of a collector's opinion.⁶³

VI. RISING LAND PRICES, 1855-1929, AND A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BENGAL PROPER AND BIHAR

The depression gradually lifted, but the land prices remained at a low level for about a decade. Things improved later. Tables 4 and 5 show the movement of such prices between 1848-49 and 1927-28, i.e., the year shortly before the setting in of the great depression. Table 4 shows the movement in the Bengal Presidency as a whole between 1848-49 and 1910-11 and Table 5 makes a comparative study of the movement of land prices in Bengal proper and Bihar in two selected periods: 1874-75 to 1893-94 and 1913-14 to 1927-28.

The movement had four striking features. First, at the beginning of the period very low prices prevailed. Secondly, a fairly high level was reached by the middle of the 1850s and the highest prices prevailed during the years, 1859-60 to 1868-69 in the nineteenth century and during the years 1918-19 to 1927-28, in the twentieth century, the annual average during the first ten-year period (expressed in multiples of the jumma of the estates sold) being

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Prog. No. 72, Bhagalpur Commissioner, 5 April 1834.

TABLE 4
LAND PRICES IN THE BENGAL PRESIDENCY, 1848-49 TO 1910-11

Period	Sale price (annual average during each five-year period)
1848-49 to 1852-53	3.41
1853-54 to 1857-58	8.77
1859-60 to 1863-64	10.25
1864-65 to 1868-69	10.16
1869-70 to 1873-74	7.72
1874-75 to 1878-79	8.79
1879-80 to 1883-84	6.91
1884-85 to 1888-89	6.10
1889-90 to 1893-94	6.64
1898-99 to 1902-3	6.36
1903-4 to 1907-8	4.90
1909-10	7.11
1910-11	6.06

SOURCE: Compiled from the statistical appendices of the Reports on the Land Revenue Administration in Bengal and Bihar during these years.

TABLE 5
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE LAND PRICES IN BENGAL PROPER AND BIHAR

Period	Sale price in Bengal Proper (annual average)	Sale price in the Bihar districts (annual average)
1874-75 to 1878-79	7.43	14.63
1879-80 to 1883-84	4.92	18.24
1884-85 to 1888-89	4.45	11.68
1889-90 to 1893-94	4.19	11.59
1913-14 to 1917-18	4.29	9.54
1918-19 to 1922-23	3.63	16.63
1923-24 to 1927-28	3.67	16.13

SOURCE: Same as for Table 4.

10.20, and that during the second 10.01. Thirdly, the level of the prices in the other years was much lower. Lastly, throughout the whole period the land prices in Bihar were invariably much higher than those in Bengal proper.

The low prices between 1848-49 and 1852-53 were partly attributed to the general economic depression resulting from the fall of the Union Bank. Moreover, prices were strikingly low where the resumed rent-free tenures were sold. Even the unresumed tenures sharply depreciated in market value, which was quite an unprecedented development. The Collector of Hugli thus explained it in 1840: It is not surprising that rent-free property, surrounded by difficulties of identification and impoverished by the searching

nature of the resumption operations, fetch prices regulated by the diminished confidence in the stability of the tenure'.⁶⁴ The resumed ones were subjected to a very high revenue demand, and it was largely due to this that a stable market in them did not develop till long. The Government found that their purchasers 'are for the most part mere speculators, who will probably relinquish them as soon as they discover that they have made a bad bargain', and in fact the government had to buy in a lot of them.⁶⁵ The revenue demand was eventually reduced in very many cases.

The land prices began to improve from the middle of the 1850s. It should be noted, however, that such prices were not strictly comparable with those prevailing at an earlier period, particularly those at about the beginning of the nineteenth century. The official reports of the time suggest that in view of the high value of landed property, proprietors did their best to prevent the sale of their estates, and that estates of only some particular nature were sold, such as those which had deteriorated because of natural reasons, like changes in the courses of rivers; the faction-ridden joint-estates, and the ones facing acute financial difficulties. The estates of the first category had understandably little market value. In the case of sales of the second group of estates, the presence of a powerful shareholder as a purchaser often stifled competition, so that he could purchase such estates or shares thereof at a low price. The value of the third group of estates was also considerably reduced, because in very many cases their proprietors raised loans by mortgaging parts of their estates at a price much below the market rate.

The increased value of landed property was due to several reasons. The Collector of Cuttack noted, as early as 1821, the tendency of the land prices to rise. In Orissa it had much to do with the final rejection in 1836 of the earlier policy of revising the land revenue demand at very short intervals. The interval since then was 30 years. (The revision due in 1866 was in fact postponed for another 30 years because of the disastrous famine of 1865-66.) But for the long spell of low agricultural prices between 1840 and 1854 the increase in the land value would surely have been larger.

When in 1821 the Collector of Cuttack was writing of the rising land prices 'the average selling price' was only 50 to 100 per cent on the jumma. Between 1840 and 1849, 94 estates sold in Cuttack fetched an average of 4.50 times the jumma. While the prices of five estates sold in Balasore between 1829 and 1842 were only three times the jumma, 11 estates sold between 1842 and 1855 fetched 9.50 times the jumma.

Table 6 shows the movement of the land prices in Orissa from 1855 to the end of the century.

The fall in the prices from 1886 onwards was partly due to the apprehen-

⁶⁴ Quoted in G. Toynbee, *Administration of Hoogly District*, Calcutta 1888, p. 64.

⁶⁵ Beng. L. R. Adm. Report, 1851-52, para 32.

TABLE 6
LAND PRICES IN ORISSA, 1855-1898
(The price expressed in multiples of the jumma)

Year	Cuttack	Puri	Balasore
1855-65	12	15	9
1865-75	20	18	N.A.
1876-85	10	10	30
1886-95	8	2	14
1896-98	8	N.A.	26

SOURCE: *Survey and Settlement Report, Orissa, 1892-98*, Vol. 1, 276.

sions of purchasers about the possibility of a large increase in the land revenue demand at the revised settlement due in 1896, particularly because the revision was going to take place after a period of 60 years. However, the fall was noticeable as far back as 1876, and such apprehensions had perhaps no role in this. Local reports do not provide any satisfactory explanation for this, except that the fertility of land in the estates that were sold had been declining over the years. The spectacular fall in Puri in the period between 1886 and 1895 was because of an exceptional event—the sale of the Kotdes estate which sold at a very low price, since the greater part of it had already been rented out in 'perpetual leases', thus virtually freezing for good the rent of such leaseholders.

Three sets of circumstances were mainly responsible for the rising land prices in Bengal and Bihar since about 1855: firstly, the large population growth and the resultant increased population pressure on the land in the context of the extremely limited existence of other means of livelihood; secondly, increased income from estates, or in any case the increased stability of the income, except in certain regions during some particular periods, and lastly, the diminishing rigour of the sale laws and the increase in the mortgageable value of estates resulting from certain other changes in the sale laws.

The role of the increased population pressure on the land in the increased value of landed property is obvious. This pressure was felt nearly everywhere, except in some decadent districts of western and central Bengal. Even there the causes which led to a decline in the population had also much to do with the decline in the area under cultivation, so that the declining population or the stagnant one did not necessarily mean any reduction in the pressure on the land, if there was any. The increased pressure was particularly visible in the Bihar districts.

This affected the value of landed property mainly in two ways: The increasing dependence of more people on the income from land and the increased competition for land among the peasantry enabling the proprietor of estates to exact a larger quantum of rent than before. This happened particularly where the new cultivation was limited or non-existent.

The increase in the proprietors' income, or at least a certain stability in it, till a certain time, resulted from numerous circumstances. Increase in the cultivation, including cultivation of more valuable cash crops like jute and sugarcane was undoubtedly one. (This however did not apply to the twentieth century. There was in fact a slight fall in the acreage in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa during the first four and half decades of the century.) Increased cultivation did provide increased income even before, but provided more now because of the increased demand for land among the peasantry. This resulted partly from the gradual elimination by the proprietors of some privileged groups in regard to rent rates, etc. An increase in the quantum of rent on the ground of a rise in the prices was now also permissible under the law though zamindars could only make a partial use of it, at least till the end of the nineteenth century. In Bihar, where the system of produce rent largely prevailed the rising prices resulted in proportionately increasing their income. In the context of the price-level of the later nineteenth century, a peasant paying rent in kind invariably surrendered a much larger portion of his produce than a peasant paying rent in cash, and increasing the rate of cash rent was also far from an easy job for the zamindar. The zamindars receiving rent in kind enjoyed this advantage at least till the second decade of the twentieth century, since when the peasants largely exercised their option (which the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 permitted) of getting the produce rent commuted into cash rent. The commutation process inevitably reduced the old level of the zamindars' income but they continued to enjoy part of the advantages of the produce rent system, mainly because of the usually high rate of commuted rent.

It may be argued that only the money and not the real income of the zamindars increased. Where the system of cash rent prevailed, as in most parts of Bengal, the rising prices did reduce their real income. However, without this increase in the rental income the real income would have been still lower.

Several changes in the sale laws contributed in various ways to the rising value of landed property. A law of 1841 (Act XII of 1841) by discontinuing the levy of interest and penalty upon arrears of revenue considerably reduced the strain on zamindars' resources. Far more important changes occurred in 1859. A law passed in that year (Act XI) greatly strengthened the security of creditors who had liens upon estates, and provided the money necessary for saving them from sale, and also of the holders of numerous undertenures. Previously a creditor holding a mortgage on an estate found his security in danger or occasionally destroyed in the event of its sale, which not infrequently resulted from frauds on the part of its proprietor. Such risks naturally reduced its value in the market as security for the repayment of loans. The creditor could now prevent such an eventuality by depositing in the collectorate the amount of the revenue arrears. The holders of

undertenures represented a wide range of economic interests that had sprung up since the Permanent Settlement, and perhaps from earlier days, including those of European indigo and sugar-planters. In fact, the case for a better security of undertenures was essentially a European one. While long leases were essential for the successful operations of such planters, they faced the risks of finding their tenures destroyed since the purchaser of the parent estate had the legal right to cancel them. Halliday, the first Lieutenant-Governor, arguing from the assumption that Europeans would mainly provide the new 'skill, capital and enterprize', on which the improvement of the local agriculture supposedly depended, defended their case. Where such tenures were registered, the sale of the parent estate did not affect them any longer. Zamindars could now as a consequence ask for a better price for the creation of such tenures, and also raise loans whenever necessary on much easier terms. Since, however, such tenures continued to be liable to an increase in the rent in future, this protection scarcely reduced the sale price of the parent estate.

The security of the creditor, which Act XI of 1859 sought to protect, was in fact strengthened by the Civil Procedure Code also coming into force in 1859, which greatly helped the creditors in the realization of all sorts of debts. In fact, whenever the security of credit was in danger and the credit market was consequently disturbed, the effect was immediately visible in the depreciation of landed property. We can take, for instance, the effects of a particular judgment of the Privy Council (25 July 1877; *Din Dayal Lal, Defendant vs. Jugdeep Narain Singh, Plaintiff*), such effects being largely confined to the district of Muzaffarpur. In the case of a lawful debt contracted by a member of the joint Hindu family living under Mitakshara law the creditor, according to the judgment, could enforce his decree by selling the rights and interests of the debtor. The purchaser, however, though acquiring a lien on the property to that extent had only one means open to him for getting into possession of his purchase—to compel a partition of the joint estate. The purchaser's difficulties were all the greater because of the mention in the judgment of the debtor's son and wife being entitled to a share in the property. The sale and purchase of the landed property of such a debtor in the district had so long been regulated by the doctrine laid down in previous judgment of the Privy Council (12 May 1874, *Ghirdhari Lall, Defendant vs. Kantoo Lall, Plaintiff*), by which a decree obtained against the father could be executed by the sale of his ancestral estate, and the interests of the father as well as of the son were bound by it. A purchaser at such a sale was not bound to enquire into the circumstances under which the decree was obtained. Persons purchasing estates of judgment-debtors as long as this doctrine was valid were now told that they had no claims to the interests of the judgment-debtor's sons, who were on fact instigated by some groups to sue the purchaser. About 3,000 copies of the judgment of 1877 were circulated. 'Touts

have been employed to get up cases in the interior of the district for the benefit of the small league of pleaders and capitalists by whom funds will be advanced for carrying on suits'. The result was 'strong feeling of insecurity among the mahajans and others who are in possession of landed property purchased in execution of decrees', and loan transactions between moneylenders and members of joint Hindu families sharply declined. In view of the fact that 'the local mahajans hold running contracts with landholders to pay their revenue when due' such a disturbance in the credit market resulted in a larger number of sales and under the circumstances the value of landed property suddenly declined.⁶⁶

Such a commotion gradually subsided, and it was in fact the interests of the community of proprietors, including the indebted ones, to see that this happened. To the diminution of such a sense of insecurity of purchasers another development contributed not a little—the increasing number of partitions of joint estates. In fact, this also resulted in the increased value of landed property, particularly in Bihar where such estates were far more numerous than in Bengal proper, because of the greater freedom such partitions ensured to the individual shareholders in managing their property.

The higher level of land prices in Bihar than in Bengal proper was due to several reasons. One was the higher level of the revenue demand in Bengal than in Bihar, particularly in the big estates. This was because the government appeared to know much less about the actual resources of the Bihar estates. This partly explains why the Bihar zamindars largely escaped the convulsions which auction sales of zamindari estates produced in Bengal. The Bengal zamindars also frittered away part of their resources by giving away estates in long and, sometimes, permanent (patni) leases. At the time of their creation such leases were immensely useful to the zamindars, partly as a means of encouraging reclamation of waste lands, as in the eastern districts of Bengal, or as a means of mobilizing resources during the period of an acute financial difficulty of the zamindars for preventing sales of their estates, as in Burdwan about a decade after the Permanent Settlement and later in other districts. (Prior to the creation of such leases, the Burdwan zamindar often failed to complete the collection of rent from all the parts of his far-flung estate before the instalments of revenue payment became due. These leases saved him the difficulty. Furthermore, the big initial payments which patnidars had to make also considerably strengthened his financial position.) Eventually, however, such leases precluded a share of the zamindars in the increased agricultural resources of their estates. In Bihar, particularly in the southern districts, the irrigation facilities provided by the Sone Canal (from 1876 onwards), by contributing to the increase of cultivation and to the greater stability of the existing one, led to an increase in the zamindars'

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1876-77, para 118.

income. Comparable facilities were absent in Bengal, except in some limited regions. In fact, agriculture in Bengal, as noted earlier, was declining over a large tract. In regard to increase of rent, which was permissible under the law under certain conditions, the Bihar zamindars were also at an advantage over the Bengal zamindars, partly because of the admittedly lower level of awareness on the part of the Bihar peasantry of their rights and partly of the system of produce rent which was confined mostly to Bihar. Apart from these, the pressure of population on the land was much higher in Bihar.

VII. THE ECONOMIC DEPRESSION, 1929-1938 AND THE LAND MARKET

After 1928-29 came a sudden crash. The following table shows how steeply the prices fell.

TABLE 7
ANNUAL AVERAGE OF LAND PRICES DURING FOUR FIVE-YEAR
PERIODS BETWEEN 1918-19 AND 1937-38

	<i>Bihar and Orissa</i>	<i>Bengal</i>
1918-19 to 1922-23	16.63	3.63
1923-24 to 1927-28	16.13	3.67
1928-29 to 1932-33	11.10	1.91
1934-35 to 1937-38	4.73	1.90

SOURCE: The Statistical Appendices of the Reports on the Land Revenue Administration in Bengal and Bihar during these years.

TABLE 8
THE AVERAGE OF PRICES BETWEEN 1938-39 AND 1940-41

	<i>Bihar and Orissa</i>	<i>Bengal</i>
1938-39 to 1940-41	5.29	2.02

SOURCE: Same as for Table 7.

The movement of land prices during the period had some striking features. First, the fall was far steeper in Bihar than in Bengal. In Bihar the abrupt fall came in 1930-31, while in Bengal the fall looked much less spectacular because of the pre-existing low prices. The movement in Bihar is shown by Table 9.

Another striking feature was the length of time over which the crash continued. Agricultural prices tended to rise from 1937-38 onwards, but the land prices did not.

The crash in the land market resulted primarily from the economic depression of the time. Certain aspects of it, such as the contraction in the supply of money, and the instability in the credit market of course adversely affected

TABLE 9
MOVEMENT OF PRICES IN BIHAR, 1928-29 TO 1940-41

Year	Prices	Year	Prices
1928-29	15.70	1935-36	6.79
1929-30	17.89	1936-37	4.06
1930-31	8.26	1937-38	6.14
1931-32	9.64	1938-39	5.59
1932-33	4.04	1939-40	3.32
1933-34	3.92	1940-41	6.98
1934-35	2.76		

SOURCE: Same as for Table 8.

the value of landed property. The far more decisive factors in this were however the sharp fall in the rental assets of estates, and the increasing insecurity with time about realizing even this diminished income. The whole institution of zamindari came under fire, the economic malaise of the time was blamed on it, and contrary to all past experiences the government itself was arguing in favour of abolishing it, so that buying an estate was not any longer worth the trouble.

The fall in the rental assets of the wards' and attached estates, temporarily under the Control of the Government and managed by the Court of Wards, can be taken as typical of Bengal as a whole, and during the depression the number of such estates sharply rose. (I am not sure if the statistics of rent collections in other estates are available.) As early as 1932 the Bengal Board of Revenue thus wrote of the perils facing the entire community of Bengal zamindars:

Even the solvent estates found it difficult to pay their Government revenue and cesses punctually. A large proportion of the zamindars of Bengal have lived a hand-to-mouth existence for years, and few of them have had the fore-sight to accumulate reserves for bad years. Those that were already in debt found it impossible to raise loans and the state of the property market was so bad all over the province that they could not sell or settle their outlying provinces in order to save the rest. . . . Naturally numerous proprietors turned their eyes to the Court of Wards as the last resort, hoping thereby to obtain time and credit from their more pressing creditors and even to postpone the payment of revenue.⁶⁷ In 1937 the Board noted how fast a considerable number of estates had turned into 'unprofitable' ones, which it would have normally been prudent of their proprietors to get rid of.

It might have been expected that in the first few years of the depression

⁶⁷ *Report on the Administration of Wards, Attached and Trust Estates, 1931-32*, para 23.

zamindars would have got rid of the estates, which for any reasons were unprofitable. It must, however, be assumed that as a result of the long-continued depression more and more estates are reaching this position.⁶⁸

In fact, since the Court of Wards could realize rent arrears more easily than the proprietors of other estates, the latter presumably suffered much worse.

TABLE 10
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL COLLECTIONS TO THE TOTAL DEMAND, INCLUDING RENT, CESSSES AND ARREARS, 1922-23 TO 1940-41

Year	Percentage	Year	Percentage
1922-23	44.8	1932-33	32.6
1923-24	47.3	1933-34	32.2
1924-25	48.9	1934-35	34.8
1925-26	45.2	1935-36	35.0
1926-27	43.5	1936-37	35.4
1927-28	43.6	1937-38	32.5
1928-29	41.2	1938-39	26.4
1929-30	41.3	1939-40	25.5
1930-31	34.4	1940-41	20.0
1931-32	35.1		

SOURCE: The Statistical Appendices of the Reports on the Administration of Wards, Attached and Trust Estates in Bengal during these years.

Where cash crops were cultivated on a significant scale zamindars suffered worse. Table 11 shows the percentage in the five important jute districts of Bengal between 1928-29 and 1940-41.

TABLE 11
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL COLLECTION TO TOTAL DEMAND IN THE JUTE DISTRICTS

Year	Dacca	Mymensing	Rangpur	Dinajpur	Tippera
1928-29	54.09	40.82	29.75	62.94	56.44
1929-30	44.83	30.54	21.08	32.20	55.52
1930-31	31.73	21.61	12.53	34.06	22.41
1931-32	36.34	20.29	14.53	26.04	30.86
1932-33	34.09	17.13	34.20	27.58	29.91
1933-34	33.77	22.06	16.29	23.07	30.89
1934-35	35.79	18.98	17.90	25.12	36.40
1935-36	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1936-37	46.11	29.53	20.40	30.27	38.79
1937-38	48.60	21.29	19.84	23.49	34.36
1938-39	32.36	18.68	16.62	22.68	32.27
1939-40	40.36	23.45	21.38	31.07	35.02
1940-41	26.91	15.90	14.76	29.17	30.91

SOURCE: Same as for Table 10.

NOTE: Of the five districts Mymensingh and Rangpur suffered worst.

⁶⁸ Beng. L. R. Adm. Report, 1936-37, para 9.

The crisis was largely due to the catastrophic fall in the agricultural prices, thus correspondingly reducing the real income of the peasantry, including those who partly depended on wage labour for their subsistence, since substantial peasants had to considerably reduce their employment. In fact, the difficulties of the proprietors of wards' estates would have been far larger if the Court of Wards had not had recourse to special measures for the collection of rent arrears. The special system, known as the 'certificate procedure', superseded the ordinary legal measure of instituting suits in the civil courts, which, a time-consuming process even in normal times, was largely ineffective during the depression when the rent arrears vastly increased. The certificate procedure cut short the lengthy process of investigation into rent arrears, the Collectors' certificates against which there was no appeal, amounting to a summary demand for the payment of such arrears, and the Collector was free to choose other coercive methods where this demand was not promptly met.

Evidently very little of the rent arrears could be realized without such certificate and with the deepening of the depression their number consequently increased. This increase between 1928-29 and 1936-37 was of the magnitude of 162.25 per cent, though the number of estates coming during the period under the Court of Wards increased by only 55.42 per cent. In some severely affected estates, such as the Kashimbazar estate in Rangpur, the Court used the certificate method in an extraordinary way. The method normally applied only to the immediate under-tenants of zamindars. Since in the Kashimbazar estate this proved ineffective, because of the existence of a considerable group of jotedars between the zamindar and the actual cultivators, a special measure now authorized the Court to realize rent arrears from any grade of undertenants. In other cases, for the sake of greater effectiveness of the method, the old system of serving certificates by peons was now discontinued, and the Collector toured the affected estates collecting as far as possible on the spot. The experiment, first confined to Rangpur, was gradually tried nearly everywhere.

Such measures, however immediately beneficial, soon lost their effectiveness, and in 1937 the certificate method was suspended for two years, and only occasionally used later.

Other normal measures for the realization of rent arrears also largely failed—for instance, selling the holdings of the defaulting peasants. 'The main reason is that there is no bidding for lands at the auctions', and the Board of Revenue noted with alarm that 'the fall in land values has had a disastrous effect on the efficiency' of courts.⁶⁹ There is little money available in the mofussil for the purchase of holdings sold for arrears of rent, and the zamindars themselves had perforce to purchase most of them. This, however,

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1934-35, pp. 3-4.

barely helped the rent problem of the zamindars toward solution since such holdings could be resettled only with the greatest difficulty.⁷⁰

To the local officers having past experiences in this regard, this seemed a striking change. The Board of Revenue thus commented:

'Whereas a few years ago, there was seldom a dearth of candidates ready to take settlement of payment of *salami* (extra payment) sufficient to cover all the arrears and the cost of the sale proceedings in the civil or revenue courts, at the present time all Managers [of the wards' estates] are finding the greatest difficulty in resettling the auction-purchased tenancies on any terms. The result is that in many cases the original tenants continue to cultivate the lands rent-free'. Though it was seen that 'more vigorous steps' were taken 'to ensure that the possession granted to the purchaser should be real, not symbolical... the number of certificate sales is so great that the results are hardly noticeable.'⁷¹

Even the offer of special rewards to the collecting staff to induce them to put in greater efforts towards such resettlements did not lead to better results. As late as 1939 as the Board of Revenue submitted, 'no appreciable progress was made' in this regard.⁷²

Though the exceptional circumstances created by the depression persuaded the government to relent in regard to enforcement of the sale laws, which came as a relief to the zamindars, the revival in 1932 of the practice of charging interest on arrears of revenue, that rate of interest now being 7.5 per cent per annum, eventually aggravated their plight. A far greater peril for them developed in the form of a spread of what was called 'no-rent mentality' among the peasantry. Non-payment tended to become increasingly deliberate, and was not necessarily the result of the inability of the peasants to pay. The anti-rent feelings had been growing since about 1931 and became so pervasive by 1940 that the Land Revenue Commission called it a 'threat' to 'the stability and security of the land system as a whole'.⁷³

Though the kisan movement formed a kind of a background against which the threat had been taking shape, other circumstances contributed to this. The anti-moneylender legislation, particularly the Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act of 1936, was one. Among other things, this imposed ceilings on interest rates, and set up arbitration Boards (called Debt Settlement Boards) empowered to write off a portion of agricultural debts and to arrange easier terms for the payment of the rest. (In such cases the ordinary Civil Courts

⁷⁰ *Report on the Administration of Wards, Attached and Trust Estates, 1934-35*, para 20.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1938-39, para 19.

⁷³ For the peasant movement during the 1930s, see B. B. Chaudhuri, 'Agrarian Movement in Bengal and Bihar, 1919-1939' in B. R. Nanda (ed), *Socialism in India, 1919-1939*.

had no jurisdiction.) Peasants, however, went far beyond, and in very many places a virtual moratorium on the payment of debts was the result. Though the Act did not apply to the question of rent an idea that it did increasingly gained ground among the peasants and rent arrears were made to pass off as debts. Sometimes the Debt Settlement Boards themselves were not careful about the distinction, and treated both alike. One of the popular slogans of the time was: 'rent is payable when able, land belongs to those who plough'. The Jessore Landholders Association complained to the Land Revenue Commission: 'The Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act has supplied additional impetus and strength to the agrarian agitation and no-rent campaign, and has caused an all-round suspension of rent'. According to the Bengal Landholders Association, 'the impression is now common that all debts and even arrears of rent can be wiped out by executive order or legislation'. The first election (1937) held under the India Act of 1935, which greatly increased the size of the electorate, had much to do with it. 'To get the cultivators' votes', as the Commissioner of Burdwan said, 'they [candidates] spoke as if the interests of the cultivators alone would be considered in future'. Soon after came the Amended Bengal Tenancy Act of 1938. The debate over the provisions of the Act, in which the Kisan leaders naturally participated, produced 'a general change in the ideas of the tenants regarding their own rights in the land'. Furthermore by abolishing the 'transfer fees', i.e., fees payable to zamindars on the occasion of alienation of peasant holdings, the Act resulted in further reducing their income.

The value of landed property inevitably fell under such conditions. 'Zamindari property is not profitable now-a-days', the Bengal Mahajan Sabha firmly asserted before the Floud Commission in March 1939. 'The cry is to stop the payment of rent; unless this is checked, zamindaries cannot be a profitable business, and creditors would not be anxious to purchase the estates'. Although zamindaris had ceased to be 'popular investments, there are some people who are still prepared to buy property, if they can get them at a nominal price'.⁷⁴ The manager of the estate of the Nawab Bahadur of Murshidabad emphasized an obvious consequence of this: 'the present-day tendency for the moneyed classes to invest in houses in cities, in shares and other securities rather than in land'.⁷⁵ It is striking that though the depression began to lift from 1938-39 onwards, land values barely showed any signs of improving. On the contrary, there was even a slight fall. This was largely because the faith in the stability of the zamindari system had been nearly shaken.

⁷⁴ *Report of the Floud Commission*, Calcutta, 1940, Vol. VI, pp. 445-46.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 82.

VIII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

'Land market' in this study merely means the sales and purchases of estates, and the intercourse between buyers and sellers that such transactions necessitated. The intercourse was, however, a restricted one or not of such a nature that 'the prices of the same goods tended to equality easily and quickly'.

Despite this imperfection of the land market some distinct phases could be identified in the movement of the land prices during the period under review. Contrary to government's expectations the prices continued to be low for quite some time after the Permanent Settlement and were, indeed, so low that in very many cases the amount of the sale proceeds was even less than that of the revenue arrears which the government intended to realize through auction sales of defaulters' estates. A distinct improvement began in 1807-8 and continued till the time of the general trade depression caused by the commercial failures between 1830 and 1834. The effects of the depression were more acutely felt in some regions than in others. In parts of eastern and northern Bengal they continued throughout the 1830s and as late as 1838 the Commissioner of Dacca argued against any active measures on the part of the government towards reclamation of waste lands, mainly on the ground that the new cultivation would scarcely be remunerative in view of the low grain prices of the time. Though the depression lifted by about the end of the 1830s the land prices continued to be low because of other developments, and the descending spiral became all the more marked with the beginning of another commercial depression resulting from the failure of the Union Bank (1847-48), and from the pervasive trade depression in Europe at the time. An upward trend in the land prices was visible again by about 1857, and till about the end of the first world war the highest prices prevailed between 1859 and 1879. The prices fell thereafter. It is notable that this fall was largely due to a secular decline in the market value of estates in Bengal proper, though in Bihar also such falls occasionally occurred. In Bihar the prices crashed only during the depression of the 1930s and even then their level was considerably higher than that in Bengal.

The nature of the factors that determined the level of the land prices also changed over the years. The disappointment of the government's expectations that the fixity of the revenue demand and the legal recognition of the proprietary status of the zamindars would automatically and immediately lead to a rise in the land values was due to several reasons. While the number of sales of estates suddenly increased the effective demand for them did not increase as quickly. Cornwallis expected a large-scale diversion of liquid cash from the usual modes of its employment, of which he noted usury, establishment of monopolies in the necessaries of life like salt and public loans, to land. Of a possible diversion from public loans he was particularly hopeful, since such loans were being paid off by the government about a

couple of months before the declaration of the Permanent Settlement. He thus justified his hope in a letter to the Court of Directors (6 March 1793) :

The public credit is high. The paper in circulation bearing an interest of 8% is selling at a premium of 1%, and the interest of money is proportionately low. As this paper is in course of payment, there is every reason to expect that the large capitals possessed by the natives, which they will have no means of employing when the public debt is discharged, will be applied to the purchase of landed property as soon as the tenure is declared to be secure and they are capable of estimating what profit they will be certain of deriving from it by public tax upon it having been unalterably fixed.

It is difficult to be conclusive about the extent of such a diversion if it occurred at all. Part of the cash which the repayment of public loans in 1793 had released was probably invested again in the fresh loans which were later floated and which Cornwallis could not probably foresee. Furthermore, the heaviness of the revenue demand, the unprecedented rigidity in its collection, the elements of uncertainty about the eventual possession and the security of the purchased estate and the recurring clashes between owners of interconnected estates because of their ill-defined boundaries, of course discouraged many a moneyed person from bidding at the auction at all, and thus resulted in the depression of the land prices.

A distinct development in the land market was the gradual disappearance or the diminishing importance of the earlier kind of constraints on the freedom of intercourse between buyers and sellers, such as the opposition to the purchaser from powerful local groups, including the neighbouring zamindars, and the inefficient administration of sale laws and justice, which gave persons connected with the zamindari bureaucracy and with the revenue and judicial departments of the government a distinct advantage in the land market.⁷⁶ Two factors tended to be increasingly decisive with time in the determination of the level of the land prices: the size of the rental income from the purchased estate and the state of the credit market. Developments which resulted in reducing the rental income or the mortgageable value of an estate, and which disturbed the credit market invariably reduced the land prices, and where the dislocation in the credit market developed into a crisis of confidence, a further setback occurred. The depreciation of landed property in several parts of Bengal during the 1830s can be taken as an illustration of the point. The general trade depression, the shrinkage of credit caused by the widespread bank failures of the time and the scarcity of silver, which in several districts of Bengal assumed a chronic form, resulted in restricting the grain

⁷⁶ The point is discussed in Section 4 of Part II of this paper.

Trade and because of the consequent fall in the agricultural prices zamindars' rental income diminished. Further, as long as the indigo trade prospered the European planters could not do without taking leases of portions of zamindari estates, and the zamindars invariably demanded a heavy price for them. The stagnation in the indigo trade at the time deprived the zamindars of this source of income. The resumption of rent-free holdings had a similar consequence. Landed property inevitably depreciated under the circumstances. A contributory factor was the dislocation in the credit market, and the consequent rise in the interest rates, which reduced the effective demand for land, since, as the Collector of Tirhut explained in 1839, 'auction purchasers, save and except those who ordinarily bid at sales', mostly depended on borrowed funds.

During the late 1840s the fresh drive for the resumption of rent-free holdings and the failure of the Union Bank led to similar results. The factors in the secular fall in the land values in Bengal proper since 1878-79 were also primarily economic. In several parts of central and western Bengal this had much to do with the rural depopulation caused by the recurring outbreaks of malaria and in some places with the declining productivity of land resulting from the diminishing water supply caused by the decadence of the river system. Normally, an important factor in this fall was the disproportion between the rising cost of living of the zamindars and the increase in their rental income. Despite the permissibility of an increase in rent under the law, zamindars in very many cases could secure only a marginal increase and, indeed, it was the conviction of the increasing difficulties in the way of increasing rent that led them to grant 'perpetual leases', by which they fixed the rent rate for ever, on the condition that the lessees made a big initial payment. Where the increase in the number of zamindars mainly depending on their rental income occurred considerably faster than the increase in this income, leading to a diminution in the per capita share in the same, the old attractions of landed estates further declined.⁷⁷ The crash in the land prices during the 1930s was also largely due to economic reasons, and the decisive factor in this was the pervasive depression of the time. There were, however, other contri-

⁷⁷ Such a predicament of the zamindars of Dacca, particularly the petty ones in Bikrampur and other similar areas of the district, was described by the District Settlement Officer thus: 'This rent could not be increased for 15 years; the enhancement would amount to 12.5%, against a probable increase of [landlord] population of 15% in the same period... it is clearly impossible for the petty landlord to remain dependent on the land... During the past 50 years, as the population and the cost of living have grown apace with no compensatory increase in income, with the joint family system deep-rooted in the people of the class, the position has grown acute' (*Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Dacca, 1910-17*, paras 95-96). The Settlement Officer particularly emphasized how the 'energies' of such 'an extensive body of men, sprung from respectable families', were under the circumstances 'perverted to the abolition of law and order',

butory factors, such as the declining social position and power of the zamindars (in the context of a growing kisan movement and of the increasingly bitter denunciation of the zamindari system from several quarters) and the increasing uncertainty about the stability of the Permanent Settlement itself.

Railroads, Cultivation Patterns, and Foodgrain Availability: India 1860-1900

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INTRODUCTION

All schools of Indian economic history agree that railroads, because of the fall in transport costs associated with their construction, permitted shifts in cropping patterns in the interior portions of India. While some historians have viewed such trends as positive and indicating a modernization of the countryside,¹ others have viewed shifts in cropping patterns as destructive and likely to have diminished India's food supply.² This paper will examine changes in total cultivated area, total foodgrain area, and cotton area for those portions of India where suitable data exist. Cotton has been chosen as the nonfood crop to be examined because of the frequency with which it has been cited as an important crop replacing foodgrains.³

EXPECTATIONS ABOUT CROPPING PATTERNS

Underlying the views of both schools of Indian economic history is the assumption that farmers were changing their cropping patterns in response to new opportunities for sales of agricultural goods. The position of 'imperia-

¹Vera Anstey, *The Economic Development of India* (4th Edn.), Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1952, pp. 143-44, 146, 148; K.L. Datta, *Report on the Inquiry into Rise of Prices in India*, Vol. I, Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1914, p. 21; Morris David Morris, 'Towards a Reinterpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History,' *Journal of Economic History*, 1963, XXIII, pp. 606-18.

²Daniel Thorner, 'Capital Movement and Transportation: Great Britain and the Development of India's Railways,' *Journal of Economic History*, 1951, XI, p. 400; Bipan Chandra, 'Reinterpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 1968, V, pp. 35-75; B.M. Bhatia, *Famines in India, 1869-1965* (2nd Edn.), Asia Publishing House, New York, 1967, pp. 31, 33-34, 45, 134-35, 160; R.C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age* (7th Edn.), Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1950, p. 366.

³Bhatia, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34. See also Peter Harnetty, 'Cotton Exports and Indian Agriculture, 1861-1870,' *Economic History Review* series 2, 1971, XXIV, pp. 414-29 for a discussion of the role of cotton in classical thought about Indian agriculture, as well as for a refutation of that role in the period 1861-70.

TABLE
CULTIVATED AREA FOR ALL CROPS, COTTON, AND

Year	Berar			Bombay Presidency			Central Provinces		
	All Crops	Cotton	Food-grains	All Crops	Cotton	Food-grains	All Crops	Cotton	Food-grains
1870-71	5,403	1,518	2,800 ^a	21,075 ^c	1,843	12,067 ^a	16,050	613	13,654 ^b
1871-72	5,333	1,479	—	21,540	1,447	12,194	13,248	667	11,466
1872-73	5,692	1,666	3,073	19,232	1,588	12,606	13,608	720	11,769
1873-74	5,727	1,768	2,949	19,042	1,738	12,561	15,164	713	13,292
1874-75	5,944	1,945	2,901	19,827	1,707	11,864	14,341	761	12,351
1875-76	6,398	2,100	2,766	14,289 ^b	1,520	9,543	13,911	813	12,657
1876-77	6,414	2,025	2,934	18,614	1,126	8,672	15,645	802	13,180
1877-78	6,470	2,078	3,318	22,574	1,420	11,816	15,745	837	13,274
1878-79	6,496	2,208	3,260	22,757	1,379	11,824	14,809	724	12,609
1879-80	6,608	2,101	3,452	21,813	1,681	11,258	15,213	756	12,982
1880-81	6,676	1,756	3,554	18,182	1,729	11,537	15,964	683	13,419
1881-82	6,641	2,190	3,123	18,479	1,932	11,657	16,154	666	13,740
1882-83	6,567	2,139	3,137	19,509	2,578	11,556	16,050	613	13,654
1883-84	6,538	2,027	3,288	22,205	3,038	13,282	15,931	680	13,489
1884-85	6,473	1,959	3,009	24,381	2,089	15,512	13,724	568	10,933
1885-86	6,558	1,846	3,133	24,482	2,147	16,084	14,165	613	12,416
1886-87	6,455	2,068	3,588	24,801	2,840	15,255	14,328	671	12,603
1887-88	6,437	1,920	3,834	25,302	2,816	15,693	14,984	592	12,501
1888-89	6,470	1,995	3,840	25,065	2,665	16,038	14,676	675	12,325
1889-90	6,610	2,304	3,753	25,716	2,816	16,285	14,986	726	12,325
1890-91	6,662	2,542	3,063	25,578	3,052	16,275	16,328	799	13,136
1891-92	6,688	2,241	3,158	25,048	2,521	16,537	16,444	763	13,286
1892-93	6,818	2,165	3,332	25,943	2,702	16,159	17,193	685	13,936
1893-94	6,791	2,183	3,141	25,407	3,074	15,174	17,357	723	13,747
1894-95	6,758	2,104	3,445	25,377	2,700	15,457	17,309	606	14,057
1895-96	6,732	2,072	3,347	25,000	2,723	14,946	16,795	558	13,960
1896-97	6,257	2,304	2,929	19,910	2,415	12,047	15,709	736	12,929
1897-98	6,654	2,152	3,118	24,313	2,220	15,745	16,526	666	13,544
1898-99	6,787	2,471	3,209	24,690	2,645	15,307	17,041	669	13,961
1899-00	5,405	2,060	2,827	19,598	2,050	13,099	14,925	713	12,132

SOURCE: See appendix for all data sources.

^aFoodgrains include *only* wheat, rice, jowar, and bajra.

^bFoodgrains include *all* foodgrains and pulses.

^cThis series is inconsistent due to the inclusion of fallows (current) in some years.

^dThe districts of Dharwar, Satara, Nasik, and Ranagiri are missing from the data for 1875-76.

1
FOODGRAINS (ALL FIGURES IN THOUSANDS OF ACRES)

Madras Presidency			Punjab			Totals ^e		
All Crops	Cotton	Food-grains	All Crops	Cotton	Food-grains	All Crops	Cotton	Food-grains
(17,302) ^e	1,467		18,377	802	15,933 ^b			
(16,878)	1,617		17,928	695	15,575			
(17,254)	1,708		19,772	790	17,236			
(17,001)	1,749		19,725	624	17,329			
24,590	1,604	20,611 ^b	19,969	699	17,454	84,671	6,716	65,181
24,972	1,645	20,981	20,571	652	15,661	80,141 ^d	6,730	61,608
24,265	926	20,264	21,626	669	18,113	86,564	5,548	63,163
19,593	968	16,772	19,021	657	16,622	83,403	5,960	61,802
21,014	1,030	18,020	20,448	785	17,963	85,524	6,126	63,676
21,458	1,152	18,055	21,414	777	18,930	86,506	6,467	64,677
21,863	1,281	18,152	21,998	786	19,930	84,683	6,235	65,891
21,887	1,407	17,823	22,102	890	19,172	85,263	7,085	65,479
22,969	1,457	18,623	23,390	861	20,078	88,485	7,648	78,248
23,513	1,526	18,952	22,497	803	19,004	90,684	8,074	68,015
22,716	1,321	18,591	23,868	850	20,322	91,162	6,787	68,367
24,083	1,358	19,758	22,613	1,036	19,334	91,901	6,999	70,725
24,659	1,487	19,820	20,318	1,093	17,043	90,561	8,159	68,309
25,185	1,464	20,284	22,791	644	19,523	94,699	7,436	71,835
25,334	1,508	20,233	23,470	763	19,850	95,015	7,606	72,286
26,119	1,641	20,058	21,231	979	17,984	94,662	8,466	70,405
26,071	1,738	20,535	27,945	847	20,020	102,584	8,872	73,029
24,308	2,081	19,703	26,122	500	18,304	98,610	8,106	70,988
26,435	1,326	21,388	26,733	548	23,023	103,122	7,426	77,838
27,410	1,724	21,559	25,646	890	21,846	102,611	8,594	75,467
27,029	1,519	21,474	24,480	1,030	20,580	100,953	7,959	75,013
27,856	1,624	21,874	19,054 ^f	1,054	15,579	95,437	8,031	69,706
26,616	1,394	21,226	18,516	994	14,893	87,008	7,843	64,026
27,212	1,509	21,865	25,810	993	21,491	100,515	7,540	75,763
27,786	1,322	22,667	20,739	701	16,522	97,043	7,807	71,666
25,792	1,383	20,695	14,994	735	11,075	80,714	6,938	59,828

^eFigures in parentheses are *total assessed cultivation*. The remaining figures are for *total areas planted with crops*.

^fPunjab figures do not reflect acreage planted but rather 'the area of each harvest reduced to a conventional standard of normal productiveness.'

^gThe totals series begin in 1874-75 because of the unavailability of Madras figures for total cultivated area and foodgrains earlier. It should be remembered that all of the difficulties of the individual series are summed here.

list' historians has been essentially one of optimism—increased markets enabled farmers to specialize to some extent and to receive higher prices for their goods. It is a position closely paralleled by simple theoretic arguments about the benefits of lowered transport costs.

Nationalists have argued that production of nonfood crops for newly opened markets occurred at the expense of food production. They implicitly assume that food was not in excess supply before the period, and that shifts of land from food to nonfood crops would therefore have reduced grain production below needs, especially when coupled with exports of foodgrains. Nationalist writers have found other aspects of the growing market economy besides increased production of nonfood crops disturbing—including the activities of moneylenders and traders, price fluctuations, and possible effects on income distribution. While all of these issues merit careful study, this paper will concentrate on changes in cropping patterns.

EVIDENCE FROM THE RECORDS

Before speculating on the causes or effects of any change in cropping patterns, it will be useful to have the data before us. Table 1 presents compilations of statistics on acreage planted with foodgrains, acreage planted with cotton, and total acreage cultivated. The figures are for Berar, Bombay Presidency, Central Provinces, Madras Presidency, Punjab, and a total for all five areas. The sources for the figures and a discussion of the problems associated with these series are summarized in the appendix placed at the end of this paper.

By looking at a late nineteenth-century non-famine year, we can note increases in total cultivation for all the areas covered. Further, the figures on foodgrain cultivation show that in all five of the administrative units, foodgrain cultivation increased or remained constant. Column 12 of Table 2 indicates that the percentage of cultivated area planted with foodgrains remained almost constant through the period 1874-75/1899-1900 for the total of the five areas.

Figures in Table 2 show cotton cultivation in Berar increased to a high of 38.1 per cent; in Bombay, cotton cultivation was regularly above ten per cent of total cultivation. The figures for Madras Presidency show cotton cultivation steady between five and six per cent of cultivation. Central Provinces and Punjab, for the period 1867-68 through 1899-1900, display no increases in cotton cultivation as a percentage of all cultivation and may show very small declines. When cotton cultivation and total cultivation for all five provinces and presidencies are summed, the percentage of cotton cultivation ranges from a low of 6.4 per cent to a high of nine per cent in 1886-87 and 1896-97. The series exhibits a very slight, irregular, upward trend.

Figures on foodgrain cultivation in Table 2 do not indicate that any large drop in the share of foodgrains in total cultivation occurred before the end

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGES OF ALL CULTIVATED LAND PLANTED WITH
COTTON AND FOODGRAINS

Year	Berar		Bombay Pres.		Central Prov.		Madras Pres.		Punjab		Total	
	Cotton	Fd-grs.	Cotton	Fd-grs.	Cotton	Fd-grs.	Cotton	Fd-grs.	Cotton	Fd-grs.	Cotton	Fd-grs.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1870-71	28.1	51.8	8.7	58.0	3.8	85.0	(8.5)		4.4	86.7		
1871-72	27.7		6.7	57.6	5.0	86.5	(9.3)		3.9	86.9		
1872-73	29.3	54.0	8.3	65.5	5.2	86.4	(9.9)		4.0	87.2		
1873-74	30.8	51.5	9.1	66.0	4.7	87.6	(10.3)		3.2	87.9		
1874-75	32.7	48.8	8.6	59.8	5.3	86.1	6.5	83.8	3.5	87.4	7.9	77.0
1875-76	32.8	43.2	10.6	66.8	5.8	91.0	6.6	84.0	3.2	76.1	8.4	76.9
1876-77	31.6	45.7	6.0	46.6	5.1	84.2	4.0	83.5	3.1	83.8	6.4	73.0
1877-78	32.1	51.3	6.3	52.3	5.3	84.3	4.9	85.6	3.5	87.4	7.1	74.1
1878-79	34.0	50.2	6.1	52.0	4.9	85.1	4.9	85.8	3.8	87.8	7.1	74.5
1879-80	31.8	52.2	7.7	51.8	5.0	85.3	5.4	84.1	3.6	88.4	7.5	74.8
1880-81	26.3	53.2	9.5	63.5	4.3	84.1	5.9	83.0	3.6	87.4	7.4	77.8
1881-82	33.0	54.0	10.5	63.1	4.1	84.8	6.4	81.4	4.0	86.7	8.3	76.8
1882-83	32.6	47.8	13.2	59.2	3.8	85.1	6.3	81.1	3.7	85.8	8.6	77.1
1883-84	31.0	50.3	13.7	59.8	4.4	87.6	6.5	80.6	3.6	84.5	8.9	75.0
1884-85	30.3	46.5	8.6	47.2	4.1	80.0	5.8	81.8	3.6	85.1	7.4	75.0
1885-86	28.1	47.8	8.8	65.7	4.3	87.7	5.6	82.0	4.6	85.5	7.5	77.0
1886-87	32.0	55.6	11.5	61.5	4.7	88.0	6.0	80.4	5.4	83.9	9.0	75.4
1887-88	29.8	59.6	11.1	62.0	4.0	83.4	5.8	80.5	2.8	85.7	7.9	75.9
1888-89	30.8	59.4	10.6	64.0	4.6	84.0	6.0	79.9	3.8	84.6	8.0	76.1
1889-90	34.9	56.8	11.0	63.3	4.8	82.0	6.3	78.8	4.6	84.7	8.9	74.4
1890-91	38.1	46.2	11.9	63.6	4.9	80.5	6.7	78.8	3.0	71.6	8.6	71.2
1891-92	33.5	47.2	10.1	66.0	4.6	80.8	8.6	81.1	1.9	70.0	8.2	72.0
1892-93	31.8	48.9	10.4	62.3	4.0	81.1	5.0	80.9	2.0	86.1	7.2	75.5
1893-94	32.1	46.3	12.1	59.7	4.2	79.2	6.3	78.7	3.5	85.2	8.4	73.5
1894-95	31.1	51.0	10.6	60.9	3.5	81.2	5.6	79.4	4.2	84.1	7.9	74.3
1895-96	30.8	49.7	10.9	59.8	3.3	83.1	5.8	78.5	5.5	81.8	8.4	73.0
1896-97	36.8	46.8	12.1	60.5	4.7	82.3	5.2	79.7	5.4	80.4	9.0	73.6
1897-98	32.3	46.9	9.1	64.8	4.0	82.0	5.5	80.4	3.8	83.3	7.5	75.4
1898-99	36.4	47.3	10.7	62.0	3.9	81.9	4.8	81.6	3.4	79.7	8.0	73.8
1899-00	30.1	52.3	10.5	66.8	4.7	81.2	5.4	80.2	4.9	73.9	8.6	74.1

SOURCE: Table 1.

of the nineteenth century. Berar shows no trend; Punjab has a few years when the percentage of land planted with foodgrains drops to near 70, but data for most years indicate foodgrains occupied over 80 per cent of cultivated land. Data for Bombay Presidency display no downward trend for the period as a whole. Because of the irregular inclusions of fallows and

changes in coverage, the Bombay figures must be treated with extra scepticism. In both Madras Presidency and Central Provinces, the share of foodgrains in total cultivation appears to have declined by four or five per cent over the time spans considered. For Madras Presidency, the percentage of land planted with foodgrains declined from 83 to 84 per cent of the total to about 80 per cent; for Central Provinces, the decline is from 85 to 86 per cent to 81 to 82 per cent.

The data in Table 2 do not cover all of India. Besides native states, which were under the indirect rule of the British, the major omissions are the North-western Provinces and Oudh, and Bengal Presidency. Both of these units are omitted because they did not collect and publish the necessary agricultural statistics until late in the period under consideration. These omissions, which are made throughout this study, may not be important as long as the focus is on cotton as the major nonfood crop that could be affected by the provision of rail transport. The necessary omissions do limit the force of conclusions. However, *for the areas where suitable data exist, those data demonstrate increase in the absolute area planted with foodgrains and small declines, in some areas, in the percentage of cultivated land planted with foodgrains.* Railroads did not cause or permit any decrease in foodgrain cultivation before 1900.

OTHER MEASURES OF FOODGRAIN PRODUCTION

However, this conclusion does not permit us to dismiss the idea that foodgrain acreage may have declined significantly in relation to population. If population increased over the period under study, per capita production could fall, even when total acreage planted with foodgrains increased. Table 3 provides information on foodgrain acreage per capita. The results, while interesting, are less than conclusive—due in part to problems with the underlying data. Berar and Central Provinces are the only regions with consistent data for the entire period. In these two regions, foodgrain acreage per capita did decline. For Madras Presidency, data are not available for the initial Census date, but the remaining three observations indicate little if any change in foodgrain acreage per capita. Because of changes in the coverage of agricultural statistics, the first two figures in the series for Bombay Presidency are understated. This means that part of the increase in acreage per capita is illusory, but it is not possible to ascertain if the entire increase is due to the fault in the series.⁴

⁴See Michelle Burge McAlpin, 'The Impact of Railroads on Agriculture in India, 1860-1900: A Case Study of Cotton Cultivation,' unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1973 for further discussion of the data problems. We observe here, in microcosm, the problem Morris alluded to in his discussion of quantitative materials for Indian history. See his 'Quantitative Resources for the Study of Indian History' in R. Lorwin and Jacob M. Price (eds.), *The Dimensions of the Past*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1972. We cannot be sure, until the underlying data series has been cleaned (a project on which I am currently engaged), if foodgrain acreage per capita rose, fell, or remained constant.

TABLE 3
FOODGRAIN CULTIVATION PER CAPITA

Area	Population	Area of foodgrains ^a (acres)	Foodgrains per capita (acres)	Index of foodgrains per capita
<i>Berar</i>				
1867	2,232,000	2,819,000	1.26	100
1881	2,673,000	3,305,000	1.24	98
1891	2,897,000	3,429,000	1.18	94
1901	2,754,000	3,233,000	1.17	93
<i>Bombay Presidency</i>				
1872	14,036,000	12,173,000 ^b	0.87	100
1881	13,290,000	11,566,000	0.87	100
1891	15,164,000	16,259,000	1.07	123
1901	14,543,000	14,531,000	1.00	115
<i>Central Provinces</i>				
1872	9,251,000	11,681,000	1.26	100
1881	11,549,000	13,274,000	1.15	91
1891	12,954,000	13,007,000	1.00	79
1901	11,873,000	13,248,000	1.12	89
<i>Madras Presidency</i>				
1872	31,221,000	—	—	—
1881	30,827,000	18,135,000	0.59	100
1891	35,630,000	20,383,000	0.57	97
1901	38,199,000	22,868,000	0.60	102
<i>Punjab</i>				
1868	17,611,000	15,795,000	0.90	100
1881	17,274,000	19,074,000	1.10	122
1891	19,099,000	19,836,000 ^c	1.04	116
1901	20,330,000	15,804,000	0.78	87

SOURCE: Population data from the appropriate *Census of India* volumes. All other data from Table 1.

^aIn general, five year averages centred on the census years are given. The first figure for Berar is an average of 1869-70, 1870-71, 1872-73, and 1873-74. The first figure for Punjab is an average of 1867-68, 1868-69, 1869-70, 1870-71, and 1871-72.

^bFigures for Bombay Presidency suffer from incomparability due to the increase in coverage which occurred between 1882 and 1884. Previously, *inamdari* lands had not been included in the agricultural statistics. Persons living on *inamdari* lands had been counted in the census. Per capita figures for 1872 and 1881 understate actual foodgrain acreage per capita. There is no basis for revising the earlier figures upwards, and to revise the later ones would serve no purpose since our interest lies in the actual availability of foodgrains per capita at the end of the period.

^cSee note f to Table 1.

For Punjab, the last figure given is biased⁵ downwards because the area *planted* with foodgrains is not given in the Punjab agricultural statistics for a series of years beginning in the 1890s. Instead, the area *harvested* reduced to a 'conventional standard of normal productiveness' is given. For the series of bad crop years which ended the nineteenth century, the difference between the two figures could be large. Since the issue at hand is the impact of railroads on the decisions of farmers to plant food or nonfood crops, the acreage *planted* is the figure which should be examined.

Even if unambiguous results about the direction of change in foodgrain acreage planted per capita could be obtained from the data at hand, they would not necessarily indicate that per capita production had changed in the same direction. If yields per acre changed over the period, these changes might have offset (or amplified) fluctuations in foodgrain acreage per capita. Data which would enable us to determine the trend of yields per acre do not appear to exist,⁶ although speculation on the possible course of yields has been plentiful. Morris suggested that output per acre rose during the nineteenth century.⁶ Bipan Chandra and Tapan Raychaudhuri have argued that yields are likely, at best, to have been constant during the nineteenth century.⁷ Blyn's work indicated that yields per acre for foodgrains were declining from 1890 through 1946 and Blyn's figures have recently been challenged by Heston.⁸ As Heston points out, no *a priori* conclusions about the trend of yields seems justified.⁹

⁵Yield figures on a fairly disaggregate basis are available for the period after the early 1890s. Even these figures are the subject of considerable debate. See Alan Heston, 'Official Yields Per Acre in India, 1886-1947: Some Questions of Interpretation,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 1973, X, pp. 303-32. The 'standard' yield figures almost certainly overstate the 'average' yield figures, but the revenue figures, which are intended to adjust the standard figures for the condition of the season, may be biased either up or down. For earlier dates, there is an almost total lack of statistics. The largest body of yield figures with which I am acquainted are presented in the 1880 Report of the Indian Famine Commission. Figures in different parts of the report are contradictory and non-comparable with later data. The coverage of the Famine Commission Report is limited to only a few foodgrains or to acreage of all foodgrains. Even these figures are province averages rather than district figures.

⁶Morris, n. 1, p. 612

⁷Chandra, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-51; Tapan Raychaudhuri, 'A Re-interpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History?' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, V, 1958, pp. 91-93.

⁸George Blyn, *Agricultural Trends in India 1891-1947: Output, Availability, and Productivity*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia; Heston, *op. cit.*, pp. 303-32.

⁹Heston, *op. cit.*, p. 328. Consider just the hypothesis that the best land in a region will be cultivated first, and that additions to cultivation will have declining marginal productivity. It is immediately possible to point out two cases in India where additions to cultivation were not of this character. First, land in Berar which had been out of cultivation when the British took over from the Nizam in 1858 had been abandoned because of the actions of tax farmers. This land was rapidly brought back into cultivation during the first decade of British rule. It was not bad land—in fact for growing cotton and jowar it is very good land. As a second

Because of the difficulties of obtaining any usable yield data for the 1860s or 1870s and the inconclusiveness of speculation about what the trend of yields may have been, I will not attempt to determine the course of yields between 1860 and 1900. Instead, an attempt has been made to estimate the foodgrain *production* (acreage times yield) per capita at the end of the century. The figures are presented in Table 4. The first column gives the foodgrain acreage per capita. For Berar and Bombay Presidency this figure includes only the four major foodgrains (wheat, rice, *jowar*, and *bajra*) and so understates the total foodgrain acreage per capita. The second column gives a weighted yield per acre where the weights are the percentage of total foodgrain acreage planted with each foodgrain. Yield figures for this calculation were taken from Blyn's study.

The third column contains weighted yield figures prepared from data in *Agricultural Statistics of British India* (ASBI). The figures from ASBI purport to be average yields, but those for Bombay Presidency and Berar are clearly standard yields instead. For the other three areas, the close correspondence between the weighted yield figures from Blyn and those prepared using ASBI data lead me to conclude that the figures in ASBI must be 'revenue' yields—i.e. standard yield adjusted for the condition of the season. The final three columns contain per capita foodgrain production calculated on (i) Blyn's figures, (ii) ASBI figures, and (iii) ASBI adjusted by Heston's 'condition factor'.

No precise agreement exists on what figures should be used for consumption requirements per person. The range of estimates, for the whole population, extends from 365 pounds per year to 460 pounds.¹⁰ If the lower figure is accepted, Figure 4 indicates that only Bombay Presidency, and then only over a series of famine years, produced less than required for consumption.¹¹ If we use the higher figure, both Bombay and Madras Presidency might have

example, we could point to the Punjab Canal Colonies where irrigation permitted cultivation of land which had previously been uncultivated. This land, with the application of necessary water control techniques, was also good.

¹⁰R.P. Sinha, *Food in India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1961, pp. 17-19; K. Mukerji, *Agriculture, Famine, and Rehabilitation in South Asia*, Ranaji Ray, Santiniketan, 1965, p. 157.

¹¹Two further adjustments might be made in some of the figures for Table 4. First, for both Berar and Bombay, the acreage planted with all foodgrains and pulses might be substituted for the acreage planted with rice, wheat, jowar, and bajra. For Berar this adjustment is moot since the area already appears to have been producing well above consumption requirements. For Bombay, such an adjustment would raise the foodgrain acreage per capita figure from 1.00 to 1.27. If we do not adjust the weights on the weighted yield calculations, this would result in production per capita, adjusted by Heston's 'condition factor' of 460 to 500 pounds. There is a second, offsetting adjustment which also needs to be made. Some grain had to be used for seed and some was lost to waste between the time of harvest and the time of consumption. The size of the adjustment is not clear—the 1880 Report of the Indian Famine Commission suggested deducting about 10 per cent from gross yields to allow for seed and wastage.

been food deficient, especially if requirements for grain are expanded to include some percentage for seed and wastage after harvest. However, it is by no means clear that these five regions, taken together, could not feed themselves at the end of the nineteenth century.

TABLE 4
FOODGRAIN PRODUCTION PER CAPITA
(at the End of the Nineteenth Century)

Area	Foodgrain Acreage per capita (in acres)	Weighted Yield per acre		Production per capita ^a		Heston ^f
		Blyn ^c	ASBI ^d	Blyn	ASBI	
		(in pounds)		(in pounds)		
Berar	1.17 acres	643	813	752	984	580 640
Bombay Presidency	1.00	485	617	485	617	364 401
Central Provinces	1.12	664	650	744	728	
Madras Presidency	.60	768	785	461	471	
Punjab	.78	634	651	495	508	

SOURCE: See text and notes.

^aFigures are from Table 3.

^bWeighted yield figures are computed from $W = \sum y_i w_i$ where y_i is the yield of the i th foodgrains and w_i is the proportion of all foodgrain acreage cropped with the i th foodgrain. Yield figures were available for, at most only four major foodgrains (wheat, rice, jowar, and bajra). When some of these figures were missing or then the total foodgrain acreage included all foodgrains and pulses (as it does for Central Provinces, Madras Presidency, and Punjab), the percentages proportions cultivated with crops for which yield figures were available were adjusted to sum to one. For instance, in Berar jowar occupied 0.86 of acreage planted with the four major foodgrains, wheat occupied .085, and no other yield figures were available. The respective proportions were increased to 0.911 and 0.089 to sum to 1. For Central Provinces, all foodgrains and pulses were included in figures for Table 3, but yield figures were obtainable for rice, wheat and jowar only. These three crops accounted for only 65 per cent of the total foodgrain area. In order to avoid overstating yield by inflating the proportions of all three crops (rice yields being very high compared to the others) it was assumed that the remaining 35 per cent of the crops yielded like jowar. Weights were determined using acreage data from *Agricultural Statistics of British India* for 1901-2.

^cYield figures for computation are from Blyn, for the year 1902.

^dYield figures for computation are from ASBI for 1901-2 where possible, otherwise, 1896-97.

^eProduction per capita equals (foodgrain acreage per capita) times (weighted yield per acre).

^fFigures are adjusted by Heston's 'condition factor' for cereals, 0.59 for 1893-1906 (first figure) and 0.65 for 1896-97 (second figure) (Heston 1973: 322). I present both figures because the conclusion that Bombay Presidency had a shortfall of production during the period around 1900 is scarcely surprising. What is surprising is that no other area appears to have had such a shortfall.

CHANGES OTHER THAN PRODUCTION

In the preceding two sections of the paper, we have seen that it is impossible to conclude that any effects of railroads on cultivation patterns in India had, by the end of the nineteenth century, reduced per capita foodgrain production, in the regions for which data are available, below consumption requirements. However, we expect that a major transport improvement will affect not only production decisions, but also selling decisions and trading patterns. R. C. Dutt argued that railroads were a major contributor to food shortages in India by permitting increased exports of foodgrains.¹² It is tempting to counter this statement by arguing that grain exported from India must have been in excess of consumption requirements or prices in India would have risen enough to halt exports. However, it is only true that exports will always be in excess of consumption requirements (in a poor economy) if each family owns an equal share of the harvest and together they own all of the harvest. When shares in the harvest are very unevenly distributed due either to landholding patterns or to the share owned by the government, exports may occur which do not represent an absolute surplus over consumption requirements. They occur because the owners of the harvest can realize higher prices by selling grain to exporters than the sections of the community which have little claim on the harvest can afford to pay. That is, the poorer sections of the community cannot afford to consume all of the harvest (even though they may be hungry) at prices which can be obtained for grain for export. Dutt argued that food shortages came about because of the need to sell grain in order to pay government its share of the harvest in cash. The purchasers of this grain, according to Dutt's view, then exported the grain.¹³ Implicitly, Dutt argues that in the absence of railroads the cost of transport to ports would have effectively prohibited most exports. While his argument is surely qualitatively correct, it is necessary to examine the size of exports relative to the size of the harvest before concluding that it has any quantitative significance.

The Famine Commission Report of 1880 concluded that a normal harvest in British India, including Mysore, consisted of 51,530,000 tons of grain. The short report on the famine of 1896-97 concluded that acreage had increased by eight per cent since the earlier estimate, and that the normal harvest was then 56 million tons of grain.¹⁴ Using the first figure for all of the 1880s and the latter figure for 1891 through 1896, exports of wheat and rice varied between 3.8 and 5.3 per cent of the harvest in the 1880s and 3.7 and

¹²Dutt, *op. cit.*, pp. 348-50.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Government of India, Department of Revenue and Agriculture (Famine), *Narrative of Famine in India in 1896-97* by T.W. Holderness, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1897, p. 13.

6.4 per cent in the 1890s.¹⁵ I regard these figures as upper bounds on the percentage of the harvest exported for two reasons. First, they take no account of grain grown in any of the states except Mysore. Second, the yield figures used by the Famine Commission of 1880 were almost surely too low. The Famine Commission's yield figures for Berar, Bombay Presidency, Central Provinces, Madras Presidency, and Punjab were 369, 470, 511, 627, and 322 pounds, respectively.¹⁶ These figures are considerably lower than the per acre weighted yield figures derived in Table 4. The differences are largest for Berar and Punjab.

Both the omission of crops produced in the native states and the use of low yield figures would tend to overstate the percentage of the foodgrain harvest being exported. This overstatement might be modified somewhat if the exported quantities of grains other than wheat and rice were available. However, exports of 'inferior' grains are unlikely to have been large. Exports were not sufficiently large to alter the conclusion that the areas considered here produced enough food to feed their populations.

CAUSES OF INCREASED CULTIVATION

It has been demonstrated that cultivation in India increased during the second half of the nineteenth century. But was this increase in cultivation due to changes brought about by the railroads? The answer is not obvious. It is necessary to consider two possible alternative explanations. First, it is possible that an increase in agricultural prices in world markets generated sufficient additional profits to cause farmers in the interior of India to increase acreage planted even in the absence of lower costs for transport of agricultural commodities permitted by the development of railroads. During the American Civil War, the rise in the price of cotton was sufficient to call forth considerably increased supplies of cotton from the interior of India even though much of that cotton had to be transported to the ports by bullock. Graph 1 shows the indexes of prices paid in Bombay for cotton and wheat over the period 1860-1900. No steady upward trend is present to account for upward movement of total cultivation in India. Bombay prices are given rather than those of one of India's potential customers to avoid the need to correct for changes in the cost of ocean shipping.

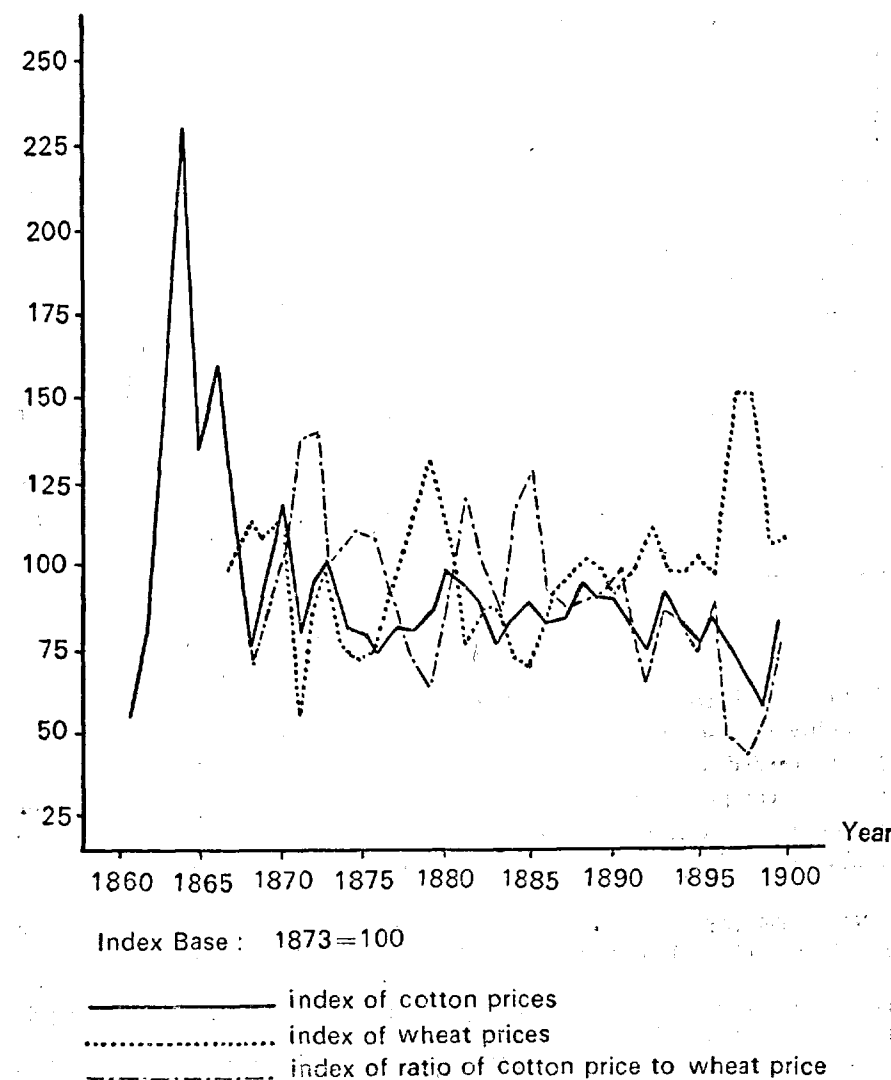
Second, Bipan Chandra has suggested that increases in total cultivation may have come about solely to match increases in population.¹⁷ If this were the case, we would expect total cultivated acres per capita to have remained

¹⁵Data on the volume of grain exported was obtained from Bhatia, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-137.

¹⁶'Weighted yields' may be too kind a term for the Famine Commission's figures. 'Guessed yield' might be more accurate.

¹⁷Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

GRAPH 1
INDICES OF COTTON AND WHEAT PRICES IN BOMBAY CITY



SOURCE: Government of India, Department of Commerce and Industry, *Variations in Indian Price Levels Since 1861 Expressed in Index Numbers* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, 1905).

constant¹⁸ and we would expect increases in cultivation to have been devoted almost entirely to feeding the increased population. As Table 5 indicates, cultivated acreage per capita was not constant over the period. Acreage per capita declined slightly in Berar and Central Provinces—both areas which began the period with very favourable land-man ratios.¹⁹ The inconsistency of the underlying series for Bombay Presidency makes any interpretation difficult, but even if we allow for some overstatement in the final two figures of the series, acreage per capita appears to have been constant. In the other two areas for which data are available, per capita cultivation increased. These figures are done with the whole population as the divisor, and therefore understate the acres cultivated for each member of the agricultural population. If that population increased or decreased as a share of total population, the trends in per capita figures in Table 5 are over or understated compared to the trend in acres per member of the agricultural population. The variety of patterns displayed by these five areas suggests that more complex explanations than the expansion of cultivation to keep pace with population growth are needed. Further, data in Table 2 indicates that the percentage of land planted with foodgrains was stable to slightly falling—not increasing as we would expect if increase in cultivation had taken place in response to the need to feed increased numbers of people. The data, either in their general form of recorded increases in cultivation or in the composition of those increases, will not support Bipan Chandra's hypothesis about the causes of increasing cultivation.²⁰

THE ROLE OF DECREASED TRANSPORT COSTS

I offer the following explanation to account for the main patterns of increases in cultivation between 1860 and 1900. Railroad construction began in 1853 but proceeded rather slowly. By the time of the American Civil War, few lines were yet complete and operable. Under the stimulus of very high prices for cotton, other means of transport were used to carry cotton out of the interior and down to the ports. When prices fell at the end of the civil war, the rail-

¹⁸In the light of the earlier discussion on the difficulty of determining *a priori* what the trend in yields was, I have chosen here to assume that there was no trend. If yields were falling, then acreage increases in response to population growth might have increased total cultivated acres per capita. The data do not show this pattern with any more consistency than they do the pattern I have postulated.

¹⁹See for a discussion of the scarcity of labour during the 1860s in both these regions McAlpin, *op. cit.*, or his forthcoming article 'The Effects of Expansion of Markets on Rural Income Distribution in Nineteenth Century India' to be published in *Explorations in Economic History*.

²⁰We might further note that Harnetty has documented for Berar an increase in total cultivated area between 1861 and 1870 of 79 per cent. This is clearly larger than any decadal rate of natural population increase. See Harnetty, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

TABLE 5
TOTAL CULTIVATION PER CAPITA 1872-1901

Area	Total cultivation (acres)	Index of total cultivation	Acres per capita	Index of acres per capita
<i>Berar</i>				
1867	5,437,000 ^a	100	2.44	100
1881	6,598,000	121	2.47	101
1891	6,650,000	122	2.30	93
1901	6,662,000	123	2.42	98
<i>Bombay Presidency</i>				
1872	20,460,000	100	1.46	100
1881	20,148,000	98	1.52	104
1891	25,470,000	125	1.68	115
1901	22,703,000	111	1.56	107
<i>Central Provinces</i>				
1872	13,531,000	100	1.46	100
1881	15,638,000	116	1.35	92
1891	15,925,000	118	1.23	94
1901	16,409,000	121	1.38	95
<i>Madras Presidency</i>				
1881	21,838,000	100	0.71	100
1891	25,653,000	111	0.72	102
1901	28,770,000	132	0.75	106
<i>Punjab</i>				
1872	18,250,000	100	1.04	100
1881	21,850,000	120	1.26	121
1891	25,100,000	138	1.32	127
1901	22,987,000	126	1.13	109

SOURCE: Table 1.

^aIn general five year averages centred in the census years are given. Exceptions are given in the notes to Table 1.

road lines to some parts of the interior were sufficiently complete that they could provide transport to the coast at prices that meant profits could still be realized in the interior. For this reason, cotton cultivation continued above pre-1862 levels. The increase in incomes generated by the cotton boom and the continuing cultivation of cotton increased the demand for foodgrains at the same time that demand from the rest of the world could be effective in the interior of India. Prices rose for grain crops and acreage under them expanded. The bubble burst (or at least shrank) with the worldwide depres-

sion that began in the 1870s. But by then, railroads and roads had lowered transport costs enough, and thereby had improved the terms of trade enough, that cultivation continued to expand or at least remained constant.

FINAL NOTES

Railroad construction in India does not appear to have been accompanied by a decrease in either the absolute amount of land planted with foodgrains or by more than a small decline in the share of land planted with foodgrains. Nor do exports of foodgrains appear to have been large, relative to production. The simple explanation for the poverty of many Indians at the end of the nineteenth century—that less food was being grown—is not supported. Attention must be directed instead to more complex explanations for starvation in nineteenth-century India. The distribution of income appears more likely than the size of food production to have produced starvation.

APPENDIX

STATISTICS ON CULTIVATION

India had no unified compilation of agricultural statistics until the beginning of *Returns of Agricultural Statistics of British India* in 1884-85. Even this publication did not achieve coverage of all administrative units until 1891-92. Before 1884-85 some administrative units collected and published as part of their annual or administrative reports agricultural statistics for the districts under their jurisdiction. These statistics are far from perfect. Three faults deserve particular note in the context of this paper. (i) The total cultivation series for Bombay cannot be made to consistently exclude or include current fallows. (ii) The coverage of Bombay statistics was expanded in 1882-84 to include *inamdari* lands. These totalled by rough calculation, 3-4 million acres. (iii) Until 1906-7 Punjab figures for acres under different crops were *not* figures on the area sown. Instead, the figures were 'the area of the harvest reduced to a conventional standard of normal productiveness. That is to say, each of the returns of the actual areas from which crops were taken was multiplied by a fraction representing the relation of the crop harvested to a normal crops'.¹ The figures for the total area cropped were not so reduced. As a result, large jumps in percentages of area planted with some crops (as in 1889-90 to 1890-91) may reflect the quality of the harvest rather than the area planted.

SOURCES OF DATA

Berar: Acreages for cotton, foodgrains, and total cultivation were compiled from the following sources. 1869-70, 1870-71: A. C. Lyall, *Gazeteer for the Haidarabad Assigned Districts, Commonly Called Berar*. 1871-72 to 1876-77: *Reports on the Administration of the Hyderabad Assigned Districts*, for the appropriate years. 1877-78 to 1885-86; Hyderabad Assigned Districts, *Report on Settlement and Survey*. 1886-87 to 1889-90: *Statistical Abstracts of British India*. 1890-91, 1891-92: K. L. Datta, *Report on the Enquiry into Rise of Prices in India*. 1892-93 to 1902-03: *Agricultural Statistics of British India*.

Bombay Presidency: Acreages for cotton, foodgrains, and total of all crops were compiled from the following sources. 1860-61 to 1872-73: Annual Report 6092 of the Revenue Department, Bombay Presidency, in Appendix to Abstract of Proceedings in the Revenue Department (Lands, etc.) for

¹Returns of Agricultural Statistics of British India, issue 23, p. 115.

October 1875. 1871-72 to 1875-76 and 1884-85 to 1891-92: *General Report on the Administration of Bombay Presidency*. 1876-77 to 1883-84: *Annual Report on the Revenue Settlement, Bombay Presidency*. 1892-93 to 1902-3: *Agricultural Statistics of British India*.

Central Provinces: Figures for cotton, foodgrains, and total acreage were compiled from the following sources. 1867-68 1891-92: *Annual Report for the Administration of the Central Provinces*. 1892-93 to 1902-03: *Agricultural Statistics of British India*.

Madras Presidency: Figures for total assessed cultivation were compiled from *Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency* for 1857-58 to 1864-65 and 1867-68 to 1873-74. Figures for cotton acreage, 1857-58 to 1873-74, were compiled from *Reports on the Settlement of the Land Revenue of the Provinces under the Madras Presidency*. Figures for cotton, foodgrains, and total cultivation, 1874-75 to 1891-92, were compiled from *Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency*. For 1892-93 to 1899-1900, figures are from *Agricultural Statistics of British India*.

Punjab: Figures for cotton, foodgrains, and total cultivation were compiled from the following sources. 1867-68: *Report on the Revenue Administration of the Punjab and its Dependencies*. 1868-69 to 1891-92: *Report on the Administration of the Punjab and its Dependencies*. 1892-93 to 1899-1900: *Agricultural Statistics of British India*.

Christian Conversion in the Telugu Country, 1860-1900: A Case Study of One Protestant Movement in the Godavery-Krishna Delta

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In 1961 India's population of 439 million included approximately 47 million Muslims, 11 million Christians, and three million Buddhists. Most of these people were either converts or the descendants of converts from Hinduism. While, in the past, some of those who changed their religion did so as isolated individuals, coming over one by one, the majority, accustomed to corporate activity, have probably crossed the religious frontier in groups. In other words, they are, or have been, the product of what has been described as the group or 'mass movement' phenomena. The term mass movement does more than imply large scale conversion and shall be used in this paper to describe (i) a group decision favourable to the new religion and (ii) the consequent preservation of the convert's social integration.¹ In a mass or group movement, the convert tends to move, simultaneously together with his family, relatives, and others belonging to the same social group, into the fold of the new religion. While he might suffer a certain amount of persecution, nevertheless, he preserves at least the basis of his social environment.

There were large scale movements of Hindus into Islam during the medieval period and there is plenty of evidence in T. W. Arnold's *The Preaching of Islam* of the tendency of converts to be drawn from similar jati or sub-caste groups.² We read of Catholic missionaries baptizing all the brahmans of the one village at the one time, and of the mass baptism of pearl fishermen in 1536.³ Writing in the preface to J. W. Pickett's *Christian Mass Movements in India* published in 1933, John R. Mott stated: 'It is estimated that one half of the Roman Catholics in India are descendants of mass movement converts,

¹This is consistent with J.W. Pickett's use of the term in his *Christian Mass Movements in India. A Study with Recommendations*, New York, 1933, pp. 21-4. See also W. Goudie, 'Facts and Features of Mass Movements,' *The East and the West*, Vol. XVI, 1918, p. 310.

²2nd edn, London, 1913, pp. 281-82, 284, 287-88, 290-91.

³A. Meersman, *The Ancient Franciscan Provinces in India 1500-1835*, Bangalore, 1971, pp. 130-31; J. Richter, *A History of Missions in India* (translated by Sydney H. Moore), Edinburgh and London, 1908, p. 51.

and that not less than 80 per cent of the 1,800,000 Protestants are the product of mass movements'.⁴ In 1956, as a result of Dr Ambedkar's leadership and influence in western India, something like 300,000 untouchables renounced Hinduism and went over to Buddhism in one day. Conversions to Buddhism, or rather neo-Buddhism, continue and a recent analysis suggests that these converts are almost all drawn from among the outcaste population and tend to move across in families or larger social units.⁵

The purpose of this paper is to present a case study of one of these mass movements—in this instance, the movement towards Christianity which developed in the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) mission in the Godavery-Krishna districts of South India from about 1860 to 1900.⁶

These two districts, which made up the southern portion of the Northern Circars, included the rich delta area (the main focal point of C.M.S. operations) which lay between the Godavery and Krishna rivers. In 1871, when the first British India-wide census was taken, their combined population was estimated at a little more than three million and, as in most other parts of the Madras Presidency, was overwhelmingly Hindu in composition—the Muslims, for example, representing only 2.2 per cent of the population in the Godavery and 5.4 per cent in the Krishna districts.⁷

Among the Hindus, the brahmins were more numerous and represented a higher proportion than they did in most of the southern districts of the Madras Presidency—5.8 per cent in Godavery and 7.2 per cent in Krishna.⁸ They were dominant in the upper echelons of government service (though certainly not in the lower) and exercised a far greater control over land and property than any other Hindu community. While, according to the Census Report of 1871, only 941 (0.3 per cent) of the traditional agricultural castes in Godavery and 639 (0.2 per cent) in Krishna derived their income from property, 17,685 brahmins (39.3 per cent) in Godavery and 6,290 (12.9 per cent) in Krishna derived their income from the same source.⁹ If the two

⁴Pickett, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁵T.S. Wilkinson and M.M. Thomas (eds), *Ambedkar and the Neo-Buddhist Movement*, Madras, 1972.

⁶This area has been selected not only because it was one of the more important centres of Christian expansion in the Telugu country during the nineteenth century (see Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 233) but also because it has received little attention from academic historians and because much of the source material relating to C.M.S. activities is readily available in London. This account, based primarily upon this manuscript material in the United Kingdom, as well as on baptismal records in India, does not take cognisance of occasional references and memoirs which may possibly exist in Telugu literature and, for this reason, makes no pretence at being a completely exhaustive examination.

⁷*Census of British India* (1871), *Madras*, Vol. 1, p. 74.

⁸*Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 36-41.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 139-51.

districts are taken together then 42 per cent of the male brahman population were occupiers or cultivators of the land or derived their income from the possession of landed property.¹⁰

Non-brahmins, who in 1871 comprised about 71 per cent of the total Hindu population in these two districts (a lower percentage than in many other districts of the Madras Presidency),¹¹ were, as elsewhere, extremely heterogeneous in life-style, status, and occupation. Many of those who belonged to the traditional cultivating castes (such as Kammas and Reddis) were tenants and cultivators, while about 12.7 per cent of the same class in Godavery and 5.9 per cent in Krishna were occupied as agricultural labourers.¹² Apart from those directly connected with agriculture, the non-brahmins included more than 3,000 engaged in government service as well as artisan, service and trading castes varying widely in numbers and social status. Their occupations sometimes overlapped with those of untouchables¹³ who, as we shall see, represented nearly one-fifth of the total 'Hindu' population.

Before examining in detail the position of untouchables and analyzing the spread of Christianity in its rural setting we intend to note the foundation of the C.M.S. mission, its location in relation to other Protestant spheres of influence, and also the nature of individualistic high-caste conversions which occurred in the mission's urban centres and which contrast with the group movement phenomena.

The C.M.S. commenced its operations in and around the seaside town of Masulipatam in 1842. The American Lutherans were already in the process of developing their activities north-east in the vicinity of Rajahmundry and, over to the west, in and around the district town of Guntur. The American Baptists were settled in Nellore (about 150 miles south of Masulipatam) but, in subsequent years, extended their work northwards closer to the C.M.S. mission.¹⁴ While the Lutheran, Baptist, and C.M.S. missionaries observed a kind of gentleman's agreement not to work in each other's field, converts, not infrequently crossed and recrossed mission boundaries spreading Christian influence wherever they went. Hence what happened in one mission sometimes affected another.

One of the C.M.S. missionaries' first objectives was to win high-caste converts through the setting up of Anglo-vernacular high schools which they established at Masulipatam (1843), Ellore (1855), and Bezwara (1857). These schools attracted a substantial proportion of brahmins and, by 1880,

¹⁰*Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 134-5, 188-89.

¹¹*Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 37-41.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 148-151.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 148-203.

¹⁴For an account of this mission see J.E. Clough, *Social Christianity in the Orient. The Story of a Man, a Mission and a Movement*, New York, 1914.

had produced 23 high-caste converts—16 brahmans, 6 high-caste non-brahmans, and 1 Muslim.¹⁵

Conversions took place at fairly regular intervals and indeed continued after 1880. The converts came forward singly, in pairs, or sometimes even in groups of three. While, in some cases, two brahmans requested baptism, in a few other instances, the desire to become Christian moved across caste lines—sudra boys influencing and supporting brahmans or vice-versa.¹⁶ News of an intending conversion usually created considerable tumult and agitation, the boy's family and other members of the high-caste community doing everything in their power to dissuade the young man from accepting baptism.¹⁷ Some enquirers disappeared; others drew back, crushed by the thought of the suffering and sacrifice involved. Those who persisted and were duly baptized were almost invariably treated as outcastes. Spurned by friends and relatives alike, they became completely dependent on the mission. Describing the situation in Masulipatam in 1866 the Reverend A. H. Arden pointed out:

At first they [the converts] have to be protected by police, and therefore must have some *refuge*. Afterwards—no relation will give them a *pie*—they must either starve, or be provided for as at present. Could they be left to die of starvation! in *time* no doubt the Xtian community would support them, but it cannot at present.¹⁸

Apparently only on very rare occasions did high-caste converts ever re-establish any kind of contact with their families. When this happened, as in the case of the Reverend H. Bushanam (a non-brahman convert baptized in 1852) he succeeded in winning over his mother and uncle to the Christian faith.¹⁹ But, generally speaking, high-caste converts were effectively isolated, and Hindu society, having ejected the affected member, sealed itself against the possibility of further contamination.

¹⁵C.M.S. archives. J. Sharp, Telugu Mission Report for 1867, Annual Letter (A.L.), January 1869; *Madras Church Missionary Record (M.C.M.R.)*, Vol. XVI, 1849, p. 108; *C.M.S. Ann. Repts.*, 1844, p. 252; 1891, p. 145; E.F. Gledstone, *The C.M.S. Telugu Mission*, Mysore (N.D.), p. 48; *Church Missionary Gleaner*, Vol. VII, July 1880, p. 76.

¹⁶Gledstone, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 48. See also J. Noble, *A Memoir of the Rev. Robert Turlington Noble Missionary to the Telugu People of India*, London, 1867 for a further account of developments and attitudes among brahmans and others in Noble's school.

¹⁷C.M.S. Noble to C.M.S. November 1847; Padfield to Fenn, 14 December 1872, 11 December 1873; Sharp to C.M.S., 8 October 1877; *M.C.M.R.*, Vol. XV, 1848, p. 31; 1887, pp. 154-55.

¹⁸C.M.S. Arden to Venn, 5 February 1866.

¹⁹C.M.S. Sharp to C.M.S., 22 April 1862. See also M. Ratnam to C.M.S., 16 January 1863.

Alongside attempts to convert the higher castes through their Anglo-vernacular schools, the missionaries carried out operations in rural areas. This work brought them into close contact, not only with the caste people, but also with untouchables and, as the latter were eventually converted to Christianity in large numbers, it is important to say something about their condition, status, and function in rural society before attempting to assess the nature of their response to the Christian faith.

If, during this period, untouchables constituted roughly ten per cent of the population of the Madras Presidency as a whole, their distribution was uneven, and they made up about 20 per cent of the population in the Godavery-Krishna districts including all the country under C.M.S. control.²⁰ There they lived separately in their own hamlets some distance from the main caste villages and, as in other parts of India, were saddled with various forms of discrimination.²¹ They were debarred from entry into Hindu temples. They were not permitted to approach, let alone draw water from the caste wells and, in some cases, were forced to employ their own special barbers and washermen.

But though scorned alike as the lowest of the low, and though lumped together in a similar category by their caste neighbours, untouchables in the delta, as well as in other parts of the Telugu-speaking region, were by no means a homogeneous group. In fact, they consisted of two main competing communities, the malas and the madigas—the social separation between them being almost as great as the gulf dividing untouchables as a whole from their caste neighbours above. The malas, who claimed superior status and considered themselves a cut above the madigas,²² were in a clear majority in the Godavery-Krishna districts. They were employed mainly in agriculture and weaving.²³ Some of them were independent cultivators with control over their own land, but the majority, tenant farmers and labourers, were very largely dependent on the goodwill of their caste employers. This dependence was if anything increased during the nineteenth century because weaving, affected by the influx of cheaply produced Manchester cotton goods, declined in importance as an alternative or subsidiary occupation.²⁴ Nevertheless, weaving remained in many cases an important source of remuneration. Some malas continued to devote most of their time to weaving, while others, when

²⁰G. Mackenzie, *A Manual of the Kistna District in the Presidency of Madras*, Madras, 1883, p. 375; H. Morris, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Godavery District in the Presidency of Madras*, London, 1878, p. 331.

²¹J. E. Padfield, *The Hindu at Home being Sketches of Hindu Daily Life*, Madras, 1908, pp. 62, 142; E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. IV, Madras, 1909, pp. 329-30; *M.C.M.R.*, Vol. XVII, 1850, p. 167.

²²Thurston, *op. cit.*, pp. 294, 330; *Church Missionary Intelligencer (C.M.I.)*, Vol. XVII, December 1892, pp. 905-6; *M.C.M.R.*, Vol. XLVII, 1830, pp. 169-70.

²³Thurston, *op. cit.*, pp. 350-1; *C.M.I.*, Vol. XVIII, December 1892, p. 900.

²⁴Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 368; C.M.S. Ellington A.L., 21 January 1864.

not fully employed in farming operations, continued to ply at their looms, weaving a type of coarse cloth worn by the lower classes. Some of this work was done for particular caste families within the village but, on other occasions and at certain times of the year, the men carried their cotton goods to sell in other districts further west.²⁵

The madigas, who lived in hamlets, quite separate from the malas, were leather-workers. Their main duty was the curing and tanning of hides and the manufacture of leather articles, especially sandals, trappings for bullocks, and large well-buckets used for irrigation.²⁶ In spite of their inferior social status, they were probably more prosperous and independent than the malas. Muslims apart, they were the only leather-workers in the Telugu country.²⁷ Moreover, leather work was a more stable occupation than weaving, it being unaffected by competition from overseas.²⁸ As well as making leather goods for local consumption or for sale in more distant parts of the country, the madigas, like the malas, were also employed as labourers in cultivation.

In addition to these primary tasks, malas and madigas alike performed many other subsidiary services²⁹ which, though regarded as low and polluting, were, nevertheless, essential for the smooth functioning of the village community. The malas acted as the village grave diggers. They also removed and burnt the bodies of brahmans and other caste people. Malas and madigas were also employed as porters, sweepers, and scavengers—removing the skin and eating the carcass of village cattle. Both communities also played a part in ritual activity. The madigas, for example, were required to make and beat the drums in honour of the village deities. On special occasions they also performed animal sacrifice.

The caste people were clearly dependent in all these respects on the contribution and service of untouchables. Untouchables in turn were, to a varying extent, dependent on their caste neighbours for employment and different types of remuneration. But their position was made still less secure because, as we have seen, both sections of the untouchable population (the malas and madigas) tended to pursue many of the same subsidiary occupations and hence were competing with each other. Economic rivalry intensified communal conflict. Ill-feeling, disputes, claims and counter claims in relation to privilege and status sometimes erupted with angry violence³⁰ and left lasting wounds which even conversion to Christianity could not always heal.

²⁵Thurston, *op. cit.*, p. 350; *C.M.I.*, Vol. XVII, December 1892, p. 900.

²⁶Thurston, *op. cit.*, p. 309; *C.M.I.*, Vol. XVII, December 1892, p. 906.

²⁷*C.M.I.*, Vol. XVII, December 1892, p. 906.

²⁸Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 368; Thurston, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

²⁹Thurston, *op. cit.*, pp. 308, 313, 349-50; *C.M.I.*, Vol. XVII, December 1892, p. 906; *M.C.M.R.*, Vol. XVII, 1850, p. 167.

³⁰Thurston, *op. cit.*, pp. 295, 332. For an account of more recent disputes see N. Subba Reddy, 'Community-Conflict among the Depressed Castes of Andhra,' *Man in India*, Vol. XXX, No. 4, Oct.-Dec. 1950, pp. 1-12.

When the missionaries began preaching in rural areas they met with a mixed reception. Some of the caste people were curious and even interested—others were clearly hostile. According to the Reverend Sharkey, the malas invariably listened to the Gospel 'with considerable attention'.³¹ A few of them joined Mrs. Sharkey's girls' school after it was opened in Masulipatam in 1847.³² Others, including a few adults, placed themselves under instruction and were baptized in neighbouring villages in the early 1850s.³³ It was not until 1859, however, that contact with an influential and strong-minded village headman actually laid the foundations of a movement which gained increasing momentum among the malas during the 1860s and after.

Early in 1859 the Reverend T. Y. Darling, who was stationed at Bezvara and who had spent many years in what appeared to be fruitless preaching, was sought out and confronted by a party of seven men.³⁴ They were led by a man called Pogolu Venkayya, were malas, and had come from the village of Raghapuram 28 miles further west. Venkayya, a middle-aged village headman, said he was seeking the Christian guru who he believed could tell them more about 'the true God the Saviour'. His interest in Christianity had been aroused partly through indirect contact with Christians living in Guntur and, when attending a festival on the banks of the Krishna river that morning in search of a Christian teacher, he and his friends had been directed to Darling's house. In the course of a long conversation with Darling six of the seven men affirmed their belief in Jesus and sometime later, Venkayya, together with 15 others (seven men, one woman, and seven children) were baptized at Raghapuram.

This was certainly an unusual event. More malas, including adults, were baptized at the one time and in the one place than ever before in the short history of the mission. This meant that members of the group could more effectively support and encourage each other in the petty persecution and trials that lay ahead. Moreover, Venkayya was a natural leader of men. He had once been a robber 'chief'. He had organized and led the party to Darling's house and, as we have seen, was in a position of authority as village headman. The strength and effectiveness of the group in remaining firm and in witnessing their new-found faith was further assured by the fact that their knowledge and understanding of Christianity appears to have been fairly well advanced. Finally, unlike so many other members of the mala community, they had some independent means of support. All the new Christians were, in Darling's own words, 'well to do and very comfortable in this world's

³¹C.M.S. Sharkey's Journal, 11 January 1850.

³²*M.C.M.R.*, Vol. XIV, 1847, p. 222.

³³*Ibid.*, Vol. XIX, 1852, pp. 43-44.

³⁴For Darling's own account of these and subsequent events see 'P. Venkayya: A Sketch of His Life,' *C.M.I.*, Vol. XVII, December 1892, pp. 898-909. See also C.M.S. Darling to Royston, 4 March 1859 and *C.M.S. Ann. Rep.*, 1859-60, pp. 156-57.

goods';³⁵ and this meant they were in a stronger position to resist pressures and appeals to return to their former ways.

Once having taken root in Raghapuram, Christianity began to spread among the malas in neighbouring villages. In 1862, there were 102 converts—about half of them in Raghapuram and the rest scattered in surrounding villages.³⁶ Eight years later the movement had spread among mala families in 35 villages.³⁷

Meantime, news of Venkayya's baptism was carried still further afield to a village called Polsanapilly in the Ellore district.³⁸ There a number of mala families, spurred on by the example of the Raghapur Christians, placed themselves under instruction and were baptized. During the next ten years Christianity spread from this new centre into 13 neighbouring villages. 'From village to village the cry comes for a teacher and the word of life', wrote the Reverend Padfield in November 1871, 'No sooner is a fresh post occupied than urgent entreaties come from another still farther on until our resources have reached their limits. . . .'³⁹

Christianity was also beginning to spread in mala hamlets further east around Masulipatam. Writing in December 1869, the Reverend Ellington explained:

New congregations consisting of about 30 adults in one village, 20 in another, and so on are springing up; and at nearly every place where I halted, deputations waited upon me from distant villages, entreating us to commence operations in their respective neighbourhoods.⁴⁰

If, by this stage, the movement had gained a momentum, a spontaneity, all of its own, official figures on the number of baptized converts are less spectacular than one might have expected. In 1869, ten years after Venkayya's baptism, there were still only about 1,650 baptized adherents in the C.M.S. mission as a whole. In 1882 there were about 3,500, in 1895, nine thousand, and, in 1905, 22 thousand, for the most part well over half the baptisms in any one year being children.⁴¹ But cold statistics do not necessarily give an accurate picture of the excitement and feeling, of the extent of the movement towards Christianity, or rather, towards whatever Christianity was supposed to represent. The C.M.S. did not have enough well-trained teachers and

³⁵C.M.S. *Ann. Rep.*, 1859-60, pp. 156-57.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 1862-63, p. 157; Gledstone, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 1869-70, p. 182.

³⁸Gledstone, *op. cit.*, pp. 30, 32.

³⁹C.M.S. Padfield, A.L., 30 November 1871.

⁴⁰C.M.S. Ellington, A.L., 3 December 1869.

⁴¹See statistics published in C.M.S. *Ann. Reps.*

preachers to follow up requests for assistance.⁴² Moreover, the missionaries were anxious to avoid the situation of having too many nominal adherents and were reluctant to baptize enquirers without long periods of instruction and preparation—a delay which effectively discouraged large numbers of enquirers who, in some other missions or in other circumstances, may have been baptized.⁴³

What then were some of the main features of the movement? Firstly, while individuals (especially men)⁴⁴ were sometimes converted first, the rest of the immediate family and even the more distant relatives tended to follow. Missionary letters and reports are full of accounts of families renouncing Hinduism, families placing themselves under Christian instruction and families baptized,⁴⁵ while baptismal records clearly confirm the importance of immediate family ties in the conversion process. Missionaries who compiled the register of nearly 900 baptisms in the Ellore district between 1862 and 1880, for example, recorded the more immediate kinship ties.⁴⁶ The baptism of husbands, wives, sons or daughters of other converts is explicitly mentioned. There are also references in missionary reports to the baptism of more distant relatives and, at least in one case, to the conversion of a whole undivided family.

Secondly, almost all these converts tended to maintain connections with the non-Christian members of the same community. Instead of being ostracized, they maintained their position and status within the wider circle. While, as we have seen, brahman and other caste converts were generally forced to break with their families and former caste associates, no such separation took place between Christians of untouchable origin and their former caste fellows. Non-Christian males and Christians of mala origin for example continued to eat, drink, and socialize together and even to intermarry—almost as freely as if conversion had never taken place.⁴⁷

Thirdly, these movements seemed to begin among the more economically

⁴²C.M.S. Ellington, A.L., 3 December 1869, 21 January 1864; Padfield, A.L., 30 November 1871; Alexander, A.L., 10 December 1868; Bushanam, A.L. (received), 3 February 1875.

⁴³C.M.S. Clayton, A.L., 20 January 1875; Bushanam to C.M.S., 16 January 1877, A.L., 27 December 1875; Alexander, A.L., January 1868, 26 December 1876, Report of a Tour taken in the Ellore District, 1875-6, 13 March 1876.

⁴⁴C.M.S. Alexander, Report of a Tour taken in the Ellore District (1875-6), 13 March 1876.

⁴⁵C.M.S. Sharkey to C.M.S., 22 September 1862; Ellington, A.L. 21 January 1864, 2 March 1867; Sharp Telugu Mission Report for 1867; Alexander, A.L., 10 December 1868, Report of a Tour taken the Ellore District (1875-6), 13 March 1876; C.M.S. *Ann. Rep.* 1867-68, p. 152. See also Gledstone, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁴⁶See Baptismal Registers, Diocesan Office (Godavery-Krishna Diocese of the C.S.I.) Vijayawada-2.

⁴⁷M.C.M.R., Vol. XLVII, 1880, pp. 168-69.

independent and to spread to the poorer and more dependent sections of the same community. The more independent the individual or family, the easier it was to take the initiative and to respond to Christian teaching without fear of reprisal. As we have seen, the first Christians at Raghapuram had some independent means of support⁴⁸ and, compared with most other malas, the first converts in and around Polsanapilly—cultivators who tilled their own land with one or two yoke of bullocks—were also in a relatively independent position.⁴⁹ The same point emerges when one considers the origins of Christianity further west across the border in Hyderabad in 1886.⁵⁰

Finally, while the initial response was primarily among malas, Christianity eventually spread across caste lines among the madigas and then (during the 1890s and after) upwards among various castes claiming sudra status.

Madigas in the Ellore district were initially unresponsive. During the 1860s and 70s a few of them, influenced at least in part by contact with madigas from the American mission, requested baptism;⁵¹ but, generally speaking, a madiga movement in that part of the C.M.S. mission simply failed to develop. The reason for this is clearly revealed in an incident which took place in about 1879. When the resident missionary, the Reverend Alexander, proposed sending one of his madiga converts to a boarding school composed of Christians of mala origin all hell broke loose. The parents said they would not allow madiga boys to sit with their mala children in school and that mala converts should not have to fraternize with people whom they regarded as unclean and lower in the social scale. Although Alexander won his point and the boy was admitted, the missionary was severely shaken, and stated in his journal that there could hardly be any doubt that the want of sympathy and welcome on the part of mala Christians and enquirers had kept out the madigas, who had largely joined the American mission where mala converts were few.⁵²

The story in some other parts of the C.M.S. mission was, however, somewhat different and, in some cases, malas and madigas not only overcame their mutual hostility, but actively encouraged each other in the Christian faith. In about 1879 one of the madiga converts from the Lutheran mission settled in a village 20 miles north of the nearest C.M.S. congregation. He married a Hindu wife and she and the mother-in-law were converted to Christianity. In this case the influence extended from the madigas to the malas and C.M.S. missionaries, who visited the village and established a school, baptized malas

⁴⁸*Supra*, p. 68.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 1864-65, p. 157.

⁵⁰C.M.I., Vol. XVII, September 1892, p. 684.

⁵¹C.M.S. Edmonds, A.L., 31 January 1862; Alexander to C.M.S., 14 February, 29 June 1862, A.L., 26 December 1876; Baptismal Register, Ellore (November 1862); Gledstone, *op. cit.*, p. 53; Clough, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-98.

⁵²M.C.M.R., Vol. XLVII, 1880, pp. 168-71

and madigas together.⁵³ In the vicinity of Raghapuram, where madigas and malas were baptized in roughly equal numbers during the last quarter of the century,⁵⁴ Christianity was also promoted across caste lines and in spite of traditional animosity. According to the Reverend Darling, the first accessions from among the madigas could be traced to Venkayya's preaching.⁵⁵ But even in this district some of the old feeling persisted. Some of the Christian malas objected to eating with madigas and Venkayya himself was abused by some of his own people for eating with Christians in a madiga hamlet.⁵⁶ Moreover, Raghapuram baptismal records, if anything, confirm contemporary comment that, as the number of conversions among madigas increased, the number among malas declined.⁵⁷

If, then, these were some of the main features of the movement towards Christianity in the C.M.S. mission, what can be said about the way in which it spread?

According to the Reverend Alexander, 'the more general way for the spread of the movement is through friends and relatives who do their best to bring over those belonging to them in distant places.'⁵⁸ Because untouchable converts, unlike those of high-caste origin, continued within Hindu society, they were able to promote Christianity through continuing contact with friends, relatives, and other members of their community. Changes in the converts' views, attitude, and conduct remained, in a sense, public—something that all could see. In some instances Christians married to non-Christians brought about their conversion,⁵⁹ while family gatherings, wed-

⁵³C.M.S. Ann. Rep., 1886-87, p. 157.

⁵⁴Baptismal Registers (Adults) District of Raghapuram, 1871-88 and Pastorate of Raghapuram, 1884-1905.

⁵⁵C.M.I., Vol. XVII, December 1892, p. 906.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 906.

⁵⁷M.C.M.R., Vol. LI, 1884, p. 231.

⁵⁸C.M.S. Alexander, A.L., 27 November 1872. See also Padfield, A.L., 30 November 1871.

⁵⁹The following story, told by a woman in the village of Injiram and taken down in Telugu by the Rev Razu, in the presence of the woman's husband (whom she subsequently converted to Christianity) not only reveals the extent of family ties among the Christians present, but also illustrates how marriage alliances sometimes led to the conversion of the Hindu partner: 'I was born in this village [Injiram] and all here are relatives of mine, but my mother-in-law lives at Buragalapadu; and I lived there with my husband for some [time] but was accustomed to come and see my father and mother here. Whenever I came they spoke of Jesus Christ and regularly had prayers and my eldest sister used to speak so nicely about the Lord. Whenever I returned to my mother-in-law's village I used to repeat what I had heard and to sing the Christian hymns which I had learned, but people there used to abuse me for this. On one occasion when I was here Razu Garu came and [I] told him that I had a great love for the Lord and wanted to be baptized, but he asked me to wait some little time longer, and spoke to me more about the Lord. Soon afterwards I returned to my mother-in-law's village, and my husband who is sitting here now, when he heard me talk about Christ became very angry and

dings, and even funerals were all occasions which facilitated the spread of Christianity.⁶⁰ The growth of the movement, encouraged by travel to distant places for family reasons, was also encouraged by travel for economic reasons. Malas and madigas travelling long distances in the normal course of business, buying and selling skins or cotton-cloth, influenced others in the more remote parts of the country.⁶¹

The setting up and staffing of elementary village schools, especially in the Masulipatam and Ellore districts, was also an extremely important factor in the spread of Christianity. Indigenous schools, scattered throughout the Godavery-Krishna region, catered mainly for brahmans and a few non-brahman groups including the official class and merchants.⁶² In the 1860s and 70s the malas in particular, deprived of educational opportunities within this traditional system and stirred up by indirect or direct contact with Christian preaching, began to ask the missionaries for schools and especially for 'Christian' instruction.⁶³ The missionaries, finding it increasingly difficult to meet all these requests, established an important teacher training institution in Masulipatam in 1868.⁶⁴ Christian schoolmasters and school-mistresses, drawn from Raghapuram and other villages and trained to an increasing extent in Masulipatam, were then placed in new centres of inquiry throughout the mission. These schools, partly a product of a new sense of inquiry, stimulated further expansion. Baptismal records of the Ellore district show that many young people studying in vernacular schools were baptized in groups of two or more during the period from 1862 to 1880.⁶⁵ 'It is really wonderful to see the ardour of the young to embrace the truth', wrote the Reverend Alexander in 1865, 'In many instances they have been foremost in casting the idols to the moles and to the bats'.⁶⁶ In many parts of the mission children influenced their parents. The missionaries met with a more friendly reception among the adults⁶⁷ while, according to Alexander, the establishment of a new school in the Ellore district was 'always followed by the Adults becoming Inquirers

threatened to cut me to pieces if he heard me talk about Christ again' (I.V. Razu Journal, received C.M.S., 10 March 1879).

⁶⁰C.M.S. Ellington, A.L., 4 March 1867; Alexander, A.L., 27 November 1872; Razu to C.M.S., rec. 10 March 1879; *C.M.S. Ann. Reps.*, 1867-88, p. 153, 1868-69, 1887, p. 157; *C.M.I.*, Vol. XVII, December 1892, p. 900.

⁶¹*C.M.I.*, Vol. XVII, December 1892, p. 900.

⁶²*India Education Commission. Report by the Madras Provincial Committee with Evidence...*, Calcutta, 1884, p. 246 (Padfield A. 4).

⁶³C.M.S. Ellington, A.L., 21 January 1864, 3 December 1869; Darling to Royston, 22 January 1862; Sharp Telegu Mission Report for 1867; Alexander, A.L., 27 November 1872, 30 November 1874; Arden, A.L., December 1872; Padfield, A.L., 30 November 1871.

⁶⁴*Church Missionary Gleaner*, Vol. VIII, September 1881, p. 107.

⁶⁵Baptismal Register.

⁶⁶*C.M.S. Ann. Rep.*, 1866-87, p. 124.

⁶⁷C.M.S. Arden, A.L., December 1872.

and in time their conversion to Christianity'.⁶⁸ The Reverend Ellington writing from Masulipatam in November 1869 made similar comments. 'Schools in this Mission', he wrote, '[had]... frequently led to adults becoming inquirers'.⁶⁹

The movement, spread mainly by example and word of mouth through the networks of family, caste, and economic organization, would probably not have begun, at least in the 1860s, had it not been for the small band of European missionaries. Their preaching and powers of organization, their foresight in training teachers and preachers and in developing an effective system of education were important contributory factors in the survival and continued growth of Christianity. In spite of this, the missionaries had their limitations. No degree of fluency in Telugu could hide the fact, that these men were foreigners in origin and style of life. Their apparent desire to control and dominate, their opposition to Christian-Hindu marriage,⁷⁰ and their rigid insistence on Victorian codes of moral conduct (which a later generation of more 'liberal' missionaries did not always see as a necessary part of the Christian way) not only drove out some of their converts, but probably also tended to counteract more positive aspects of their work.

Furthermore, the missionaries were themselves increasingly dependent on a host of indigenous leaders—on those who fitted in with the official mission organization as well as on families, headmen, and others who acted in a more spontaneous, less structured way. The work done in Masulipatam bore fruit in the districts. Of the 23 high caste converts won by 1880, mainly through Noble's school, four of these became ordained clergy and nine others were employed in mission service.⁷¹ Mala converts also held important positions in the mission. The first three admitted to the ministry were ordained in February 1884.⁷² Malas from Raghapuram and other rural centres staffed village schools all over the mission. Other salaried or voluntary workers went on long tours with the specific object of preaching. Venkayya himself who, in the words of Darling, 'diligently preached the Gospel in villages far and near' was soon rewarded by the baptism of a remarkable man named Budda Séshayya. Together with a third companion, Kama Muttya, they travelled over a wide area, staying with their own people, preaching and singing the Christian message in the form of Telugu sacred songs.⁷³

⁶⁸C.M.S. Alexander, A.L., 16 December 1873.

⁶⁹C.M.S. Ellington, A.L., 30 November 1869.

⁷⁰In the 1890s one of the missionaries in Masulipatam 'excommunicated' some members of his congregation 'because they had married heathen wives or contracted such marriages for their children' (*C.M.S. Ann. Rep.*, 1893, p. 150). For an unflattering assessment of missionary policy in relation to conversion movements see Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 4th edn., London, 1960.

⁷¹*Church Missionary Gleaner*, Vol. VII, July 1880, p. 76.

⁷²*Ibid.*, Vol. XI, September 1884, p. 107.

⁷³*C.M.I.*, Vol. XVII, December 1892, p. 905.

Before attempting some kind of explanation as to why Christianity gained so many adherents, especially among the malas and madigas, we shall explore the way in which conversion affected the ordinary every-day functioning of the village community, including outcaste relations with the caste population. Apart from a confession of belief, evidence of repentance and a willingness to learn, the missionaries insisted on three basic changes in the life of untouchable converts—renunciation of idol worship (including participation in Hindu festivals), the giving up of work on a Sunday, and renunciation of the custom of eating carrion.⁷⁴

To say the least, all these changes caused the caste people a certain degree of inconvenience. If Christians refused to pay taxes towards the cost of festivals or the upkeep of temples who would make up the deficit? If madigas refused to sacrifice animals or make and beat the drums to propitiate evil spirits, who would perform those functions? And who would remove the carcasses of animals? The giving up of work on a Sunday, especially during the busy harvest period, was greatly resented by Hindu landlords as they were compelled to rearrange the fieldwork, so as to meet the new demands of their employees.⁷⁵ The introduction of education also affected agricultural operations, as the children, instead of tending the landlord's cattle, left the fields for instruction.⁷⁶

These changes were bad enough, but what of the other less tangible effects? Would not Christianity, if it spread any further, make them all outcastes or, at least, put an end to all distinctions of caste? And why should malas and madigas, who had long been servants of the caste people, begin to assume new airs and attempt to rise above their station? Furthermore, the presence of the European missionary at least in the background, symbolized the presence of a rival power who, if necessary, would side with untouchables against the rest of the village people.⁷⁷

Small wonder then that the spread of Christianity provoked active opposi-

⁷⁴C.M.S. Bushanam, A.L., 3 February, 27 December 1875; Alexander to Fenn, 14 August 1865; Padfield, A.L., 30 November 1871; Arden, A.L., December 1872; Padfield, *The Hindu at Home*, p. 143.

⁷⁵Clough, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-2; C.M.S. Arden, A.L., December 1872.

⁷⁶C.M.S. Arden, A.L., December 1872.

⁷⁷The Reverends Arden and Alexander were both, for example, quite prepared to invoke the power of British courts and intervene on behalf of converts. When, in 1872, the teacher and five Christians in the village of Yalurupad were taken up and imprisoned on what he regarded as 'false' charges, Arden felt it his 'duty' to bring the matter before the magistrate and the village munsiff was fined £5 (C.M.S. Arden, A.L., December 1872). On another occasion, village Christians who had their cattle impounded 'appealed to the Government for protection' and, according to Alexander, 'substantial justice was done'. The caste people, he explained, 'bitterly resent the uprise of the Malas who have long been their abject slaves and drudges. It is no longer possible to abuse, defraud and ill-treat them after they join us and the caste people hate us and the movement which robs them of their prey' (C.M.S. Alexander, A.L., 30 September 1875).

tion. In some cases the caste people simply ceased to offer various types of remuneration and service, since the Christians themselves had ceased to carry out at least some of their traditional obligations. In Raghapuram the dhobi refused to wash the Christians' clothes and the komati refused to sell them corn and oil.⁷⁸ In villages further north, Christians were denied their traditional rights of gathering fire-wood on government wasteland and of digging for fresh water in the bed of tanks during drought.⁷⁹ But there were also cases of calculated persecution in an attempt to dissuade enquirers from accepting the new faith or in attempts to get Christians to recant and return to their former ways. In Raghapuram there were threats and intimidation.⁸⁰ In other villages the converts' cattle were driven off and impounded, while the converts themselves were subjected to verbal abuse, imprisonment, beating and other forms of physical violence.⁸¹ In at least one instance the madigas were forced to give up their rent-free lands.⁸²

As we have seen, C.M.S. missionaries were reluctant to baptize without a long period of instruction and preparation. During this period a considerable proportion of enquirers dropped away—some under persecution and many when they discovered that adherence to Christianity was unlikely to offer the advantages they had been led to expect. But what of the other enquirers—those who persisted and who eventually joined the Christian church?

Some converts may have expected economic gain through contact with Christian missionaries. Indeed, on one occasion at least, the Reverend Starkey promised his hearers that Christianity would create and strengthen them in habits of industry and cleanliness and that this would make them 'comfortable and happy'.⁸³ But against this one must weigh the realities of persecution—the fact that, on conversion to Christianity, many untouchables lost some traditional sources of remuneration, could no longer supplement their food through scavenging and were required to give up work on Sundays—no small sacrifice during the harvest season. Referring to Christians in Raghapuram, the Reverend Ellington explained:

For one day's work in the fields a man would receive four times as much as he could ordinarily earn, supposing him to be fully occupied with his loom. And yet they cheerfully forego this one day in the week, as well as run the risk of displeasing their wealthy and influential employers.⁸⁴

⁷⁸C.M.I., Vol. XVII, December 1892, p. 906.

⁷⁹C.M.S. Bushanam, A.L., 3 February 1875.

⁸⁰C.M.I., Vol. XVII, December 1892, p. 903.

⁸¹C.M.S. Bushanam, A.L., 3 February 1875; Arden, A.L., December 1872; Alexander, A.L., 30 September 1875; Padfield, A.L., 30 November 1871; E. Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, London, 1899, Vol. III, p. 761.

⁸²C.M.S. Alexander, A.L., 26 December 1876.

⁸³M.C.M.R., Vol. XVI, 1849, p. 40.

⁸⁴C.M.S. Ellington, A.L., 21 January 1864.

Did converts hope for some improvement in social status? Certainly by insisting on abstinence from alcohol and on the giving up of scavenging, the missionaries were, incidentally, encouraging the adoption of high-caste customs. But there is little evidence that conversion to Christianity actually improved social status—at least in the first generation. One very good test of this was whether Christians of untouchable origin were allowed to use caste wells. But even in the 1930s Christians in the Telugu country were still being forced to use their own separate sources of water supply.⁸⁵

We have already noted the widespread desire for village schools and there can be little doubt that many of the despised malas and madigas came under missionary influence because they hankered after some kind of elementary education. But what kind of education did they really desire? No doubt, their ideas and aspirations were often vague and confused but, in view of the fact that some enquirers had already begun to debate religious issues and asked quite specifically for *Christian* instruction or for *Christian* schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, it would be hazardous to assume that, even at this stage, they were seldom if ever interested in the Christian content of education or that their motives were always completely secular. Moreover, mission schools were generally open to both Hindus and Christians and there was no need to accept Christianity unless, of course, Christian scholars had a better chance of attracting financial support.

If at times it is not easy to see how far the convert gained specific economic, social, or educational advantages, there can be little doubt that Christianity promised a greater degree of legal protection and social justice. It presented converts with the possibility of a new alliance with forces which lay outside the oppressive village system—contact with the missionary and, through him, contact with the white man's world and all the power and prestige of the British raj. The importance of this new alliance system became all the more apparent when missionaries themselves interceded on behalf of converts and took up the more severe cases of oppression.⁸⁶

But perhaps, in the last analysis, the attractions of Christianity were more internal than outward—more psychological than anything else. Converts were sometimes extremely aggressive in destroying their idols and, amongst other things, the movement was a clear renunciation of Hinduism—perhaps including the whole system of practice and belief which kept untouchables underfoot and at the bottom of the human scale. Even if there were no improvements in social status, the convert gained a new sense of dignity and

⁸⁵Pickett, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-71, 207-8.

⁸⁶The effectiveness of missionary intervention on behalf of converts is reflected in the Reverend Alexander's comment that because they had received an education in Noble's school or come under missionary influence, 'the Native officials are always on our side and give us justice whether our oppressors are Jemindars, Brahmins or village authorities' (C.M.S. Alexander to Fenn, 14 August 1865).

of his own individual worth. Perhaps, for the first time, untouchables found, in the missionaries, other people who took an interest in their welfare and who, more than others, were prepared to accept them as human beings. Like Islam and Buddhism, Christianity encouraged a new sense of equality and self-respect. 'These poor folk are always delighted when I tell them we are all brothers and sisters', wrote Sharkey, 'and that the distinctions of caste are all human and false'.⁸⁷

Last, but not least, there is evidence that Christianity was seen as a form of insurance against the power of evil spirits. Many untouchables were highly superstitious. They lived in a world peopled especially by evil spirits—a world controlled by black and white magic where the gods, more often than not, were treacherous and required constant propitiation.⁸⁸ The Christian God, at least according to the Reverend Sharkey, certainly promised protection against unseen dangers and the powers of evil: 'I endeavoured first of all', he wrote (describing a visit to a mala hamlet), 'to dispel their fears of evil spirits and possessions by presenting God as the only preserver of our race and object of worship, and that, if we once gained His favour, nothing on earth could hurt us, and that the only way of acquiring this was through His Son Jesus Christ, whom I next preached'.⁸⁹ This study suggests that the spread of Christianity was not always isolated within the confines of denominational missions and that what happened in one part of the Telugu-speaking area tended to influence what happened in other parts of the same linguistic region. It remains to be seen how far these movements transcended linguistic as well as caste boundaries—crossing, for example, the Telugu-Tamil division.

Many features of the movement in the Godavery-Krishna districts, far from being unique, parallel similar developments in other parts of South India. The local is in some ways the microcosm of the more general process. In many other regions, and not only in the C.M.S. Telugu mission, evidence suggests that long periods of preparatory preaching preceded the growth of mass movements; that Christianity appealed especially to the underprivileged sections of the community; that families and kinship groups belonging to the same jati became involved and that Christianity sometimes crossed traditional caste boundaries.⁹⁰

But these general common characteristics tend to obscure important

⁸⁷M.C.M.R., Vol. XV, 1848, p. 81.

⁸⁸For an account of their religious views and practices see especially H. Whitehead, *The Village Gods of South India*, Madras and Calcutta, 1921; Thurston, *op. cit.*; Pickett, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-89; M.C.M.R., Vol. XVIII, 1851, p. 237.

⁸⁹M.C.M.R., Vol. XIX, 1852, p. 219.

⁹⁰Apart from Pickett's work see also accounts by two missionaries with experience in Tamilnad: Goudie, *op. cit.* and W.H. Campbell 'Mass Movements in the Mission Field,' *The East and the West*, Vol. IV, 1906, pp. 9-16.

local variations. Hardgrave, in his study of the nadars of Tamilnad, refers to whole villages applying for baptism;⁹¹ yet there is little evidence of this occurring in the Godavery-Krishna delta. Secondly, initial interest in Christianity—the way it was perceived—not only depended on the way it was preached by particular missionaries, but on what it seemed to promise. And what it seemed to promise varied according to the circumstances of particular groups. In some areas it promised education; in others material advantages including famine relief; in others legal protection and the removal of those disabilities peculiar to the local situation. But perhaps everywhere it promised new allies—alliance with the power and prestige of the white man outside and over against the traditional village system. Thirdly, the spread of Christianity also depended on the peculiar facts of geography, on the ease of travel and communication, and on the extent to which individuals were accustomed to travel from one village to another. Fourthly, localized systems of belief were also important. In this respect the American missionaries working in the Telugu country were placed in a very fortunate position and were able to build on the foundations laid by Yogi Nasriah who emphasized the doctrines of a personal god, love and forgiveness as expounded in the bhakti movement.⁹² Fifthly, the capacity to respond to Christianity also depended to some extent on the power structures within the local situation. Village headmen sometimes took the initiative⁹³ while, according to Hardgrave, the nadars, like some of the malas, were in a comparatively favourable economically independent situation.⁹⁴ Moreover, the duties and perquisites within the jajmani system varied—some jati groups in one area having more to lose than those of a comparable status in others. The position of untouchables in this respect was by no means uniform throughout South India—some being more dependent on the caste people than others.

Finally, the existing social composition of local churches was also of great importance. In Travancore, the Syrian Christians and, in Tinevelley, Christians of caste origin⁹⁵ did not always encourage outcaste conversion; in the C.M.S. Telugu mission madigas were sometimes repelled by malas while, in the American mission, madigas came in in large numbers unimpeded by the existence of mala congregations. On the other hand, our detailed examination of the situation in the Godavery-Krishna districts shows that conversion was sometimes promoted across caste barriers. Indeed historians

⁹¹R.L. Hardgrave, *The Nadars of Tamilnad. The Political Culture of a Community in Change*, Berkley and Los Angeles, 1969, p. 46.

⁹²Clough, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-5, 104, 140-3, 145, 160, 188.

⁹³For an account of their importance in the Lone Star Mission see Clough, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-93.

⁹⁴Hardgrave, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁹⁵G.A. Oddie, 'Protestant Missions, Caste and Social Change in India 1850-1914,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. VI, No. 3, September 1969, p. 267.

should pay closer attention to the missionary claim that, in many areas, Christianity moved upwards among the caste population, not in spite of, but because of outcaste influence. Writing in the 1930s, the Reverend J. W. Pickett, who carried out a detailed survey of Christian conversion movements in Andhra Pradesh, declared that 'about ninety per cent of all higher caste converts interviewed . . . attributed their conversion wholly, or in part, to the influence upon them of changes they had observed in converts from the Depressed Classes'.⁹⁶

⁹⁶J.W. Pickett, *Christ's Way to India's Heart*, London, 1938, p. 60

The Ideology and the Interests of the Bengali Intelligentsia: Sir George Campbell's Education Policy (1871-74)*

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The glory of Sir George Campbell, Bengal's Lieutenant Governor (1871-74), seems to rest on his educational measures. It can not be denied that he had given his incessant attention to education.¹

His education policy falls under three heads: primary education, higher education, and technical or scientific education. This paper seeks to study in depth all these different aspects of Campbell's education policy. It also probes into the role of the Bengali bhadralok vis-a-vis the Lieutenant Governor's progressive education policy.

I

The introduction of the system of primary education opened a brilliant chapter in the educational history of Bengal in the nineteenth century. Campbell designated primary education as 'mass education'² which was gaining ground like an utopian concept since the days of Sir John Lawrence.³ The basis of the new system which Campbell had devised was an old one, viz. the indigenous popular education of the country. The real object of Campbell was to aid, promote, and improve this indigenous system and educate the people through it, instead of attempting to supersede it. Several governments in the past had attempted to extend popular instruction particularly those of Lord Hardinge and Sir John Peter Grant but these attempts had proved abortive partly for want of funds but more from the failure of the education department to recognize as instruction any thing that was not on their model.⁴ In 1854 the Court of Directors in their Educational Des-

*I am thankful to my Research Supervisor Dr Kalyan Kumar Sen Gupta, Rabindra Bharati University, who kindly read an early draft of this paper and made some valuable comments.

¹*The Hindoo Patriot*, 30 March 1874.

²*The Bengalee*, 11 January 1873.

³*The National Paper*, 5 June 1872.

⁴Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

patch had stated that very little had hitherto been done in Bengal for the education of the masses. 'The attention of the Government of Bengal should be seriously directed to the consideration of some plan for the encouragement of indigenous schools for the education of the lower classes'. This injunction had been frequently repeated by the Government of India and by successive Secretaries of State. In the month of August 1871, it was desired to leave the primary education to the unfettered discretion of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.⁵

When Sir George Campbell came to review the position he found that the two great questions were (i) whence should money be found for the extension of primary schools and (ii) what was the best means of effecting such extension.⁶ The Lieutenant Governor regretted that in Bombay the grant to primary education was for each million of the population seven or eight times as large as the increased grant now made for primary education in Bengal.⁷ In 1871 the Government of India took a reasonable ground and stated: 'It is a primary duty to assign funds for the education of those who are least able to help themselves and that the education of the masses therefore has greatest claim on the state funds'. It then explained that although it insisted on the imposition of local rates for the primary education it did not mean to deny to primary schools assistance from imperial revenues. It declared that 'they would have full liberty to increase the allotment either from retrenchment in other services or from savings in other branches of education'.⁸

Unlike other provinces in India, Bengal had never been aided in any way by grants from local and Municipal funds. The Bengal provincial funds, however, had been made over to the local government at the time of Sir George Campbell's appointment as Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Accordingly he found himself able in 1872 to increase the grant for primary schools from Rs 1,30,000 to Rs 5,30,000 a year and found funds to pay for what the additional native inspecting agency required.⁹

Campbell brought about a radical change in the education department. An Inspector of Schools, with a circle of ten districts containing a population of 14 million, could hardly direct and manage the village schools of his own circle. Moreover an inspector could not have influence over or know the zamindars, townsfolk, and villagers without whose co-operation no effectual reforms of this kind could be carried out. It seemed best to place the administration of the primary school funds in the hands of District and Sub-Divisional officers who were to be aided and advised by regularly constituted District School Committees. The District Officers were to improve existing village

⁵*Ibid.*, 1871-72.

⁶*Ibid.*, 1872-73.

⁷*Ibid.*, 1871-72.

⁸*The Hindoo Patriot*, 6 March 1871.

⁹Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

schools and establish new ones by giving either a monthly grant or to evoke the liberality of landholders or others by giving a small government grant to any primary school they might successfully establish.¹⁰

The plan adopted by Sir George Campbell was however based on a different principle altogether. It made the Collector and the Commissioner virtually the controllers of the education department; it reduced the Inspector and Directors to mere nonentities. The Deputy Inspectors of each district were placed under the authority of the Magistrate and Collector. The Commissioner exercised a general supervision and control over the committees and presided over the meetings of the committee. The Magistrate and Collector was to be the Vice-President and took the chair when the Commissioner was not present. The Vice-President was to be the active head of the Committee and would carry on the duties through the Deputy Inspector and the Secretary subject to the resolutions of the Committee. The Headmaster of the Government School or other educational officer selected would be Secretary to the Committee. A clerk, if necessary, might be allowed. The government would allot a certain sum for grants-in-aid to each district distinguishing the allotment for middle and higher education and that for primary education. The sums devoted to primary education would be allotted by the Magistrate and the Collector with the advice of the Committee. The Deputy Inspector under the orders of the Magistrate would check and pass the accounts. Quarterly abstract statements of the accounts of primary schools would be forwarded to the Inspector in such form as may be prescribed. The Director would have even the privilege of carrying on formal official correspondence with the government.¹¹

It was not in the interest of the education department that the Director should be thus reduced to a cypher. The Court of Directors in a memorable despatch thus recorded their opinion on the subject:

We are of opinion that it is advisable to place the superintendence and direction of education upon a more systematic footing and we have therefore, determined to create an education department as a portion of the machinery of our governments in the several presidencies of India. We accordingly propose that an officer shall be appointed for each presidency and Lieutenant Governor who shall be specially charged with the management of the business connected with education and be immediately responsible to government for its conduct.

But the effect of the changes introduced by the Lieutenant Governor in the words of the resolution would be to make it less possible for the Director to

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 1872-73. General system of public instruction.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 1872-73.

exercise a direct control over local operations that have been transferred to the civil officers. From the very beginning, the Bengali bhadraloks sounded the tocsin. The pro-landlord newspaper, *The Hindoo Patriot*, pointed out:

The whole Campbell Scheme was a revolution without possessing a single ingredient of reform. It reduced the Director to a mere *Kerani*. On the other hand not a pice was saved to the state while an expensive staff of officers, such as the Director and Inspector, was retained who would have practically nothing to do. As for transferring all control in educational matters to the Collector and Commissioner they would have no time to do the work and that practically they would be guided by the Deputy Inspector whose responsibility had been increased without corresponding addition to his emoluments which alone would secure suitable persons. It is doubtful whether all these gentlemen professing to be Deputy Inspector of Schools had any notion of the principle on which the system of grant-in-aid was founded. The interference of the Deputy Inspector was at the root of the failure of the system.¹²

Campbell had offended the Bengali Hindu bhadraloks because he wanted to extend primary education among the masses. The Bengali Hindu bhadraloks, a newly emerging social group mostly consisting of persons belonging to higher Hindu castes, after imbibing the best fruits of western education were trying desperately in the second half of the nineteenth century to assume the social leadership of the Bengalis. This social group, ambitious and ruthless, wanted to keep the masses ignorant in order to maintain its leadership over them. Quite naturally the Hindu bhadraloks could not see eye to eye with Campbell's education policy, a policy which was mass-oriented. As the beneficiaries of the nineteenth-century British imperial system in India, the bhadraloks—the zamindars, the professional people, and the salaried persons—were apprehensive of the educated cultivators, artisans, and the labourers. Thus clearly enough, the class interests of the bhadraloks clashed with Campbell's primary education scheme and the latter left no stone unturned to wreck it.

Up to July the Lieutenant Governor had been engaged in the Municipal Bill. His object was to provide for primary education in the several classes of municipalities to be formed under the Bill. Campbell hoped that if the Municipal Bill became law many villages would establish primary schools aided by government funds. He hoped that by the end of 1873-74 the new Municipal system would be so far established that a considerable portion of the burden now assumed by the government might be taken over by the municipalities of considerable and prosperous villages. Town municipalities

¹² *The Hindoo Patriot*, 7 October 1872.

would be able to support or render self-supporting some of the schools of the higher class which now absorbed a large share of the education grant. In this way government money in addition to that already saved would be made available for poorer and more backward classes.¹³ But Sir George Campbell's Municipal Bill was unfortunately nullified by the Governor General of India in 1873.¹⁴ This was in deference to the wishes of the Hindu bhadraloks who saw in Campbell's Municipal Bill an attempt to extend education to the masses.

With regard to the style of schools and the teaching to be given it was explained that the great aim and object was to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic in the indigenous language of the province, to practise the boys in their native system of accounts and teach them something of mensuration and the native system of land survey. The instruments to be used as teachers were men of the indigenous school teacher class who would be content with emoluments of Rs 8 or Rs 10 a month and not the higher class of teachers hitherto turned out by the training schools who would be content neither with the low wages of gurus nor with the native system of teaching.¹⁵ Sir George Campbell aimed at for such purposes an allowance of Rs 2 or 3 per mensem which would in many cases suffice where the villager or landlord or other party interested was willing to make up the remainder of the ordinary Rs 5 pathasala grant.¹⁶

The leading bhadralok journal, *The National Paper*, thought that Campbell's proposal to educate the masses through the medium of elementary books was impractical. Elementary books would not convey to them any knowledge that could be turned to their positive good. Such books would not convey a whit better knowledge than what was generally conveyed by popular *Sisubodha* found in every peasant's cottage. The case of the peasant boy reading the elementary books would be very like that of an English lad who had commenced his first lessons. 'That elementary knowledge would only raise a thirst for more knowledge in nine out of the ten cases, there is not the least doubt'.¹⁷ *The Bengalee* however pointed out: 'The people needed an organised system of instruction that would reach the lower strata of society, remove the prejudices and enlarge the mind of the masses and give them a knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. For the attainment of this grand object it would not do to make a grant of Rs 2 or 3 to a school'.¹⁸ The Lieutenant Governor did not desire to see men educated beyond their position and the necessities of their vocation. But he was sure that an elementary

¹³ C.E. Buckland, *Bengal under Lieutenant Governors*, Calcutta, 1902, Vol. 1, pp. 526-27.

¹⁴ Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

¹⁵ Education Proceedings, File 57/16, No. 6, August 1873.

¹⁶ Annual Report of the Administration of Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

¹⁷ *The National Paper*, 5 June 1872.

¹⁸ *The Bengalee*, 25 October 1873.

education would greatly benefit the agricultural class in every way and he felt that the duty of the government was to do its utmost to promote such education.¹⁹

Arrangements had been made to establish in each district a Normal School for the primary school teachers.²⁰ They should be attached to training classes for some months either before they set up their schools or at the next rice-sowing season or at such convenient opportunities as may offer themselves.²¹ To each Normal School must be attached a model school or *pathsala* to serve as a practising school for the pupil teachers. Stipends were to be given to actual village teachers who might be induced to come to the Normal Schools for professional training and also to young men of the same class who wished to qualify themselves to be village teachers.²²

A very satisfactory feature of the new scheme was that the Muhammadans took to it just as kindly as the Hindus.²³ Where the Muhammandans preponderated the population, the Lieutenant Governor did not object to the grant to their *maktabs* of aid similar to that given to the *pathsala* or common village schools, provided an useful primary education was really given.²⁴ As will be seen later, this concession given to the Muslims and the prospect of the spread of Muslim mass education angered the Hindu *bhadraloks* who opposed tooth and nail Campbell's education scheme.

Government scholarships in former years were given to boys who did well at the university examinations and at minor examinations held by the education department in each district. No scholarships were set aside for boys at primary schools and it merely happened that *pathsala* boys would gain scholarships and so secure the means of prosecuting their studies beyond the course of a petty village school.

By the orders of 1872 a sum of Rs 29,520 had been granted annually to provide 410 scholarships of Rs 3 a month tenable for two years. This undoubtedly was a real and positive effort to take education to the lowest classes of the rural population; an attempt which made the urban Hindu intelligentsia really panicky. The total funds now allotted to primary education in Bengal were thus considerably more than one-third of the net grant for education in Bengal for the year 1873-74. This expenditure was no doubt small for so populous a province, but it was an advance on what went before.²⁵ But unfortunately the number of primary scholarships was too few to be of any appreciable benefit. It needs to be remembered that 4,000 mass schools had

¹⁹Bengal Judicial (Police) Proceedings, No. 30, February 1872.

²⁰Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

²¹Buckland, *op. cit.*, 1902, p. 529.

²²Education Proceedings, File 34, No. 6, August 1873.

²³Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

²⁴Buckland, *op. cit.*, p. 528.

²⁵Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

been sanctioned but the primary scholarships allotted would reach but one in 40. Then it was enjoined that no boy above the age of 14 would be eligible for a primary scholarship.²⁶ Campbell wanted that by his scholarship system the son of a ryot or labourer would become a distinguished engineer or physician or agriculturist or administrator of a high court.²⁷ But *The Hindoo Patriot* remarked sarcastically: 'Between the *pathsala* and the university degree there was a very wide gulf which it was not easy to bridge over. It is mere rhetorical flourish and nothing else'.²⁸ The opinion of this landlord-dominated newspaper clearly indicated the urban *bhadralok*-landlord attitude.

Sir George Campbell felt the difficulty of providing funds for the permanent maintenance of the system of primary education.²⁹ The Government of India by its decentralization resolution had permanently fixed with the education grant from the imperial funds and that grant was taken at a low figure owing to the depressed condition of the finances in 1870-71. So it was difficult for the local government to get funds to satisfy the claims of primary education. It was indeed inconsistent on the part of the supreme government to impose on the local government a duty without giving them means to discharge it. The Government of India was right in affirming that the savings which might be made in other branches of public expenditure should be applied to promotion of education. But the local government had so far given scant attention in that direction. The Government of India alone had, therefore, the opportunity to make effective retrenchment for increasing the allotment of education.³⁰ Sir George Campbell had understood the principle of local rating for education but Bengal had no funds for establishing, aiding, and maintaining primary schools for the 65 million of its population.³¹

Sir George Campbell's education policy was severely criticized by contemporary newspapers and journals dominated by the English-educated Bengali intelligentsia. He was reminded by the *bhadraloks* that what he had resolved to do had been commenced by Sir John Peter Grant and that if that distinguished governor could not do all that he desired to accomplish it was for want of funds.³² But none of the Bengali *bhadraloks* who had done so much to bring about the so-called 'renaissance' came forward with funds to make Campbell's scheme a success.

In some districts difficulties had been created by the spread of sinister rumours by the *bhadraloks* regarding the designs of the government. Many

²⁶*The Hindoo Patriot*, 21 October 1872.

²⁷Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

²⁸*The Hindoo Patriot*, 21 October 1872.

²⁹Buckland, *op. cit.*, p. 533.

³⁰*The Hindoo Patriot*, 6 March 1871.

³¹Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

³²*The Hindoo Patriot*, 19 May 1873.

of the cultivators were made to believe that they required the help of their boys in the fields or at their handicrafts.³³ A native newspaper, *The Samaj Darpan* (Mirror of Society), said: 'In many places the *gooroo*s are becoming very troublesome. . . There is no instruction imparted while at the same time a stop is put to their looking after their fathers cows or other agricultural duties. While such is the state of things it would appear that Mr. Campbell had directed his endeavours towards putting a stop to agriculture'.³⁴ This once again brings to light the nature of bhadrakok propaganda against Campbell's enlightened scheme. To solve this problem Campbell introduced the 'Half time' system of England.³⁵ According to the Annual report,

under the various systems heretofore in force there was in existence on the 31st March 1872 no more than 2,451 boys schools classed as primary aided or supported in any way by government and these schools only mastered 64,779 pupils. On the 31st March 1873 the primary schools maintained under the old systems were returned at 2,719 and their pupils at 73,998 showing an increase of 268 schools and 9,219 pupils over the number of the previous year while under the new system he had established or aided and brought under systematic supervision no fewer than 5,917 additional village schools with muster rolls containing 141,413 pupils. The whole number of primary schools connected with the education department had thus risen within the year 1872-73 from 2,451 to 8,636 and their pupils from 64,779 to 215,144.

These statistics sufficiently indicate that the anticipations which the Lieutenant Governor felt himself justified in forming had been fulfilled.³⁶ The few objectors were only those who were wedded to the old system by which a few profited at the expense of the many. The bhadrakoks thought that the Lieutenant Governor's education policy read well on paper but when the facts were analyzed it would be seen that these primary schools were old friends with new faces. The old guru had himself no pretence whatever to education. No progress was made in the quantity of education and a three-rupee grant to him would not materially improve his position. 'We see no sensible advantage from cutting the village *pathsalas* into government schools by giving a grant of three rupees to the *guru*, while the cause of real education is starved by the reduction of expenditure on colleges and Anglo-vernacular schools. We refuse to join in the haile-lujahs sung for the glorification of this part of Sir George Campbell's educational policy'.³⁷

³³Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

³⁴*Samaj Darpan*, quoted in *ibid.*

³⁵'Mr. Campbell's Scheme of Primary Education,' *The Bengal Magazine*, July 1872-August 1873, Vol. 1, p. 171. Quoted in Shila Purakayashtha, *Itihas Baisakh-Asar*, 1379, pp. 1-12.

³⁶Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

³⁷*The Hindoo Patriot*, 30 March 1874.

It is unfortunate that a man like Sir George Campbell received little sympathy from the Bengali bhadrakoks. He developed a system of primary education for the very poor, a really honest and public spirited project, but since he created and promulgated it without ascertaining the feelings of the landlords whose support he nevertheless demanded,³⁸ his scheme ended in failure. The English-educated Bengali intelligentsia never desired that the sons and daughters of the fishermen and the cultivators should be educated *en masse*. They felt that the peasant boy whose mind had been elevated by knowledge would find it beneath his dignity to hold the plough or sow the seed any longer. Ambition would urge him to leave his village cottage for more respectable employments in the city.³⁹ It would be a great loss to the landlord and the highly educated bhadrakoks. The primary object of Campbell's education policy, however, consisted not in taking a man out of his class but in making him a contented, civilized, and cultivated human being within it.⁴⁰ As the beneficiaries of imperialism, the bhadrakoks could not appreciate this and made systematic efforts to ruin Campbell's primary education scheme.

II

Campbell next turned his attention to the problem of higher education.⁴¹ Reductions were carried out in the Berhampore, Krishnagar, and Sanskrit colleges which provoked some expression of dissatisfaction among the upper and literate classes of Bengal⁴² who thought that Campbell was perhaps denying them the privileges of their classes. The Government of India had in the past years very earnestly drawn attention to the disproportionately large share of the government educational funds enjoyed by the Bengal colleges. The Secretary of State had rightly directed that two full government colleges should not be maintained too close to one another when there was so much difficulty in providing funds for primary education. Further the Lieutenant Governor proposed to introduce physical science in the Bengal colleges. So long there had been professors of physical science at the Presidency College only and the Lieutenant Governor wished to introduce physical and natural science courses at other colleges as soon as possible. The government grant for colleges was already very high so that the Lieutenant Governor felt unable to establish science classes at other Bengal colleges unless he could arrange for some reduction in the expenditure on general instruction in colleges.⁴³ Precisely for these reasons, Campbell sought to

³⁸Buckland, *op. cit.*, pp. 570-71.

³⁹*The National Paper*, 5 June 1872.

⁴⁰Judicial Proceedings, Bengal, Education Department, December 1871.

⁴¹*The Hindoo Patriot*, 19 May 1873.

⁴²Buckland, *op. cit.*, p. 532.

⁴³Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1871-72.

reduce government grants to the government colleges mentioned above. The policy was quite in keeping with Campbell's enlightened education policy and the Bengali intelligentsia's opposition to this policy was also not out of tune with its class interest and ideology.

The first real reduction was the Berhampore College. The number of undergraduates at this College had been falling for some years past. In the year 1871-72 there were only three third year and three fourth year students. The cost to government of keeping up a staff of European professors for these six students was about Rs 13,000 a year. Moreover at the last examinations not a single student had taken the B.A. degree. This then rightly appeared to the Lieutenant Governor an evident case for reduction. The two higher classes were eventually abolished and the College taught up to the first arts course only. It was decided that the undergraduates already in the third and the fourth year classes at Berhampore should be received at the Presidency or Hooghly College without additional expenses to themselves.⁴⁴

The condition of the Krishnagar College was also brought under review. At the end of 1870 there were 18 students in the fourth and only one in the third year while in March 1872 there were 12 students in the third and seven in the fourth year. Krishnagar was within a few hours journey of either Calcutta or Hooghly and at both these places were two flourishing colleges. The Lieutenant Governor naturally decided to close the third and fourth year classes at Krishnagar also.⁴⁵

The only other college where grants were reduced was the Sanskrit College in Calcutta. This College was originally established for the promotion of Sanskrit learning but it was some years ago found impossible to attract students unless English was added to the College course. Accordingly, English lecturers were added to its staff. Still the institution did not become popular. In 1871 there were only 26 undergraduates and in 1872 only 23. For these 23 undergraduates were maintained a principal, three professors, two lecturers, and a subordinate staff. The Lieutenant Governor proposed to dispense with the two English lecturers and rightly decided to let the Sanskrit College student attend the Presidency College lecture rooms. He also proposed to redistribute the chairs of Hindu Law, logic and philosophy so as to save the salary of one professor. In deference to the wishes of many gentlemen, the Lieutenant Governor had consented to let the first arts course remain for the present but the maintenance of the two higher classes could not be justified. There was no real reduction in the means of education. Arrangement had been made to enable the students to attend the classes at the Presidency College. He had much increased the strength and efficiency of the Presidency College and the

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

Hooghly College.⁴⁶ The Presidency College had however outgrown accommodation and in 1871 a grant of three lakhs was made for the construction of a college building⁴⁷ and it was expected to be ready for occupation in the early part of the session of 1874.⁴⁸ The Hooghly College was the most flourishing and useful college outside Calcutta. It had long been the subject of complaint that a purely Muhammadan endowment was principally devoted to the education of Hindus without any contribution from the government. The Lieutenant Governor therefore determined to reduce the Krishnagar College to the first arts course and to devote the money saved to the Hooghly College in such a way that while additional advantages were given to Muhammadan students the benefits to Hindus and other students might be justified by contribution on the part of government and a saving of the endowment income might be affected and devoted to Muhammadan education elsewhere. The Lieutenant Governor sought to make the Hooghly College a special college for agricultural and practical arts as well as a place of general education. In the two great provincial centres of Patna and Dacca he was also trying to render the colleges as complete and efficient as possible.⁴⁹

The net result of the education of the Bengal colleges was a saving of about Rs 30,000 or Rs 35,000 a year in the cost of the arts course in the several colleges. The whole of this amount Campbell wanted to spend in establishing chairs of physical science, botany, and agricultural chemistry. These reduction in colleges provoked some expressions of dissatisfaction on the part of the bhadraloks of Bengal. They appeared to fear that government would eventually withdraw its support from colleges and from higher education.⁵⁰ The Lieutenant Governor hoped that these well-established institutions would become more and more self-supporting, the funds now available would be useful for further extensions.⁵¹ The Bengal intelligentsia's mouthpiece, *The Bangalee*, however reminded Campbell:

In no civilised country has collegiate education as yet assumed a self supporting character and any Indian ruler who expected such a pheno-

⁴⁶*Ibid.* The Lieutenant Governor apprehended that the Sanskrit College had been of late years turned into sectarian institution where 'respectable Hindoos' (not sons of pundits only) received ordinary education at a cheap rate, but at a great expense to the government. This state of affairs must certainly be brought to an end. As a separate institution for English and general education the Sanskrit College must be merged in the Presidency College. Additional aid would be given, if necessary, to the Presidency College teaching staff and due provision in respect of fees, scholarships, etc., for the encouragement of deserving poor men. See General Proceedings, Bengal, Education Department, April 1872, Nos. 7-8.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 1872-73.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹*Ibid.*

menon in the backward province of India must be more wise and far seeing before taking any step in this matter. Mr. Campbell should have retrieved the error of abolishing the Colleges of Krishnagar and Berhampore which gave such promise of good to a large population. He at least should bear in mind the brilliant results of the first Arts Examination at Krishnagar which fully entitle it to a restoration of the B.A. Classes.⁵²

The landlord's organ, *The Hindoo Patriot*, remarked:

Usually the importance of the College is tested by their attendance and examination results. Judged by both these tests the Krishnagar College at any rate did not need the pruning knife. If the Dacca and Krishnagar College is compared by these tests the action of the Lieutenant Governor in respect of the Krishnagar College is not at all justified. The number of pupils in the Dacca College was 103 and that of the Krishnagar College was 105. The cost of each student per annum at the Dacca College in 1872 was Rs. 357/- whereas at the Krishnagar College it was only Rs. 340/- and yet the blow has fallen upon the latter.⁵³

The Bengalee further observed:

There is another aspect in which the retention of the Berhampur and Krishnagar Colleges as Colleges and not High Schools can be put before the Lieutenant Governor. Large local contributions and even grants of land were obtained on the understanding that they were required for Colleges. If the original donors or their representatives were to come forward and asked the government to carry out its original programme there is no doubt they would have a strong case to fight for. Because the reduction of the two Colleges has indirectly injured the cause of education however, plausibly the reductions may be defended.⁵⁴

The National Paper suggested, 'Let the Ranee Shurno Mayl. of Cassimbazar and other Zamindar of Moorshadabad come forward and save the Berhampore College and put the government of Bengal to shame'.⁵⁵ As we have noticed earlier the bhadraloks did not at all show similar anxiety for the extension of primary education. This once again brings to light the narrow class interests of the late nineteenth-century Bengali intelligentsia. The Hindu intelligentsia of Bengal also saw in Campbell's education policy an effort to subdue the Hindu community. This was expressly pointed by

⁵²*The Bengalee*, 11 January 1873.

⁵³*The Hindoo Patriot*, 26 May 1873.

⁵⁴*The Bengalee*, 8 February 1873.

⁵⁵*The National Paper*, 12 July 1871.

The National Paper:

Of all the minutes which have emanated from the sturdy hands of the Lieutenant Governor on the subject of education none aims so deadly a blow at the Hindus as the one in which he proposed the abolition of the College department of the Sanskrit College and the chair of Smriti. It is a death blow to the College itself, an institution which is the pride and the boast of the Hindus and which has for so many years kept alive among them glorious literatures of their forefathers.⁵⁶

Communal and class interests thus combined the Hindu bhadraloks against the liberal education policy of Campbell. This will be evident from the following comment of *The Indian Observer*: 'It is not long time ago one of the most distinguished oriental scholars in Europe recommended that Sanskrit should be studied in all English Schools professing to give a liberal education. For the scientific knowledge of the Bengali and Hindi languages Sanskrit is most important'.⁵⁷

The National Paper pointed out:

Of course the College now holds an anomalous character. The former principal was an English scholar and was almost ignorant of Sanskrit though he was at the head of a Sanskrit institution. This is strange and the result of this was that the senior students were ordered to attend the lecture of the Presidency College. Under such circumstances the Lieutenant Governor would take the first opportunity to cast his eyes on that doomed institution.⁵⁸

On another occasion the paper advised Campbell:

It would have been quite an intelligible thing if Mr. Campbell had altogether eliminated English from the College curriculum and thus reduced the institution for the study of Sanskrit alone. But to keep up the College and at the same time to nullify its utility by the abolition of the English classes and of the chair of Smriti is quite a mystery. Of all the Sanskrit subjects taught in the College Smriti is unquestionably the most important. All who know that how Smriti is interwoven with the whole life of the Hindu must admit the truth of what we say. We hope that His Honour would condescend to enquire into the matter and reconsider the order passed by him.⁵⁹

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 27 March 1872.

⁵⁷*The Indian Observer*, 4 February 1871.

⁵⁸*The National Paper*, 12 July 1871.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 27 March 1872.

The Education Commission of 1882 however partially supported Campbell's measures and stated:

The importance of retaining a College for the special study of Sanskrit to a high standard can never be questioned. Nor is any doubt expressed as to the desirability of connecting the study of Sanskrit with that of Western science and literature. The only point on which there is any question is the necessity of retaining the first Arts Class in the Sanskrit College. This appeared unnecessary and useless particularly when those students who desired collegiate instruction might obtain it from Matriculation to Degree in the Presidency College close by.⁶⁰

Sir George Campbell was bitterly criticized by the *bhadraloks* for the concentration of the highest education in the Presidency College in the metropolis. According to a section of the intelligentsia, it amounted to all intents and purposes, a denial to the vast masses in the *Mofussil* of the means of higher education. Residence in the capital for instruction in the Presidency College subjected the *Mofussil* students to numerous inconveniences and hardships. In the first place it necessitated his removal in many cases to a distance of two to three hundred miles from his home and guardians. In the second place he was exposed in his tender years to the temptations and vices of city life uncontrolled by the wholesome influence of parents and relations. In the third place the cost of living in the capital was so dear that he could not afford to incur it without possessing large means.⁶¹ It is therefore quite evident that the *bhadraloks* who opposed Campbell's primary education scheme were really concerned for the education of sons of the *bhadraloks* even to the remotest district-towns. Class interests thus predominated mass interests during the so-called 'renaissance' era of Bengal.

In Bengal the Lieutenant Governor desired to restore Muhammadan education. Orders were issued in 1871 to establish a special class for teaching Arabic and Persian to Muhammadans in the ordinary schools wherever the demand should justify the supply and wherever the Muhammadans should agree to conform in addition to the regular course of study in the upper classes, so that both kinds of instruction must be taken. The collegiate instruction in the Calcutta Madrassa would be remodelled and reinforced, while the Mohosin endowment which then supported the Hooghly College would be employed wherever in Bengal their employment seemed most advantageous for encouraging and attending education among Muhammadans.⁶²

The scheme devised by Sir George Campbell to promote education among the Muhammadans was however a failure. The Education Commission thus

⁶⁰Education Commission, 1882, p. 164.

⁶¹*The Hindoo Patriot*, 30 March 1874.

⁶²Education Proceedings, August 1873, File 87-3, No. 7.

pointed out the causes of Campbell's failure:

In all middle and high schools and colleges English should be made compulsory. The promotion among any class of Her Majesty's Indian subjects of a purely oriental study is fraught with many mischievous consequences. Urdu should be to the Muhammadans what Bengali is to the Hindus of Bengal and Arabic and Persian should take the place of Sanskrit. Muhammadans boys should not be forced to learn four languages, whilst the Hindus have to learn only two. Urdu and Persian or Urdu and Arabic or Persian and Arabic along with English should be deemed sufficient.⁶³

III

The losses in the arts college were partly counter-balanced by gains in the medical and engineering colleges. In 1872-73 the entries had been unprecedentedly large in each of them. The new civil engineering classes had also attracted many undergraduate students so that on the whole it seemed probable that the losses in the arts college might have been fully made good by increases in the department of this special instruction.⁶⁴ Sir George Campbell had given a new impulse to science education. Arrangements had already been made to attach teachers of drawing, physical geography, and of engineering materials and surveying to some 18 of the principal government higher schools. The Lieutenant Governor was convinced that there was too much cramming of languages in schools, too little bread-winning education, and no teaching of practical arts, particularly because in all the provinces of Bengal there was a great want of men qualified in land surveying for the public service and for private work.⁶⁵

Surveying was one of the very best subjects that could be introduced in schools of all classes in Bengal.⁶⁶ Practical surveying in the field according to the Lieutenant Governor was good both for imparting some practical training as also for the sake of its 'muscular morality' as suggested by an education officer Clarke.⁶⁷ All collegiate schools and several *zillah* schools had very liberal grant for survey class contingencies and most higher class government schools had already managed to make an annual saving on their net grant.⁶⁸

Henceforth the Presidency College was the only government institution in Bengal where any instruction in physical science could be obtained. With

⁶³Education Commission, 1882, pp. 221-23.

⁶⁴The Report of the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1872-73.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶Education Proceedings, August 1873, File 20-26.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, File 20-25.

⁶⁸The Report on the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, 1871-72.

the view of teaching physical and practical science at other Bengal colleges, the Lieutenant Governor in June 1872 moved the Government of India to select in Europe and send out to Bengal two science professors who should be able to teach the following subjects of the university science course: physical geography, chemistry, general philosophy, vegetable physiology, and botany.⁶⁹

This requisition had been complied with and two gentlemen Pedler and Walt had been sent out, one able to teach chemistry and to conduct analysis, the other trained in agricultural botany and vegetable and animal physiology. Thus a good deal had been done in various ways to support the measures of the university for the extension of the science element in the education scheme.⁷⁰ In May 1872 the Lieutenant Governor referred the existing scholarship rules to a committee with an instruction to revise them so as to encourage the teaching of physical science and surveying in schools and the study of natural and physical science in colleges.⁷¹

During 1871-72 some few artisan schools had been established. The pupils were all taught reading and writing and each had to learn a trade either carpentry, smithery, brass work, or tin work.⁷²

Campbell thought that young men of education might prove their fitness for the deputy magistracies and other posts in the native civil service. Some university qualifications, a knowledge of surveying, and a short period of approved service in some government department were required and further each candidate was required to show that he had so far cultivated his physical powers as to be able to ride. The teaching of gymnastics had also been introduced into colleges, and in some of the schools with extraordinary success. A Bengaliphil, *per excellence* Campbell thought that the Bengalee intellect was acute but his physical qualities were lacking and if such qualities were generally required the Bengalee race might have a great future before it.⁷³

Thus it can be seen that Sir George Campbell had done a great deal to impart a practical character to education in Bengal but the intelligentsia far from seeing much good in the exclusive attention which was paid to scientific education opposed it. Thus *The Hindoo Patriot* wrote:

Surveying is an art which is of use to the professional man and its compulsory teaching in school can be defended on no rational principle. The University restricted the number of subjects required from candidates for entrance as the mental strain involved in the attempt to master them was

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 1872-73.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 1871-72.

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³*Ibid.*, 1872-73.

telling fearfully on the physique of the students. The addition of surveying, drawing and physical geography to the school course by one who continually preaches the value of gymnastics and riding in order to develop the body shows that he is not the safe guide which his admirers take him to be.⁷⁴

'He has simply elevated drawing, surveying and hand writing to the dignity of science'.⁷⁵

The Bengalee also supported *The Hindoo Patriot's* contention: 'Without any mathematical training the Bengalees are turned into a race of surveyors in the name of practical science. Surely the force of humbug could go no further'.⁷⁶

The National Paper was also highly critical of Campbell's policy:

Mr. Campbell proposed to give the masses a technical education, that is to educate them in mechanical arts such as carpentry etc. The sons of carpenters, blacksmiths and other mechanics will not attend schools which will be established for giving such technical education when they have a fair chance of profit by being apprenticed to native shops where they would learn their trade within a few years and with that gain something in the bargain. Besides, what would be the use of giving them such technical education if it does not turn out to be a source of profit. And this cannot be so long as heavy duties are not imposed upon European works of industry and art imported here and very light duty imposed on native manufacture exported to foreign countries.⁷⁷

Sir George Campbell's education policy provoked bitter discussion among the conservative bhadraloks. Deep thinker as he undoubtedly was, he was no less a thoroughly practical man and not merely practical but always blazing with ardour to carry out his schemes.⁷⁸ But the Hindu intelligentsia opposed from the very beginning Campbell's education policy since it clashed with the class interests of the newly emerging Bengal middle class which was trying desperately during this period to acquire for itself an elitist status. This attempt would have been frustrated if Campbell's still-born schemes of primary and technical education had succeeded. The bhadralok anger was reflected in the following comment of the *Saptahik Samachar*: 'Our queen is good, our viceroy is good, but such is our fate that our Lt. Governor is a man

⁷⁴*The Bengalee*, 8 February 1873.

⁷⁵*The Hindoo Patriot*, 30 March 1874.

⁷⁶*The Bengalee*, 19 July 1873.

⁷⁷*The National Paper*, 5 June 1872.

⁷⁸*The Daily Examiner*, quoted in the *Pioneer*, 27 February 1872.

of different stamp'.⁷⁹ Thus consistent bhadrakok opposition led to the failure of Campbell's progressive and mass-oriented education policy. This was indeed a tragedy for Bengal.

BOOK REVIEWS

⁷⁹*Saptahik Samachar*, 26 July 1873, quoted in K.K. Sen Gupta, 'Sir George Campbell and the Rent question in Bengal,' *Calcutta Review*, October-December 1970, pp. 227-36. For details of Hindu intelligentsia's opposition to Campbell's progressive pro-tenant policies this article is very useful.

ANDRE BETEILLE, *Six Essays in Comparative Sociology*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1974, x + 113 Pp. Rs 25.

The volume under review comprises six essays: (i) Sociology and social anthropology, (ii) Peasant studies and their significance, (iii) The concept of peasant society, (iv) Tribe and peasantry, (v) Peasants and workers, and (vi) Marxism and modern sociology. The first three essays were delivered at three universities as the University Grants Commission national lectures in sociology for 1972-73. Three more essays were written later 'in order to reveal more clearly the connexions among the first three and relate the whole effort to the concerns of sociology in contemporary India' (p.vii).

Beteille's central concern in all six essays is with the development of an alternative approach to the sociological study of rural India and, in the process or as a preliminary step to it, with the clarification of the odd-job word 'peasantry' as it is currently employed in social anthropological literature. He attends to these tasks directly in essays 2, 3, 4, and 5; in the first and the last essays he also discusses what may be seen as some other intimately related issues. The broad approach which Beteille employs is to critically examine ideas and concepts by relating them to historically specific situations cross-culturally—in India, in China, and in Europe. He sums up his position in this regard clearly and emphatically: 'Sociology as an intellectual discipline must be either fully comparative or nothing, which means that it must view every type of human society with the same critical detachment' (p. 109). Hence the title of the volume. India is, however, what Beteille speaks about most of the time and there is no doubt that the book is primarily a contribution to the sociology of India.

In the first essay he draws attention to what for many professional colleagues has assumed the dimensions of an identity crisis, namely the problem of the relationship between sociology and social anthropology. He rightly refers this distinction to the historical circumstances under which these studies originated in Europe. An outstanding characteristic of social organization in India, he argues, lies in the continuity between tribal, rural, and urban life and this renders a sharp compartmentalization of disciplines untenable. He also maintains that, besides sharing their subject matter, sociology and social anthropology are united by common theories and a common approach though techniques of investigation and analysis may be conceded to be various.

He then turns to a rapid comparison of the scope of village studies in China and India (essay 2). These studies are related to the emerging process of 'self-awareness' among the countries of the Third World. Moreover, Beteille points out a concern with peasantry which shares some of the attributes of so-called primitive societies (such as an elaborate system of kinship and marriage) and of modern societies (notably socio-economic inequality).

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resolves the sociology *versus* social anthropology debate. He suggests that in India a culturological approach to the study of peasant communities—in terms of values—has led to an emphasis on their internal harmony; the concern of Chinese students with problems centring around the ownership, control and use of land has, on the other hand, resulted in the salience of interests and conflict in their work. An 'overemphasis on caste among students of the Indian village led them to neglect one of the most crucial features of a peasant social and economic system, the technical and social organization of production . . . [They thus failed to see that rural productive systems] were not all communities of peasants, but were often divided into landlords, tenants and labourers' (p. 37). Beteille makes the need to cultivate and enlarge this alternative vision: the central argument of his essays—his message, as it were.

The foregoing leads him directly to the problem of defining the category of peasantry (essay 3). He thinks that before any advance can be made, we must abandon linguistic inexactitude and refrain from referring to whole societies as peasant or otherwise, and that we must determine empirically who exactly are the peasants among local communities. Caste and subcaste are categories that are too large to be useful in this connexion; the family or the household is what matters. Also, traditional occupation is a snare, for one encounters 'lapsed peasants' in village India in the form of non-cultivating landowners or landless labourers. Employing social, economic, and political criteria, Beteille argues forcefully that the Indian village is highly heterogeneous and internally stratified and, in these respects, different from European and Chinese villages. An examination of the tribe-peasantry dichotomy (essay 4) also shows the complexity of the empirical situation and the sterility of time-worn categories. Many tribes are said to be *proper* peasants as compared to many non-tribals who have been treated as such.

The book comes really alive when Beteille supplements discussion in general terms with empirical materials to consider the relationship of the peasant with the agricultural workers (essay 5). He sets up a four-fold framework—(i) market situation, (ii) work situation, (iii) status situation, and (iv) political situation—to examine data from some parts of India so as to emphasize once again the ambiguities that surround the notion of peasantry. The only solid ground that one can stand on, it is suggested, is that of the empirical datum. Uncritical appeal to the categories of a supposedly universal theory (e.g., Marxist-Leninist) will not help.

In the concluding essay, Beteille reiterates the need to shift the emphasis away from mutually exclusive categories, such as tribe and peasant-caste, and from their mutual interdependence in an ideal (even idyllic) state to categories defined in terms of their socially structured interests and to antagonistic relations between strata and classes. The short-sightedness of neglecting to learn from the Marxian mainstream are pointed out but, at the

same time, the dangers of Marxist dogmatism also are highlighted.

I have given a rather long summary of Beteille's argument because I think he has something important to say. I may add that he says it well: his prose is remarkable for its freedom from sociologese and for its felicitous lucidity. I hope the book will be widely read and discussed.

Personally I am sympathetic to Beteille's plea that we cultivate a sociology of interests. It is obvious that we need to look at society in India from more than one perspective so that we might see social reality in the round. We need to focus on categories that cut across the traditional groupings of tribe and caste. Our stock of descriptive and analytical categories needs to be enlarged so as to capture the nature and magnitude of social change. Beteille has for some time now argued persuasively for the importance of the notion of class to the sociology of India. In the present book he shows how this notion will help us to break up the omnibus category of peasantry into more meaningful categories and also reveal to our view those aspects of social reality which a rigid classificatory approach, with its preoccupation with frozen types, conceals. The chief merit of Beteille's exercise is that he does not merely proclaim the need for an alternative approach but carefully argues the case for it. This is welcome because of the tendency among Indian sociologists and social anthropologists to take on new tasks almost unthinkingly, often only imitatively.

I am, however, uncomfortable with what I consider Beteille's tendency to oversimplify issues, some of them important. One could cite several examples, but a few should do. (I am, of course, aware of the fact that the original nature of half of the book as spoken lectures must have imposed severe constraints on detailed exposition, but the author might have taken advantage of the decision to publish to clarify and elucidate some of the major issues.)

It seems to me that Beteille underestimates the potential of a sociology of values to deal with socially structured interests. Ideology never is silent on interests: the problem is to relate the sociologists' *chosen* categories with the 'native' categories. If the former are to stand by themselves—so as to serve an instrument of action—one would have to abandon Beteille's definition of 'the task of the sociologist' as an objective discussion of 'the prevailing alignment of groups and categories in a society' (p. 77). In fact, his legitimate doubts about the applicability of alien categories and the dangers of dogmatic Marxism—in other words, his concern for the preservation of the historical specificity of the Indian experience—would seem to entail a convergence of the two sociologies. Beteille seems to posit an unproblematic, incremental view of the endeavour. I am sceptical if this will do. We have to adequately deal with the relationship of a sociology of interests with that of values; culture and social structure have to be brought together in an ordered relationship. Paradigms are not lacking: there is, for instance, the Marxian enunciation of the relationship of the infrastructure with the superstructure, or Dumont's hierarchical viewpoint, but Beteille is silent on the problem in these essays.

Of less importance but not altogether negligible, since the book is offered as a text (see the publisher's blurb), is the somewhat inadequate presentation of the rise of rural sociology and village studies in India. I think Beteille over-stresses the taxonomic concerns of Redfield's approach. Whereas Redfield did write about folk, peasant, and urban societies as ideal types, he also wrote at considerable length about the processes of 'transformation'. Though Beteille does mention the notion of 'folk-urban continuum', he concentrates on Redfield's typology of societies suggesting that this is what has been more influential, misleading students to write vaguely of peasantry. It is a pity that he does not discuss precise cases of this kind of category mistake.

Similarly, Beteille does not mention earlier work in India and stresses—unduly, I think—the middle-of-the century emergence of village studies. This is puzzling. Even if one were to ignore the well-known books of people like Slater and Darling—for dealing with them would take the discussion too far afield—it is to be regretted that the work of Radhakamal Mukerjee on rural India during the second quarter of the century, which, besides being considerable in bulk, is theoretically original and empirically rich, has been ignored. Then there are the two Wiser books, *Behind Mud Walls* (1930) and *The Hindu Jajmani System* (1936); both these preceded Dube's *Indian Village* (which is described as the first Indian village study) but are completely ignored by Beteille. This is unfortunate for he could have pointed to the Jajmani System book to show that although this author focused on the economic content of intercaste relations, his preoccupation with the traditional values of the caste system, which legitimize inequalities, prevented him from bringing out the clash of intergroup interests. Besides, the wide-spread influence of these books on the work of a large number of research workers in the last 25 years or so gives them considerable importance. In short, a general criticism of the book *from the point of view of students* is its lack of bibliographical detail. Thus, to give one last example, they will have no clue in its pages to the works of Indian Marxists or Marxism-oriented Indian sociologists on which the last essay is partly based. Even Marx is referred to sparingly.

The foregoing criticisms are not intended to minimize the merits and importance of this book. It is a valuable contribution to the debate on the scope of the sociology of India and, as I said above, it should be widely read and discussed. Besides, there are the author's views on the tasks of sociology, on the nature and importance of the comparative method, on Marx's contribution to sociology, and on several other general issues which, too, merit discussion.

The publishers have served Beteille well by producing an immaculately printed book. One wishes it were also better bound and less expensive. It ought to have been within the reach of student-buyers.

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T.N. MADAN

ASIYA SIDDIQI, *Agrarian Change in a Northern Indian State: Uttar Pradesh 1819-1833*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1973, £ 4.50.

Dr Siddiqi's book is concerned with the social and economic history of the Ceded and Conquered Provinces (a major part of modern U.P.) in the period 1819-33. These years saw the development of a 'comprehensive policy of detailed land revenue settlement' which became the model for all north India, as well as providing 'valuable evidence on the way in which the economy of the region was affected by the commercial relationship with Great Britain' (p. 4). Although two important administrative acts define her period and principal concerns—Mackenzie's 1819 revenue minute and the final codification of the assessment and collection system in Regulation IX of 1833—Dr Siddiqi concentrates on the application and effects of policy rather than its evolution. After a brief background chapter on the region's political and military history, Chapter 2 establishes a baseline for the study of change through a careful reconstruction of pre-British agrarian structure based on early British records and indigenous administrative manuals. The next three chapters examine the impact of settlement procedures and mechanisms employed to realize the revenue, and involvement in the world market through the expansion of indigo and cotton production for shipment down the Ganges to Calcutta.

Each chapter contains new and provocative insights. The baseline chapter provides a better picture of the relationship between rights in land in terms of potential claims, and actual land use than exists in the literature to date. In the period's land-rich circumstances, appropriate shares of the tax burden were clearly the issue, not a specific correlation between inherited rights and the amount of land actually cultivated. There is new evidence on the creation of private property in land with the suggestion that the weight of taxation severely limited the value and security of ownership. Although revenue procedures were designed to clarify and stabilize agrarian relationships, the amount demanded by the government had the opposite effect (p. 101). By combining the rigid realization of revenue due, which has been documented elsewhere, with the requirement that taxes be paid in cash, the government forced monetization and commercialization given the period's high levels of assessment.

In order to pay the revenue and to meet the extortion attending its collection, the peasant had to sell his crop in advance to the money-lender, and later to buy or borrow from him whatever he needed for seed and food. Thus the subsistence element in his economy was undermined and monetization was induced, not because he had a surplus to exchange but because the necessity of paying his instalments of revenue forced him to sell even his food and stock (pp. 132-33)

Zamindars, *malguzars*, and peasant cultivators were driven into the hands of moneylenders whom, she finds, the administration came to view as a necessary part of the revenue system even in normal times (p. 138).

The concluding chapter, dealing with the impact of the region's commercial relationship with Great Britain, is the high point of the book. The consequences of colonial rule for indigenous entrepreneurship, the balance of payments and indigenous manufactures have been the subject of numerous studies. Dr Siddiqi provides us with one of the first examinations of the impact of the international market on rural India. Her findings are significant at a number of levels. The production of indigo, and to a lesser extent raw cotton and sugar for export via Calcutta dates from this period in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces. Although the evidence is spotty, Dr Siddiqi documents the localization of production of export crops in riverain districts coupled with intensified grain production and trade in hinterland areas to supply areas concentrating on indigo and cotton, revealing an increasing integration of the rural market in the early nineteenth century. This process, and the resulting economic boom however, was the product of wild speculation in the Calcutta export market as traders searched for new products through which to remit private and public funds to England in the face of the collapse of the cotton piece-good market. The booms' shaky foundation is significant both for the exaggerated demand during its height and the completeness of the collapse following the failure of several Calcutta export houses in 1830 and growing bullion exports to meet obligations in England. The government exacerbated the depression by closing two mints in the region as economy moves, aggravating the shortage of currency just at the time when bullion exports already made money scarce. Prices fell, making it all but impossible for landowners to meet the revenue assessments made during the boom.

Forced monetization and commercialization then is the theme which unites the book, saving the chapters on land tenure and revenue settlement from being simply another (though very good) exposition on the British land revenue system. Her *economic* analysis shows that while the settlement process itself produced some familiar changes in rural society by levelling groups with varying rights and perquisites into fairly uniform categories of revenue payers, the crisis in the region's economy and society cannot be understood by looking at the administrative and legal framework alone. She discounts Stokes' suggestion that influenced by Ricardian economics, the government set its demand too high,¹ emphasizing instead the fluctuations in the world market for Indian goods and problems in the balance of payments in the colonial economy paired with regulations requiring punctual cash payment of the land revenue.

¹ E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1959, pp. 132-33.

There are some issues on which one would like additional information and further analysis. Given B.S. Cohn's work on the Benares region, a final conclusion about the actual fate of dispossessed landowners must await further analysis.² Her examination of the consequences of administratively and commercially induced monetization in the whiplash of the general depression and the priorities of a colonial government is excellent. But it does not dispose of the question as to whether, given the small-scale, subsistence orientation of north Indian agriculture, any other transforming process is conceivable in normal economic circumstances. Is commercialization of agriculture possible without credit, and given the colonial government's reluctance to provide it, what were the alternatives? Dr Siddiqi seems to regard moneylenders as the sole source of credit where as later surveys show that fellow cultivators, landlords, and even temples frequently performed this service.

Dr Siddiqi's book hopefully marks the beginning of a new trend in Indian economic history. Here is proof that the documentation exists to move from superficial and emotionally charged debates on the Indian economy in the colonial period, the sophisticated studies of economic processes and performance within well-defined periods and regions in which the variety so characteristic of the subcontinent can be controlled. Books such as *Agrarian Change in a Northern Indian State* provide material on a whole range of historical and theoretical issues about monetization, commercialization, technological change, distribution of wealth, and changing patterns of production and consumption in the colonial context which can only be argued in abstract terms at an all-India level at present.

TOM KESSINGER

R. Suntharalingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, 1852-1891*, Arizona, 1974, Pp. 396. \$3.95 (paperback), \$7.95 (cloth-bound).

S. Saraswathi, *Minorities in Madras State. Group Interests in Modern Politics*, Impex India, Delhi, 1974, Pp. 247. Rs 50.

These two books deal with the groups involved in the politics of the Madras Presidency. Suntharalingam describes the rise of elites articulate in the language and style of modern politics at the Presidency capital in the second half of the nineteenth century; Saraswathi analyzes the caste-based groups that have competed for political advantage in the twentieth century. Both books have the detail and novelty which mark doctorate research, and it is not only because the academic study of the Madras Presidency is so 'benighted' that they add immensely to our knowledge.

Indeed Suntharalingam's aim is to endow Madras with the status which it earned in the crucial period of Indian political awakening but which has

² B. S. Cohn, 'Structural Change in Indian Rural Society, 1596-1885', in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1969.

rarely been acknowledged by historians of the nation. While the climax of the book describes the part played by the 'professional elite' of Madras in the early years of the Congress, there is also detailed analysis of the preceding 30 years 'in terms of the social groups which the western impact brought into existence'.

He delineates three novel elites which nurtured the new politics in Madras. In the 1840s and 1850s the leaders of the commercial community came forward to protest at the influence of missionaries over government policy and soon became the leading defenders of society and culture and critics of the imperial government. With the decline of the missionary bogey, the commercial elite faded into the background but not before it had helped found the Madras High School which was to be the cradle of the next elite. Partly because of the Madras Government's neglect of educational projects (other than the High School), partly because of the rigorous public-school ethos inculcated by the School's remarkable headmaster, and partly because of the ease with which the Proficients of the High School carved out careers in the public services, a very small handful of men acquired a unique position of social pre-eminence in the 1850s and 1860s. The duties of social and political leadership were thrust upon the members of this 'administrative elite'. While the men of commerce had seen themselves as protectors of Indian tradition, these men saw the opportunity to regenerate Indian society through a synthesis of traditional values and the new, imported knowledge and materials. Yet the task of synthesis was difficult and the administrative elite minuscule. It soon became defensive and ultimately ineffective when attacked by the traditionalists on the one hand and by the next generation of educated on the other.

From the 1860s, meanness gave way to profligacy in educational policy, and by the next decade graduates had swamped even the many new places opened up in the public services and spilled over into the professions, particularly law and journalism. The skills and the independence conferred by their callings equipped the members of the 'professional elite' for a more aggressive and more effective role as political advocates. They found their political voice against the tumultuous background of the Lytton and Ripon Viceroyalties, set up *The Hindu* newspaper and the Madras Mahajana Sabha to make themselves heard, and assumed a *vakalat* for Indian society as a whole. They took a prominent part in the confused gropings that finally gave birth to the Congress, and staged a successful session in 1887. However in the 1890s, there was anti-climax. The Madras Muslims turned towards the teachings of Syed Ahmed Khan, the fires of the Ripon period subsided into ashes, and political Madras got embroiled in the fractious problems of social reform (which had been the downfall of the administrative elite in the 1870s). The first wave was over.

Excepting an extraordinary passage in the introduction which gives the

impression that Brahmins owned most of the land in the south, the narrative is rigorous and detailed. Fittingly it displays the sense of restrained drama which marked the politics of the city with which it treats. Yet two ghosts stalk the book, and give it a sense of mystery. The first ghost is the mercantile community. It appears in bodily form at the start of the book but is soon killed off, and the rest of the narrative is bequeathed to the English-educated. Yet the merchants will not lie down, and they continue to haunt the story. They reappear as participants in agitations, as patrons of social reform and political associations, and as a sizeable section of the Mahajana Sabha (and they should have appeared as a large factor in the 1887 Madras Congress session). In the conclusion Suntharalingam recognizes that the 'economic transformation' of Imperial Madras was 'just as important' a factor in the political awakening as education, yet this is not brought out in the bulk of the book; economic changes and the political roles of the merchants and other economic groups remain shrouded in mystery.

The second spook is government. There is little treatment of the peculiar characteristics of imperial administration, of the special qualities of the Madras Government, or of the immense changes which took place in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Yet we get glimpses of the chimaera in the importance given to Ripon's local government schemes, in the protests at new taxes, in the Mahajana Sabha's agitations over the administration of forests, salt and irrigation, and in the readiness of all of the elites to defend society against the depredations of an irresponsible administration. Only the head and shoulders of the ghost—the Viceroy and Governors—assume more substantial form, but they are wholly disembodied.

With these two elements consigned to the middle passage, the book slides—albeit unwillingly—towards a well-worn groove. The politics of the crucial 1880s are analyzed chiefly in terms of the education overspill and the personal failures of a handful of proconsuls. The pre-eminence of the professional elite is divorced from any wider social or administrative context, and is seen largely in terms of personal attributes.

Moreover, this analysis leads quickly to other conclusions. Circumstances had made the professional elite chiefly Tamilian and chiefly Brahmin in composition. Without a deeper social or administrative background, it becomes easy to confuse the pre-eminence of a handful of elite politicians with the domination of a social group. The way is opened up to interpret later politics in terms of challenges to this domination by other social blocks. This is where Dr Saraswathi comes in.

Minorities in Madras State is a study of Madras politics from the turn of the century to the mid-1960s. Dr Saraswathi finds that the dominating factor in the formation of political groups has been caste and that the dominating trend in recent political history has been 'a process of displacement of the forward by the backward'.

The backbone of the book is an account of government policy on communal recruitment to the public services, for this policy has been the focus—and in many ways the catalyst—of much of the politics of caste in Madras. She discusses the evolution of new political categories: some like the Brahmins and the variously-named non-caste Hindus, Scheduled or Depressed Classes are new incarnations of old social entities; others like the Non-Brahmins and the Backward Classes are entirely novel. Each is a 'grouping' of jatis bundled together by the circumstances of modern politics. The preponderance of Brahmins in the public services of the Madras Presidency around the turn of the century prompted a movement of protest in the name of the Non-Brahmin. With British patronage and the success of the justice Party under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1920, the Non-Brahmin leaders secured several government orders on communal recruitment to the public services, which it was hoped would restrict the intake of Brahmins. Not long after, however, there appeared another movement (tailored closely to the Non-Brahmin pattern) which argued that concessions won by the Non-Brahmin leaders had benefitted only 'Forward Non-Brahmins' and that 'Backward Non-Brahmins' now required special treatment. Soon after independence, the Backward Classes—a category which includes cultivator, labourer, weaver, artisan, toddy-tapper, and lesser merchant jatis—secured many of their demands. Moreover, the Backward Classes predominated in the electorate of the new democratic state and were soon entrenched in power. Largely because of this, the Depressed Classes have not managed to climb into the escalator of communal politics and the 'process of displacement' has been halted.

Dr Saraswathi brings out three ironies in the story. The first is that the strategies of 'minority politics' have been used with great success by the leaders of groups which formed a majority of the population (the Non-Brahmins and then the Backward Classes) and have failed utterly in the case of a real minority group (the Depressed Classes), which has had to be content with a rather patronising patronage at the hands of the dominant groups.

The second irony is connected. The policy of utilizing caste considerations in service recruitment (and other aspects of administration) began in the late nineteenth century and matured between 1900 and 1920. It was begun in a rather arbitrary fashion by a government which was alien and irresponsible and which had rather hazy ideas about Indian social realities. Once initiated, the policy gained a momentum of its own. Yet just because the government was alien and irresponsible, it could keep a check on it. The British acknowledged some claims for special treatment but simply ignored others when matters seemed to be getting out of hand. At independence, the new government inherited the imperialists' policies without the imperialists' freedom and irresponsibility; it was obliged to take the policy of communal recruitment to this logical conclusion. It was ironic that a policy shaped

by the uncertain knowledge, the arbitrariness and the divide-and-rule tendencies of the British, found fullest expression in independent India.

The third irony relates to the hierarchy of caste. Dr Saraswathi argues that the political divisions that originated around the issues of communal recruitment have suffused Madras politics. Indeed, since the rise of the Non-Brahmin demand in 1916, 'nothing has happened by way of review or reconsideration of the basic principle'. In face of new ideas and new institutions, caste has become the political armour of everyman. The success of the Backward Classes in deploying the politics of caste to consolidate their dominant position in Tamil Nadu since independence has given them a vested interest in the politics of caste. Thus 'backward' groups now have a reason to sustain the social system that made them backward in the first place.

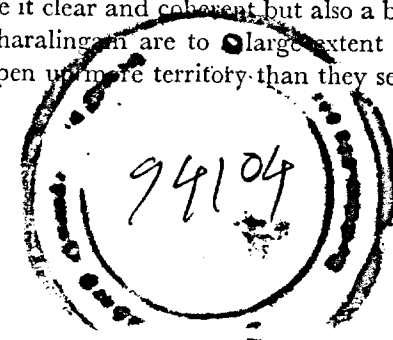
It is at one and the same time the success and the failure of the book that it opens up many questions about caste and the political process. There are to begin with some small but important difficulties. For instance, what are these groups like the Non-Brahmin and Backward Classes? At one point she tells us they are 'real, specific groups', but elsewhere she is at pains to show us the superficiality and changeability of caste nomenclature. The Sourashtras have at different times asked to be considered as Brahmins, Non-Brahmins, Backward and Scheduled Classes. Further, how far is it really true that the battle of these caste aggregates form the bedrock of politics in the Tamil region? Studies of elections, panchayat raj, land reform, and ministerial patronage have painted a picture in which caste is part of the background not the main interest, and where caste loyalties such as they are refer to the jati not to one of these new 'groupings'. Indeed it would be hard to see why the politics of a predominantly agricultural country should be shaped by the administrative rules relating to a handful of government jobs.

These initial problems lead us into deeper territory. How well does the vocabulary of Madras politics reflect the realities of political conflict? How much has caste politics changed caste institutions? What does it really mean that the Backward Classes have a vested interest in sustaining the caste system? What indeed were caste relations like and what was the political content of caste before the British began to confuse caste and administration?

Dr Saraswathi moves through 60 years of Madras politics in 200 pages, points out the changes brought about by the coming of independence with great skill, and picks her way through a complex story without falling into any of the sectarian traps which litter such a touchy subject. The limitations placed upon the study make it clear and coherent but also a bit dissatisfying. Both Saraswathi and Suntharalingam are to a large extent dogged by the fact that pioneers always open up more territory than they settle.

Madras

CHRIS BAKER



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